

# GRAND GROWTH

Ingham and Macro Meats have announced dramatic expansion plans to double their production of chicken and kangaroo respectively in South Australia over the next year.

In a huge shot in the arm for the meat industry, the two companies will invest a total of \$283 million in expansion projects and create more than 1,000 jobs.

MBL has already flagged increasing the production capacities of the Wingfield and Keith recycling plants to cater for the greater flow of raw materials from two of our biggest Members.

"The expansion plans of Ingham and Macro is great news at a time when there's so much gloomy news around the economy," says MBL Chairman Bruce Carter.

"The news is a significant bonus to the wider meat industry. The flow-on effect for other businesses is important.

"MBL is close to both companies and the Co-op will benefit from their expansion.

## Ingham, Macro flag huge expansion to double production

- + Total investment \$283 million
- + More than 1,000 jobs created
- + Benefits will flow to your MBL

"We are already rendering a significant amount from Ingham and it's increasing.

"Mainly as a result of Ingham's growth, we will look at expanding our plants which would in turn lead to more jobs."

Ingham supplies chicken offal (frames and

gut) to MBL's Wingfield plant, as well as supplying feathers and blood to Keith, where feather meal is a relatively new product.

Macro supplies kangaroo offal to Wingfield

*Continued page 3*



## Scaling the Heights

Modbury Heights butcher Darren Mellor's three-man shop is ticking along nicely, enjoying loyal custom in a small centre with abundant parking.

With a large high school adjacent, he does brisk afternoon trade. In fact, trade is so good that he has been able to ditch the wholesale side to concentrate on retail.

And Darren's image has now become even more professional, thanks to his purchase of an impressive Brice Ezi-Scale system from MBL. *He explains why on page 5.*

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Rob Black, the master butcher who founded the Adelaide-based meat trading company Samex, made a huge 50-year contribution to the industry.

He died on May 8 after a long illness, aged 68.

Over many decades, Rob was regarded as one of the most knowledgeable and experienced people in the international marketing of red meat.

He began his stellar career in his family's butcher shops in the Brighton area and by 21, he was the Australian Meat Board's General Manager for WA.

He founded Samex in 1978, building it into one of Australia's main meat trading companies, exporting well over \$100 million of meat annually to 45 countries.

Under Rob's direction and with his appetite for risk and adventure, Samex was successful in opening markets in regions where other exporters had been circumspect.

His courageous and adventurous

# Vale Rob Black

ous nature also saw him become a prominent rally car driver, and he assembled a fine collection of expensive cars.

Gary Marriott became a partner in Samex 30 years ago, with Rob remaining Managing Director until his death.

Samex has remained based in Adelaide, with offices in Dubai, China and Egypt.

In 2009, Rob told MBL News

that his experience as a master butcher had been vital, giving him the insight into meat products that are valued by consumers.

"My butchering background also allowed me to talk in detail with the importers," he said.

In the last MBL News, we told how Rob's legacy to the industry would be a \$1 million scholarship scheme administered by AMIC.



Under the 30-year scheme, 210 people aged under 25 will each receive a \$5,000 sponsorship to travel interstate or overseas for vocation training and skills enhancement.

## Blue refresh for MBL trucks



MBL Food Service's delivery trucks are getting a blue makeover.

The first truck to be refreshed is turning heads, with the others in the fleet to gradually follow suit.

The move from all-white trucks with blue signage to a predominantly blue look, with photos of food, is part of the Co-op's continual refreshment.

Also prominent is the logo of the national buying group Ikon Pack, which MBL jointly founded.

## Pink Butcher gains support

MBL has lent support to AMIC's Pink Butcher campaign, subsidising specially-made pink caps and aprons for participating butcher shops in October.

Some 40 shops had already registered for the campaign before its official launch in Adelaide on May 29.

Participating butchers will decorate their shops in pink for the month of October to raise money for women and families affected by breast cancer.

"We're very pleased with the positive response so far from butchers. Others still have time to register for the campaign which is open to all butchers, not just AMIC members," says AMIC's Paul Sandercock.

Breast cancer survivor Sam DiCicco has run Pink Butcher activities at Seaford Gourmet Meats for several years (see stories pages 8 and 9).

Sam says, "So many people are effected by breast cancer. Apart from the women themselves, there are families, friends and work colleagues.

"Pink Butcher creates such a strong link between butchers and customers."

The campaign is being held on a statewide basis for the first time this year.

Five industry partners are lending support this year - Holco and D.R. Johnston Group are gold partners, MBL and APL are silver partners, and Barossa Fine Foods is a bronze partner.

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# GRAND GROWTH

From page 1

where it goes with other species to produce a high protein mixed meatmeal product.

MBL supplies a range of merchandise to Macro, which has enjoyed stunning growth and is opening international markets under founder Ray Borda.

Bruce says, "We are closely aligned to Ray. He is a good Member and he's very loyal to MBL."

"Macro's expansion is good reward for Ray's work and it's great news for MBL. We'll supply more merchandise and Marco will supply more raw materials."

Ingham and Macro announced their expansion plans within weeks of each other in May. They say their plans are well advanced and will be completed over the next year.



The dramatic expansion of Ingham will involve a \$275 million investment which will create 850 new jobs. The SA Government will contribute \$3.7 million.

Ingham is doubling capacity throughout the production chain including breeding, hatching, processing, feed production and product distribution at 15 sites in northern Adelaide and the Murraylands.

These sites include Bolivar, Edinburgh Parks, Dry Creek, Monarto, Yumali, Murray Bridge and other sites in the Murraylands.



Ray Borda on the kangaroo production line... "we're excited about expanding."

## 'Expansion of Ingham and Macro is great news, with benefits for other businesses including MBL' - MBL Chairman Bruce Carter



The primary processing plant at Bolivar will be upgraded. There will also be new breeder farms, extra contract grower farms, an expanded hatchery and possibly a new feedmill.

Ingham says the expansion will create 385 direct jobs with the company and 465 jobs with contractor firms, as well as up to 700 jobs in the construction phase.

The expansion will see Ingham double its rate of ongoing investment in Australia to more than \$300 million in the next few years, the majority of which will be in SA.

Ingham already processes 3.6 million chickens a week across Australia – one third of the nation's chicken production. SA supplies the eastern seaboard and WA.

SA customers include Foodland, Drake Supermarkets, Woolworths, Coles, Aldi, KFC, McDonald's and assorted food service companies.

"We already have a direct employment equivalent of over 1,600 fulltime employees in SA and this is expected to grow to nearly 2,000 as a result of this investment," says Ingham CEO Mick McMahon.

"We are fortunate to be in a growing business. Chicken is the most popular meat in Australia and the demand continues to grow.

"We continue to invest in that growth, creating jobs and opportunities for local companies as we do so."



Ray Borda says work will begin later this year on Macro's \$8 million factory expansion at Athol Park, where the workforce will double to 500. He expects to employ up to 300 extra people in regional areas.

"We will initially double production and then treble it within 18 months. With the latest next-generation equipment, our ambition is to eventually raise production five-fold," he says.

"We have been planning our expansion for some time. We're excited by it. We're doing all we can to be able to meet demand as it grows domestically and internationally.

"Over the past five years, more and more people have gravitated towards kangaroo for its health benefits, particularly in the last 18 months."

From humble beginnings as pet food supplier, Macro is now the world's largest wild game meat business for human consumption. While kangaroo processing dominates, Macro also supplies rabbit, hare, venison, boar and goat meat.

"We were almost pushed to extinction three or four years ago with the floods and droughts but we kept going, buying properties around the factory," Ray says.

"We plan state-of-the-art premises and machinery – you need to be as efficient as possible as Australia is the most expensive country in the world for manufacturing.

"We do a lot of research – we have eight scientists working here and we are regarded as experts in our field.

"We can also compete because we're all about value adding, producing the finished product. Packaging is so important; it's not just the quality but how it looks.

"I've just returned with ideas from China and the IFFA trade show in Germany about packaging as well as smoking and making smallgoods."



Leabrook Quality Meats took top honours in the inaugural 2015 awards.

## Awards identify 'gaps' in how shops are run

Helping identify any operational "gaps" is an aim of AMIC's Awards for Excellence for the owners of retail butcher shops.

The awards are being held for the second year, with nominations closing on June 17.

AMIC's SA Executive Director Paul Sandercock says the awards recognise businesses which are "highly professional, innovative, aspirational and sustainable."

"Judging takes into account every aspect of a modern retail butcher shop," he says.

"It's about butchers being recognised for the good things they do, and to help identify any 'gaps' in the way their business operates."

Participating butchers provide written responses to questions covering business management and planning, human resource practices, marketing and promotional strategies, and effective customer relationship management.

It takes about one hour to complete the four questions.

Judges later visit stores to verify answers, interview butchers and give feedback.

"The questions are designed to cover all areas of the operation to help butchers look at their businesses and identify aspects that need addressing or improvement," Paul says.

"One of last year's winners said the very process of answering made him think more about how he was planning and operating his business, giving him new perspectives and insights."

As well, judges will be looking for information about "the story" of the business.

Paul says, "Tell us how you plan and carry out the role of a business owner and who supported you in your business journey. Take the time to tell your story."

"Industry excellence awards are not new – other industries like tourism do it – but this is new for the retail meat industry and it can be very valuable."

The award winners will be announced at the 2016 AMIC Awards for Excellence presentation dinner on Saturday, September 17, at the Hilton Adelaide Hotel.

In the inaugural awards last year, **Leabrook Quality Meats** – run by Michael Lawrence and Luke Moody – was awarded the top Gold Standard.

Judges were particularly impressed by Luke's highly successful digital marketing strategies, including Facebook, Instagram and emailed newsletters.

Silver Standard awards were awarded to three shops:

**Mathie's Meat Shoppe** at Clare for community focus, and shop and product display.

**Seaford Gourmet Meats** for employee engagement, and costing and pricing policies.

**Windsor Meats** at Malvern for community focus, and shop and product display.

All four shops were also commended for customer service and given a large, framed certificate to display.

## Machinery: \$20,000 tax break to drop to \$1,000

Savvy butchers and other MBL customers have begun planning machinery upgrades ahead of generous tax deductions ending in mid-2017.

"Time flies, and people are aware that the current tax break is coming to an end," says MBL Machinery Manager Chris Mountford.

"A lot of people have begun assessing their machinery needs and have already spoken to us at MBL about upgrades, while others have already begun buying."

"There's definitely never been a better time to buy new machinery and other equipment from MBL."

Butchers, bakers and fishmongers are among small business operators who can now claim immediate tax deductions for every business-related purchase of up to \$20,000.

Any number of purchases for under \$20,000 each can now be made, and each can be instantly written off.

The threshold for immediate depreciation returns the old figure of \$1,000 on July 1, 2017.

The \$20,000 tax break came into effect in May 2015, with the Federal Government stating it would continue for two years before dropping back to \$1,000.

It currently applies to businesses with an aggregated turnover of less than \$2 million a year, but the government proposes to increase the threshold to \$10 million on July 1 this year.

Assets costing over \$20,000 can be depreciated in a single pool - 15% in the year of purchase and 30% in subsequent years.

On top of the tax break, MBL offers interest-free payment terms to approved Members who also receive the Co-op's annual rebate.

MBL Members and customers should consult their accountants for specific advice.

Butcher Darren Mellor rates ease of use for staff and transparency for customers as two important virtues of the impressive Brice Ezi-Scale from MBL.

He says the new equipment is performing so well, investing in it was one of his best decisions.

"It's going really well. It makes life a lot easier, that's for sure," says Darren, pictured, who has run Mellor's Gourmet Meats at Modbury Heights for 12 years.

"We find it easy to use, it prints receipts and there are less mistakes with it, but there are important benefits for customers, too.

"The screen at the front allows people to see exactly what they are purchasing and how much they are spending.

"And because it's so professional and up to date, it gives people a good impression of my business."

In purchasing his \$5,000 Ezi-Scale, Darren took up MBL's offer of up to 12 months interest-free payment terms to approved Members.

"The efficiencies and benefits mean it's paying for itself," Darren says.

Also, butchers are among small business operators who can now claim immediate tax deductions for every business-related purchase of up to \$20,000 (see story *opposite page*).

MBL Machinery Manager Chris Mountford and offsider Shane Reynolds say there is strong interest in the new Brice Ezi-Scale and Ezi-Ticket equipment.

"They are good systems, well worth the

There's never been a better time to buy great new scale and ticketing equipment from MBL

# Ezi-Scale is just the ticket, says Darren



investment. They are really good units for MBL customers," Chris says.

"They are simple to use, they are most accurate and they can do assorted tasks, including advertising specials on the screen and printing labels.

"Shane and I find out the requirements of Members and customers, then we get the supplier, Gap Solutions, to visit and go through it all."

Chris says the systems are versatile in their applications, making versions suitable from

small shops to chains.

"At Stirling Variety Meats, Chris Pfitzner has two scales - one prints labels and the other prints receipts," he says.

"Barossa Fine Foods has started rolling it out. All stores will be linked so that head office can see how each store is doing."

The ad on this page highlights the capabilities of the versatile system.

To discuss your individual needs, contact Chris or Shane at MBL on 8417 6000.



**Find out more...**  
Please call  
Chris Mountford or  
Shane Reynolds on  
(08) 8417 6000

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# NEW TRICKS

## Dennis returns to butchery to mix traditional skills with latest trends

They say you can't teach an old dog new tricks – just don't try telling that to genial Dennis Wilks (pictured).

Dennis, now in his 60s, is having the time of his life advancing Broadway Meat Store at Glenelg South by adopting butchery trends that were unheard of when he started in the 1960s.

Ready meals by an in-store cook, gluten free products and even vegetarian fare are among his arsenal today. He's also preparing to leap into social media – albeit with help from his savvy wife Libby.

"I'm loving it here. I love the challenges and I look forward to coming to work every day," says Dennis, who has the happy knack of mixing traditional skills with modern trends.

Yet three years ago when he bought his now-flourishing shop, he felt like a duck out of water after being out of the meat industry for almost 20 years.

He left the industry in 1994 when he sold the old Mitcham Meat Store and moved to Melbourne where he had the franchise of a chain of fitness centres for 12 years.

To cut a long story short, he returned to Adelaide and bought Broadway Meat Store in 2013 with his business partner from Mitcham, Phil White.

Dennis credits Phil, who has since left to take over High Street Butchery at Burnside, with helping to ease him back into butchery and catch up on trends.

"I couldn't have done it without Phil who had kept up with it all.



It took me a while to get back into the swing of things," Dennis says.

"I was tired when I left the industry in 1994 and I never thought I'd return to it – but I have, and I love it.

"After all these years, I still get a kick from happy customers saying things like, 'I've never had a better ribeye!'

"I also like to hear if something is not quite right but it doesn't happen too much. The customers here are just great; they know their food."

Dennis has recently completed refreshing the store with a new floor, new tiles and extended customer area.

"The shop was old and rustic when we took over – a bit of a

dog's breakfast. But we've got it how we want it now," he says.

Becoming a butcher was an easy decision for Dennis who, as a boy, remembers his butcher father Alec working at the Hyde Park shop of Wally Matson.

"When I was leaving school in the late 60s, Wally offered me a job and I took it. He was at North Adelaide by then – he had stores in three locations in North Adelaide at different times.

"Wally drummed it into me to get as much experience as I could; to learn as much as possible.

"So I moved around a lot, working for some of Adelaide's butchering icons – Taffy Davies, the Horscroft family, Mick Hammond, Bronte Illsley, Syd Gable then leaving at age 19 for Melbourne where I worked for 18 months." 



➤ Dennis travelled to London in his early 20s, applying for a job at a kosher Jewish butcher shop at upmarket Hampstead Gardens Suburb.

“In the job interview, I remember asking, ‘What’s kosher?’ I had no idea, but I still got the job,” he says.

“They must have liked me because I was there for three years but I only worked in winter so I could travel all around Europe and north Africa.”

Dennis kept the adventure rolling on his way home to Australia, catching a bus to Athens and going overland to Singapore via countries including Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

“Although I saw some interesting butcher shops, I didn’t learn a lot about butchery – but I learnt a lot about life,” he says.

Back in Adelaide, Dennis worked at St James Quality Cuts, Clapham, for a year and for Mick Hammond at Goodwood Quality Meats for nine months.

At 27, he opened his own shop on Belair Rd, Kingswood. He was there for five years until buying Mitcham Meat Store, in Mitcham Shopping Centre, from Maces Meat.

“I had 11 good years there until 1994, building a reputation for quality, before selling the shop to Bruce Berry who already had Bruce’s Meat in the same shopping centre,” he says.

Of his 12 years in the fitness business in Melbourne, Dennis quips, “The difference was the meat twitched instead of staying still.”



## ‘I love the challenges and I look forward to coming to work every day’ – Dennis Wilks

Returning to Adelaide five years ago, he “fiddled around a while” working in a hardware store and then thought about returning to butchery.

“I wanted a shop in a good area like Mitcham. Libby used to pass Broadway Meat Store while running and she mentioned it to me – I looked into it, one thing led to another and we bought it,” he says.

“We saw it as a good shop in a good position with a village-like atmosphere. We saw good potential for growth. It has turned out that way and it will continue to get bigger.

“We have a really nice bunch of customers. I’d know 60% of them by name.

“When we started here, the average spend per visit was \$14 to \$20. After a few months, it increased to about \$25 as customers got to trust us and value our advice.

“If someone’s buying steak, I like to ask what they plan to cook. For some things, cheaper chuck is better than fillet. It’s about building trust...”

Dennis says two big changes over the past 20 years have been the development of ready products, and catering for more people with allergies.

“We do a fair bit of cooking now. We offer things like lamb vindaloo and vegetarian lasagne – things we never offered at Mitcham,” he says.

“You now have to cater for a lot

of people with allergies. Just about all our products are gluten free.”

Dennis is helped by butchers Harry Farrington and Mark Farrelley. They make sausages, bacon and ham on the premises. The cook is Alana Stevens, and Paige Marshall serves.

Until recently, a weak link in the business involved office work

but Libby has now taken control after leaving a State Government job.

As well as looking after the books, Libby will ramp up promotions and create a presence on Facebook and Instagram.

Dennis says, “Things have changed and you’ve got to get with it.”



**Taking pride** of place at Broadway Meat Store is this timber butcher’s block which Dennis Wilks estimates must be at least 50 years old.

“It was used out back when I took over. I moved it out front. I used it but the others thought the surface was too uneven,” he says.

When renovating the shop recently, Dennis moved it across into the customer area as a prop for a product display.

He plans to research the history of his shop which he thinks it has been a butchery for “70 to 80 years.”

He has a photocopy of a photo of the shop when it was in the Turners group. Judging by the cars parked outside, he thinks the photo is from the 1940s or 1950s.

“I have a feeling my butcher father Alec worked here for a while but I don’t know for sure,” he says.

Breast cancer survivor Sam DiCicco, of Seaford Gourmet Meats, continues to be an inspiration to many people.

She has been the force behind turning the Seaford butchery pink in October for several years now, raising substantial amounts for Breast Cancer Network Australia (see story on opposite page).

As a Community Liaison Officer for BCNA, Sam also addresses public meetings, telling her story to give an insight into the challenges faced by women with breast cancer, their families and their work colleagues.

Published here is an edited version of one of her speeches.



# MY STORY **By Sam DiCicco**

My great-grandmother and grandmother both died in their 40s from breast cancer, as well as several other family members.

This prompted my GP to suggest that my mum, my younger sister and myself get tested for the BRCA1 gene - the gene commonly associated with the increased risk of breast and ovarian cancers.

It wasn't a great shock to me when our results came back - we were all BRCA1 positive.

Knowing I was positive wasn't a big deal to me at the time, in 2003. It just meant yearly mammograms and being more vigilant, so I just went on with my life.

My husband David and I were working hard to build up Seaford Gourmet Meats and raise our two daughters, Emma and Tyla.

Then in 2007, at the age of 37, I was diagnosed with Stage 2 breast cancer, and

because I was BRCA1-positive, it was highly aggressive and had already spread to my lymph nodes.

I was devastated. Immediately, life as I knew it had been turned upside down and the world felt like it had completely stopped.

Suddenly my work and family commitments had to fit around doctors' appointments, blood tests, specialists, scans, x-rays, surgery, months of chemotherapy and more surgery!

It was blur. Surely this was someone else's nightmare.

My family was devastated. David had lost his dad to cancer and was terrified that he was going to lose me as well.

It felt like I was on auto pilot, just doing what had to be done to get through each day. I was a wife, mother and boss - I didn't

have time to have breast cancer!

I had my eldest daughter doing Year 11 and my youngest daughter in Reception. So I needed to speak to teachers, coaches, principals and the mums of my girls' friends. I felt like I was repeating my story every five minutes.

But they were all amazing... school pickup rosters and sleepovers were organised, even teachers devised a dinner roster so our family had home cooked meals the whole week following my chemotherapy.

We were overwhelmed. I think I cried every time a meal was delivered.

My close friends, however, were a mixed bag. I was shocked to find some distanced themselves. This was really hurtful, after all I was still me. I was still the same!

I spent a long time being upset about it but after speaking to other women 

# Seaford's pink example

The Pink Butcher charity program in October gives butchers across SA a great opportunity to "connect" with the local community, say Sam DiCicco.

Sam, a breast cancer survivor, first turned Seaford Gourmet Meats pink in October 2013 and the response was huge, raising almost \$10,000 for support group Breast Cancer Network Australia (BCNA).

Thousands of dollars have subsequently been raised at Seaford, indirectly leading the AMIC's first statewide Pink Butcher month this October.

Sam's success at Seaford has become a template for the AMIC campaign. She is a member of the AMIC organising committee, with more than 50 butchers so far committing to "going pink" in October.

"Women love seeing their butchers in pink – we get lots of comments," Sam says.

"Our first pink October promotion was given huge support, becoming a focal point for the local community.

"We started it, and the hairdresser's, chemist, newsagent, fruit and veg shop and bakery all went pink, too. The whole



"Pretty in pink"... Seaford Quality Meats' crew in Pink Butcher month.

shopping centre looked amazing.

"On centre stage, we put down fake grass and a little white picket fence to make a field of pink cut-out women.

"There were 300 cut-out figures – people made a donation and wrote a message on a cut-out."

Some people were quite emotional, writing messages about loved ones.

"One woman put \$500 in the collection tin and she wasn't alone in her generosity," Sam says.

Because of her experience with breast

cancer, including chemotherapy, Sam can readily identify affected women.

"I can see women on chemotherapy. It's the look...the skin changes, the eyebrows go...and I'm a good picker of wigs," she says.



➤ in the same position, I found out it was pretty common. I realised it was their problem and not anything to do with something I'd done.

Surprisingly, it was people that I'd never counted on that rallied round and were amazing - phone calls, flowers, offers of help and the odd casserole.

But I wanted the most help with my girls. I wanted to try to keep things as normal as they could be for them, even though things were anything but normal.

At work, the mainly male staff were gorgeous. I had lots of well wishes and flowers, and it seemed that some of those tough guys could really write something sweet in a card when needed.

Having our own business, I was extremely lucky that I could take time off when I needed to.

I remember sitting at the hospital having chemo and chatting with some other women who had to go back to work immediately after their treatment.

I was gobsmacked! I could hardly make it back to the car!

**'At work, the male staff were gorgeous. I had lots of well wishes and flowers, and some of those tough guys could really write something sweet in a card' – Sam DiCicco**

I wanted to ring their bosses and tell them in detail what these women had just endured over the past six hours and tell them to cut them a break.

During this time, one question popped up repeatedly: "Let me know if there's anything I can do to help?" As well-meaning as it was, I wasn't in the frame of mind to stop and give them my list of things that needed doing.

Rather, someone just taking the reins and helping with something was much better.

What I needed was someone ringing in the morning and letting me know that they were dropping a meal off about 5 o'clock, or a work colleague doing the BAS.

I was self-conscious of how my looks had changed - my hair was shorter, I had gained weight from the medications and, of course, I'd lost my breasts.

I initially felt like people would be judging

me on that, but I soon came to realise that it was how I felt about myself, not what they were thinking.

In total, I ended up taking a year off work. Returning to work was a great time for me, making me feel like I had returned to some kind of normality and I had something else to focus on.

Since my diagnosis, my eldest daughter has tested positive to the BRCA gene. Emma has decided to be proactive and at the age of 20, she is contemplating having a bi-lateral mastectomy and reconstruction.

This is devastating - something that should never have to be in her life plan.

She has started a career with an Adelaide brokerage firm but now has the hard decision to make about wanting her surgery and the time off she would need against cementing her place in this firm.

I know only too well from statistics

Applying cutting-edge technologies such as x-ray and 3D imaging to processing is being touted as a way to revolutionise Australia's \$12 billion meat industry.

The new technologies can measure and differentiate meat from fat and bone before processing, say researchers at Perth's Murdoch University.

At present, animals are sold based on their weight.

Researchers say new technologies can enable more accurate animal measurement before processing and ultimately yield better quality meat.

Measurement technologies will effectively predict eating quality, ensuring retailers can provide greater consistency of quality to consumers.

Research funding has been committed by the Federal Government and a number of meat industry players, led by MLA.

Project leader Dr Graham Gardner says

# Hi-tech ways to better predict eating quality will transform industry

relying on carcass weight is now a "very crude indicator" of lean meat yield and meat eating quality.

He says the new technology for measuring and differentiating meat from fat and bone would benefit meat producers, suppliers and retailers across the country.

Dr Gardner and his team have developed a dual x-ray absorptiometer (DEXA), which uses x-rays to accurately measure and differentiate meat from fat and bone.

"This and the latest hyperspectral and 3D

digital imaging will move the industry to a true value system of accurate measurement and improved quality," he says.

"It will transform the industry's competitiveness by creating a feedback and decision making system underpinned by accurate measurement.

"Producers, processors and retailers will all benefit from the new technology.

"There will be lower commercial risk, improved meat quality and increased profits."

The Federal Government's Rural Research and Development for Profit program will contribute \$4.8 million of the \$11.5 million pledged for the four-year project.

MLA, Australian Pork Limited and the Australian Meat Processor Corporation, along with processors and suppliers Teys Australia, JBS and Australia Country Choice, will also fund the research.

Dr Gardner believes the investment is collectively worth \$100 million in efficiency savings to the meat supply industry once the new technology has been applied.

He says the Murdoch University project has a very clear aim of implementing accuracy and efficiency throughout the entire meat supply chain.

The funding will pay for the implementation of this technology across the meat supply industry.



Researchers scan carcasses using a CT scanner, which enhances x-ray scans.

## MY STORY

From page 9

that most people would have been affected by breast cancer somehow. Help is available.

At BCNA we offer information and support, not only for the women diagnosed but for their family, friends and work colleagues. Check out our website.

BCNA has a great resource called *My Journey Kit* which is designed for women

newly diagnosed with breast cancer. It can be ordered online or by phone.

Included is a fantastic brochure, *Helping A Friend Or Colleague With Breast Cancer*. It has information for what may or may not be helpful to the person returning to work.

Much depends upon the individual woman and sometimes you might need to take her lead. Avoiding her won't make the situation go away or any easier for her.

Neither will telling her a story about a friend or relative who has recently passed away - not something you need to hear just after a diagnosis.

If you're her supervisor, the best thing you can do is make her aware that you're flexible. She may still need time off for appointments or still have bad days physically.

Being flexible is really important and make sure she knows. Having to ask can make her feel awkward and inadequate to do her job.

So the best advice I could suggest is - be yourselves, be available to listen, let her know she's still an important part of her workplace and not excluded.

But even as friends and colleagues, flexibility is really the key.

# iKON pack thanks 500 Thai workers with rice

MBL and the five other businesses behind the Ikon Pack brand have donated 5kg bags of rice to Thai factory workers who produce assorted Ikon products.

The goodwill gesture was much appreciated as 5kg of rice goes a long way in Thailand, lasting an average family for three to four weeks.

"Ikon is the main export customer for PP Packaging Co Ltd, a family-owned business that employs 500 local people," says MBL Operations Manager Bexley Carman.

"The workers are on very basic wages and the owners take great care to employ hard working and conscientious people.

"The Ikon group orders large volumes of products from this factory, including foam trays which are of higher quality and cost significantly less than previously.

"We view this business as an extension of our own because we work with them on a daily basis and we are continually adding new products to be manufactured there.

"We wanted to give a little back by showing we are invested in this business and we care about them – we're not just another distant customer."

The Ikon group donated a 5kg bag of rice to each employee as they broke up for their New Year celebration, which is in early April in Thailand.

The rice was sourced in Thailand from other local businesses and the labels,



Happy recipients... workers with their 5kg bags of rice.



Ikon Pack's logo was on a sign made for the presentation.

featuring the Ikon Pack logo, were produced over there.

"The factory's owners hold a big break up party when the factory closes for the New Year holidays, giving away various gifts. It was an appropriate time to give the rice," Bexley says.

"Most of the workers go home to their families for the holidays and apparently this 5kg of rice can last three to four weeks for the average Thai family."

The Ikon Pack group consists of six organisations – one in each mainland State and one in New

Zealand – which are market leaders in supplying ingredients and materials for the red meat, poultry, seafood and allied industries.

MBL in SA is the only Co-op in the group which includes Complete Butchers Supplies (Victoria), Neild & Co (NSW), Vadals (Queensland), MBL (WA) and Dunninghams (NZ).

The six collaborated several years ago to form an association under the Ikon Pack brand, with the aim of creating a recognisable image for a range of products.

## Lamb ads really do the trick

MLA says its 2016 Australia Day lamb marketing campaign was the most successful ever.

The campaign, Operation Boomerang, featured SBS newsreader Lee Lin Chin running a rescue mission for lamb-deprived expats.

National retail lamb sales rose by 34.4% in the week preceding Australia Day, compared with the weekly average, MLA says.

Lamb sales jumped by 39.5% over the weekly average for the week of Australia Day.

"This equates to a 36.9% sales increase across the two week campaign period, by far the most successful on record," says MLA's marketing head Andrew Howie.

"This makes it MLA's most successful Australia Day campaign on record.

"The campaign video was watched over 5.5 million times, while more than 1,200 media pieces resulted in a cumulative audience of more than 404 million."



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When Mel Harley joined MBL's front counter and phone orders team 15 years ago, the Co-op's computer system was the best available.

"It was considered state of the art, designed specifically for our needs," says Mel, who is now MBL's Customer Service and Communications Supervisor.

"But such have been the advances in technology over the last 15 years, the old system now seems so incredibly basic.

"We had only one program and that was it. We didn't even have the basic Microsoft software suite.

"There was certainly no emailing – we knew nothing about it! And we couldn't handle eftpos payments back then.

"We didn't have a website, so there was no online ordering or online eftpos payments.

"Technology has certainly gone ahead in leaps and bounds."

Mel, who joined MBL after working at several retail businesses, embraced the latest technology when coordinating the creation of MBL's website in 2014.

Users have given the big thumbs-up to the slick website which makes selecting, ordering and paying for products easier than ever.

Easy to use intuitively, the "clean" design features a product catalogue and preferred product list for easier navigation and faster ordering.

It's a responsively designed website which means it can be viewed in different "sizes" – for smartphones and tablets as well as standard office computers and laptops.

This allows customers to use smartphones or tablets to browse the product catalogue, place orders and make payments anywhere and at any time.

"Butchers, for example, can use a smart phone while in the storeroom to place an order on the spot," Mel says.

As well as good display of products and easy ordering, a priority was integrating credit card payment with MBL's internal accounting system.

MBL's range now tops 7,000 products, and one of Mel's continuing jobs is sourcing product photos from suppliers and the internet, and taking photos herself for the website.

"We now have photos of the bulk of the products. Our reps use the photos as a reference tool, using their iPads to show

# "Meet the Team"

## Profiles on MBL staff members



people what products look like," she says.

"Also, we can direct people to photos on the website when we're taking phone orders.

"The next step is compiling detailed descriptions of the products."

Mel says while online ordering is definitely growing, phone ordering remains the preference for many MBL members and customers.

Through phone conversations over the years, she has become friendly with MBL members from far and wide.

"The customers are great. You get to know them over the years and it's interesting when some finally visit MBL – they can be different to what you imagined," she says.

Outside of work, Mel is a passionate foodie and she often applies her knowledge to help MBL customers.

"My food knowledge comes into play all the time, allowing me to advise customers on what products are best for their needs," she says.

"As one example, we sell four types of soy flour which are used for different purposes. I've advised customers which one they need.

"I'm interested in the science of food – I'd love to do a course about how the chemical reactions in food lead to the taste...

"I love the whole aspect of food, and sourc-

ing it can be fun. Over the summer, I enjoyed making chutneys and jams.

"I bought a box of tomatoes from the side of the road in the Barossa, so I made chutney.

"But last summer's highlight was orange jam from a tree in my backyard. It had a boom crop, with small but lovely tasting fruit.

"I squeezed the juice and made the most amazing jam – tangy and sweet at the same time, with a beautiful balance."

### Q & A

**Do you have a special interest or hobby?** I enjoy cooking and mosaics – I love breaking tiles and making pictures.

**What would you do with a spare \$50,000?** I'd build myself a commercial-style kitchen at home.

**If you were a car, what would you be?** I'd be an early 1960s Cadillac Eldorado Biarritz – total style.

**What food can't you live without?** Chocolate.

**If you could meet anyone, living or dead, who would it be?** American rock guitarist Jimi Hendrix.

**What's the best thing about working at MBL?** The customers, the people I work with, and being able to use my creative skills.