

OUTRAGEOUS!

Out-of-control electricity and gas price hikes to clobber MBL

Skyrocketing price hikes are set to blow out MBL's energy costs by several million dollars a year.

The huge energy costs will severely impact on your Co-op's bottom line – meaning reduced rebates and shares to Members.

Despite rigorously looking for better electricity and gas contracts, MBL will be further hit by the energy mess created by incompetent governments, both State and Federal.

MBL has reluctantly agreed to a new electricity contract with a price rise of about \$750,000 a year.

Since 2010, MBL's electricity costs have increased by up to 448% over the inflation rate of 13.5%.

A new gas contract is currently being negotiated, with MBL facing a price rise of between double and triple the existing contract – a slug of between \$1.2 million and \$2.4 million a year.

"Our current gas supply contract runs out at the end of December and we are looking at all options to address the threat to MBL," says CEO Warren McLean.

"We have some solid ideas that are under development."

Most of MBL's energy use is at the Wingfield and Keith rendering plants, where we solve an environmental dilemma by turning waste, which can't be used in landfill, into export products.

As tallow and meal are commodity-priced

products, MBL can't raise our prices to cover rising production costs.

The latest energy price slugs also mean MBL will be losing money on butcher shop pickups of raw material, but this service will continue.

"While the electricity price rise is a major concern, a massive issue is a gas shortage which will keep driving up prices," Warren says.

"Only two companies have been willing to give us quotes for gas – others can't buy enough gas to supply us because so much is being exported to Asia.

"The gas issue goes back to policies by the Rudd and Gillard governments in Canberra,

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Big River Pork's \$14 million expansion

Big River Pork, near Murray Bridge, will become one of Australia's biggest pork processors, with a \$14 million expansion boosting production by more than one-third.

In turn, more raw material will be supplied to MBL Proteins for conversion at our Wingfield plant into tallow and meal for export markets.

Full story pages 4 - 5

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OUTRAGEOUS!

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while the electricity situation is the creation of Labor at State level.

"Incredibly, Jay Weatherill's big plan to solve the electricity crisis is to build a power station fired by gas. Doesn't he know about the gas shortage?"

The Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) says the gas shortage will in turn risk electricity supply and security.

It warns that SA could face a difficult choice - keeping the power on, or cutting gas supplies to homes and businesses.

"If we do nothing, we're going to see shortfalls in gas and we're going to see shortfalls in electricity," says AEMO Chief Operating Officer Mike Cleary.

Australia has some of the world's largest natural gas

deposits, and a \$200 billion investment in liquefaction, pipe lines and shipping facilities has made us the world's biggest gas exporter.

Three massive new plants near Gladstone in Queensland are contracted to supply gas to Asia, led by Japan.

An unintended consequence of the gas "bonanza" created by Queensland Labor has been to create shortages at home.

And it gets worse... Asian businesses have reportedly been able to buy Australian gas at around half the price of what we pay for it.

Asia will be awash with cheap Australian gas until at least 2022 - while Australian businesses pay through the neck for limited supplies.

The gas market is fulfilling the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's "worst fears" as producers and customers struggle to cope with "the new realities forced by the \$200 billion investment project."

"The outlook for gas supply is now even worse than it was a year ago; indeed, our worst fears are being realised," says ACCC Chairman Rod Sims.

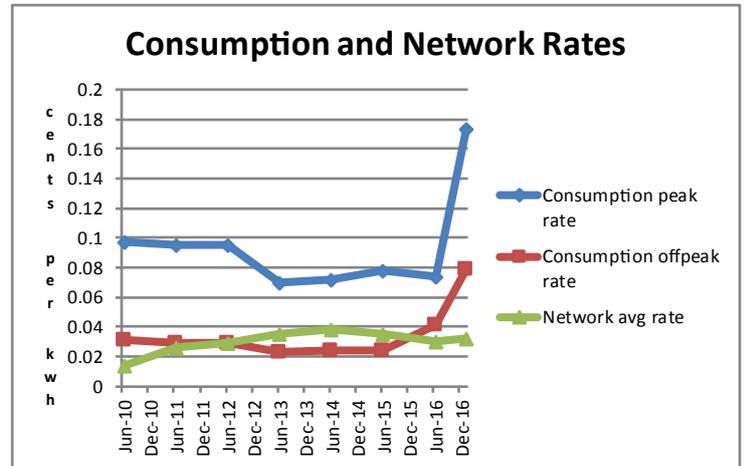
Warren McLean says, "The rapidly evolving disaster in the gas supply situation is extremely concerning.

"It stems from Queensland Government decisions back in 2008 to allow over-commitment to gas exports and failure to protect domestic supply," he says.

"Domestic users of gas are subsidising cheap Australian gas used in Japanese and Chinese households!

How MBL's electricity costs have skyrocketed since 2010

(Inflation rate since 2010 has been 13.5%)



Graph A: consumption and network rates

Peak consumption rate increase since 2010 177.5%
Off Peak consumption rate increase since 2010 253.8%
Network average rate increase since 2010 224.8%



Graph B market rates

Small-scale Renewable Energy Scheme (SRES) rate increase since 2010 455.9%
Large-scale Renewable Energy Target (LRET) rate increase since 2010 461.7%

*LRET effectively penalises conventional electricity users to create a financial incentive for wind and solar power.

"SA's electricity problem is down to the Weatherill Government's ridiculous commitment to renewable energy.

"State and Federal Governments need to mandate enough gas reserves to supply Australian businesses and households, and stop our survival being exported cheaply."

*Federal Labor's insidious carbon tax cost MBL - that is, Members - more than \$800,000 across 2012-13 and 2013-14.

The carbon tax, which was axed by the Liberals, mightily inflated MBL's electricity and gas costs at the Wingfield and Keith plants.

Next issue: How butchers are responding

MBL NEWS

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Orderly ordering

MBL's new portal is faster and easier

Ordering merchandise from MBL has been made faster and easier by our new customer ordering portal, which is already winning praise.

Easy to navigate intuitively, the portal displays the customer's last four orders made over the previous 30 days to enable fast identification of what new merchandise is needed.

Back orders – orders placed but out of stock – can also be tracked.

This allows for greater stock control, reducing both the chance of merchandise shortages and the risk of unnecessary reordering.

The portal can be used on any device – mobile phones, PCs, laptops and tablets.

Once the order is made, MBL sends an email of confirmation.

Barossa Fine Foods, Springfield Butchers and the Drake Meat Centre are among the first Members to trial the new portal; now MBL is ready to extend it to the wider Membership.

The customer ordering portal is separate from the existing ordering section on MBL's main website.

The portal has its own web address, which can be added to Favourites.

"Our main website was developed in 2014, partly with a view to attracting business from the general public," says MBL Operations Manager Bexley Carman.

"The new portal is designed for faster and easier use by our Members; it's more intuitive.

"Being able to see the four most recent orders makes compiling new orders easier and has other benefits including greater control over stock.

"The portal can be operated in areas of poor Wi-Fi reception – for example, a butcher can login while online then make an order in a storeroom and the order will automatically submit when connection to the internet becomes available.

"Importantly, the new portal needs to be used with an eye to normal delivery times."

Bexley says MBL continually aims to increase our services to Members and customers.

"The new ordering portal will take some of the time pressure

off our travelling reps, hopefully giving them more time on-site to discuss new products and answer questions," he says.

A similar portal was first developed by Vadals, a Queensland company which supplies similar merchandise to MBL.

The two businesses are among six – one from each mainland State and New Zealand – in the Ikon Pack buying group.

MBL Sales Manager Dale Rowe has been chiefly responsible for tweaking the Vadals portal to best serve the needs of MBL

and our diverse Membership.

"Barossa Fine Foods was the 'guinea pig' – the first to use it and give feedback. Only a few issues were identified, leading to refinement," Dale says.

"Springfield has been using it since November and they love it, saying it's easy to use and they have no issues.

"Drake Meat Centre has also been using it, and Drake Supermarkets are looking at it.

"It's now available to the wider Membership and I'm expecting people will be keen to use it, given all the advantages.

"It gives people much more information, put right in front of them.

"They can see exactly what they ordered, so there's no dispute over orders."

**Members wanting to use the new portal must email sales@mblsa.com.au to request a password. They need to give their customer name, membership number and the email address from which orders will be submitted.*

Big tick from Ange



MBL's new ordering portal is easy to navigate and has multiple benefits, says a Barossa Fine Foods' production assistant, Ange Stock (above).

Ange has been one of the first to use the new system for the weekly MBL orders she makes with Franz Knoll.

"There's more information displayed and this helps in different ways," she says.

"Having previous orders displayed helps with new orders, making the process faster.

"I can also see back orders so I don't reorder, and I can cross reference when I get the invoice."



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Huge pork expansion a bonus for MBL Proteins

Big River Pork's \$14 million expansion to increase production by more than one-third will increase the already substantial flow of pork offal to MBL's Wingfield rendering plant.

MBL Proteins converts the waste into pork tallow and pork meal which are both exported, mainly to the US and Canada.

Already, MBL collects up to three truckloads daily of pork offal from Big River Pork.

MBL purchased a B-double loader in 2015 to collect up to 22 tonnes of waste in each trip to the Big River Pork plant near Murray Bridge. This loader usually makes two return trips daily.

CEO Warren McLean says MBL has secured contracts for the supply of rendering material from the expanding chicken and pork industries.

Boning rooms were once a major source of

rendering material but these have dwindled, partly because retail butchers are buying more meat in cartons.

"Adelaide's traditional rendering supply base has been shrinking for a few years – there's almost no boning rooms left anymore," Warren says.

"To protect our assets (rendering plants), MBL has secured contracts with expanding chicken and pork processors to supply available rendering material.

"Big River Pork's expansion is significant and it will benefit MBL."

(MBL supplies Big River Pork with assorted merchandise, from disposable gloves and aprons to carcass bags and garbage bags).

Big River Pork says the plant's expansion, due to be completed in 2019, will increase the number of pigs it processes from about 11,000 to 16,000 weekly.

It will enable Big River Pork to increase its production to meet a new long term supply agreement as consumer demand for pork continues to grow.

Big River Pork will become one of Australia's largest pork processors with 330 fulltime equivalent workers. 



➤ The company is already a major employer in the Murraylands, with a current workforce of 190 fulltime equivalent positions.

The expansion, supported by a \$900,000 State Government grant, will create an extra 140 fulltime jobs and an estimated 46 jobs in the construction phase.

There will be new chillers, new dry goods stores, new carparks, a new water system and extensive new site works around the plant.

Work on two new carcass chillers, adding to the six already operating on the site, began several months ago. The first new workers started in March.

The South Australian Centre for Economic Studies estimates Big River Pork's expansion will boost the State's gross product by \$79 million over the next 10 years, in 2015-16 values.

Big River Pork Chairman Geoff Hampel says, "It's exciting times for the company and the region."

"The expansion's great news not only for the company and our employees but for new employees, the region and the economy," he says.

He says the expansion will benefit a range of stakeholders including local farmers, transport operators, feed suppliers – and MBL.



Now *this* is a vacuum packer... everything's on a big scale at Big River Pork.

'Big River Pork's expansion is significant and it will benefit MBL' – Co-op CEO Warren McLean

Big River Pork was established in 2001 and has four shareholders - Auspork, BE Campbell, George Weston Foods and Hurstbridge Abattoirs.

It manages pork production from farm to retail, boasting a purpose built, state of the art processing facility at Brinkley, on the outskirts of Murray Bridge.

The location – an hour from Adelaide via the freeway – is ideal. Pigs from Victoria can be easily accessed and finished products sent interstate by road.

"Over the years the shareholders of Big River Pork have increased their volumes and they've gained new business in various customers around Australia," Geoff says.

"That business has grown to a level that we will have an additional 3,500 animals coming through the plant by the end of the year and that product will be going through the eastern seaboard.

"The additional volume gives us a chance to reduce our costs, so we can be more competitive in the marketplace.

"The expansion will also lead to increased efficiency, allowing South Australian pork to be priced more competitively."

Big River Pork acts as a service provider to the four shareholders and other clients – the pork is boned or sent to clients as carcasses for further processing.

"We process for many of the large pork companies including Don, KR Castlemaine, Sunpork, Auspork, BE Campbell and major retailers throughout Australia," Geoff says.

"Locally, we process product for companies like Barossa Fine Foods, Conroys, and Holco.

"The expansion will enable us to increase



Operations Manager of MBL Proteins, Gary Deutrom, with a B-double loader which can collect 22 tonnes of waste in each trip to Big River Pork.

Continued page 10

New shop's top notch

'This is the future of butchery'

Curious butchers are beating a path to Corey Smelt's impressive new Murray Bridge shop which adds cafe culture to butchery.

The Top Notch shop has high visual appeal, with chic black wall tiles, a long and well-lit display, and a cold room where customers can choose vacuum packed meats.

A barista will soon join, for a small cafe with outdoor tables.

A chef has been hired to prepare breakfast and lunch fare, from toasties and gourmet meat pies to Black Angus steak picked by customers from the main display.

The chef, Brad Townsend, formerly of the Mannum Club, is giving cooking tips to customers and instructing the butchers in the basics.

"For the first few weeks, we're running it just as a butcher shop before slowly transitioning into hot food followed by the coffee side," says Corey, 42, who



Corey Smelt outside his new shop... "People want more; we're giving a wider experience."

operates the business with wife Karen.

"We want to move slowly at first to get it right."

In a measured, matter-of-fact

tone, Corey says, "This is the future of butchery.

"This is different – and retail butchers must be different to move forward.

"Butcher shops will need to be more than just butcher shops. People want more; we're aiming to give a wider experience.

"A number of butchers are already coming here to see what I'm doing and to pick my brains, with a view to doing something similar."

The shop had been open for only a week when MBL News visited in early March. Several meat industry players were among a constant flow of customers.

"We've had a very good response in the first week. The number of customers has been doubling day by day as word spreads," Corey says.

"Apart from being on Facebook,

we don't advertise. Being on the main road, more people are seeing us."

To their credit, Corey and Karen designed the impressive shop themselves with help from internet research and advice from the operators of Standom's in-store cafe at Seaton.

The shop is based on cafe butcheries which are popular in Europe, especially in Germany.

It's the culmination of hard work going back 27 years to when Corey began his apprenticeship at age 15 at Foodland West Lakes.

He later worked in butcher shops before spending 10 years as a sales manager at Poultry Boss, where he found inspiration to venture into wholesaling.

"I bought a butcher shop with a little wholesaling and then I built a warehouse," he says.



Coffee, anyone? Karen Smelt sets up the coffee area.



➤ The Top Notch warehouse, on the Princess Hwy at Murray Bridge, has been successfully operating for 10 years, supplying butcher shops, restaurants and hotels.

“We don’t do time consuming things – I buy things like sausages from butchers I supply,” he says.

“I ask what their best sellers are and buy them. Examples include sausages from Brighton and Stirling, and patties from Balhannah.

“Early on, local people kept arriving at the warehouse to buy meat – I was basically selling out of my fridge so I decided to add a retail area which still operates.

“I then opened a butcher shop in Murray Bridge. I’ve just closed that leased shop, opening this new freehold one on Adelaide Rd, in a more prominent location.”

Corey continues to be based at the warehouse while Karen has an office at the new shop, which was formerly a poultry shop.

He says, “This site is zoned only for a chicken or butcher shop, and it would cost about \$70,000 to have the zoning changed.

“A laundromat and a dentist wanted to buy it but the deals fell through because of the zoning issue.

“I always knew about this shop, I bided my time and we ended up getting it dirt cheap.

“I did the demolishing work inside in my spare time and I did all the outside rendering. I was in no hurry as I had a lease to run on the other shop.

“It has taken us a year and along the way customers followed our progress on Facebook.”

Corey says he spent about \$200,000 on the fit-out. “I got all the equipment from MBL – well over \$40,000 worth including \$10,000 on Ezi-Scale tills,” he says.

“Being able to own the freehold of a shop is a big thing for me. It’s a no-brainer. Before, I was paying someone else’s mortgage.

“You can’t justify doing a major fitout like this if you don’t own the building.”

The seed for a cafe butchery was planted years ago when Corey hungered for a hot pork roll with crackling for lunch, only to realise Murray Bridge did not have a carvery.



A photo of cattle runs the full length of the cool room where shoppers can choose vacuum-packed products.

“I said if I ever built a butcher shop, I’d do a cafe with hot meat rolls. I went on the net and saw what was being done overseas,” he says.

Brad the chef was hired by Corey three months ago and his cooking advice to customers is

proving a real asset.

“For the first few months, we have been teaching Brad how to be a butcher and he has been teaching our butchers how to cook,” Corey says.

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Pat Conroy

Andrew Conroy

CONTINUING TRADITION

On the eve of reaching 60 unbroken years as an MBL Member, it's "steady as she goes" for Conroy's Smallgoods.

Conroy's joined MBL on April 15, 1957, and is the Co-op's oldest continuing Member, ahead of Blue Ribbon Smallgoods which joined 52 years ago, in 1965.

And the tradition will continue, say the Conroy brothers Pat, 76, and Andrew, 73, who have devoted all their working lives to the Bowden institution.

"Our plan is to continue in the foreseeable future," says Pat, who in 1958 joined the business which evolved from his father Bob's city butcher shop.

"Housing development is encroaching on the factory but we have no plans to stop making smallgoods here."

Andrew, who joined the business in 1961, says, "It's steady as she goes."

Two of Andrew's adult offspring – son Sam who manages production and daughter Jane who's in marketing – are heavily involved in the business.

"They see their future here," Andrew says.

The strong bond between Pat and Andrew has been the foundation for the continuing success of Conroy's, which employs about 80 people.

"Conroy's success can largely be put down to the extraordinary relationship between

Conroy's marks 60 big years as an MBL Member

two brothers who have worked so well together over the years," Pat says.

"We respect each other's point of view and we enjoy what we do."

Andrew says, "Part of the enjoyment has been the strong relationships we've formed

with staff and customers over the years.

"We've had a strong relationship with MBL which has always served us well. It has been a happy relationship."

Pat says, "We greatly value our strong association with MBL." 



> While Conroy's Smallgoods is MBL's oldest Member at 60 years, the family's association with the Co-op goes back more than 70 years.

RL "Bob" Conroy ran a butcher shop in Rundle St, Adelaide, in the 1940s. MBL's records show that Bob and his mother Mary Ann were admitted as Members on December 2, 1946.

This business was the forerunner to Conroy's Smallgoods which began in a factory at Richmond in the 1950s before shifting to Bowden in the 1970s.

The Conroy's story started in Broken Hill where Bob's father, PK Conroy, opened a butcher shop in 1902 before purchasing another six shops, an ice works and a piggery.

Bob moved from Broken Hill to Adelaide, with Conroy's records showing he purchased a butcher shop at 154A Rundle St and began trading on May 1, 1940. He joined MBL six years later.

This shop became too small, and bigger premises were purchased next to Harris



Displayed in Conroy's foyer is the mounted cleaver presented to Bob Conroy as MBL's oldest Member during our Centenary celebrations in 2005.

COMMENT **By MBL Chairman Bruce Carter**

Over the decades, Conroy's has always been an excellent and highly valued Member of the Co-op.

Conroy's has been an important Member in terms of merchandise purchases – their support to MBL has been significant and reliable for years.

The family has also contributed to MBL at Board level – Bob, who was very progressive in his day, served as a Director for many years as did Pat, while Andrew was an Alternate Director when Pat was unavailable.

On the retail side, Bob built such a reputation for quality that many butch-

ers would only ever buy Conroy's bacon and ham, and Conroy's bung fritz was famous.

The Conroys have always been tireless workers with a strong work ethic. Their word has always been their bond, and their business integrity has always been second to none.

At MBL's Centenary celebrations in 2005, we presented Bob with a mounted and inscribed cleaver as MBL's oldest Member.

Now, the reaching of 60 unbroken years as an MBL Member is another milestone for both Conroy's and the Co-op.

Scarfe's in 1942. A large rear room allowed for the making of smallgoods, led by hams and bacon.

With the influx of European migrants after World War II, Bob saw an opportunity to supply growing demand for continental meats, employing a German sausage maker in 1949.

Bob built a smallgoods factory at Richmond to start Conroy's Smallgoods in 1954. He initially supplied his Rundle St shop and other delicatessens and continental food stores.

MBL's records show that Conroy's Smallgoods was approved as a Member on April 15, 1957.

The third generation – Pat and Andrew –

joined the business in 1958 and 1961 respectively. They learnt about smallgoods from masterful Cecil Chapman.

"Cecil was a man of great knowledge and expertise in his field," Pat recalls.

The Rundle St shop was closed in 1963 to allow concentration on manufacturing. Conroy's has been at its present Bowden home since 1976.

Bob died in 2006, aged 93, leaving a lasting legacy. He is remembered for his vision and innovation.

One example of being ahead of his time was turning part of his small Rundle St shop into a sliced meat deli – he was value adding at

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The Conroy family as featured in an MBL newsletter in 1996... (from left) Bob, Pat, Andrew, Sam, Tim, Robert and Jane.

Big River Pork expands

production to meet a new long term supply agreement, as consumer demand for pork continues to grow."

He says Australian pork is of high quality and has an envied "clean and green" reputation.

"It's hard to compete with exporting pork at the moment because there's some very cheap pork coming out of places like the USA, Brazil, Denmark and Canada," he says.

"While the expansion will mainly service growth in the domestic market, there is room for further increases in exports into Asia."

Big River Pork airfreights between 700 and 900 carcasses a week to Singapore, and exports frozen pork offal to other Pacific rim countries, including China.

Geoff says shipments to Singapore had already grown significantly in the past 18 months.

"Singapore has a limited capacity to take meat but we would hope that would continue to improve," he says.

"We are very confident that the export markets will grow as we go forward, with

opportunities in other countries in the region."

Geoff says Big River Pork's growth was the result of much hard work.

"I thank and congratulate everyone at Big River Pork for their skills and dedication in growing this company and positioning us for this major expansion.

"We are a proud company – proud of our culture, our history, our product and this state – and we look forward to continuing to grow."

New shop's top notch

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"We're developing menus that range from a Big Breakfast with a Mississippi sausage and the rest, to pies and pasties with real meat.

"I think the idea of people being able to select their own steak and have Brad cook it for them to eat here will have good appeal.

"I see there being several targets – older people in the mornings for coffee and maybe a toastie, tradies at lunch for maybe hot pork with vegies and an iced coffee, and after school mums and dads wanting meat for dinner."

The new shop is managed by butcher Cameron Eckermann, who managed Corey's old shop for nine years.

"I've noticed that 70% of customers here are new customers," he says.

Corey (pictured right) and Karen are rightly proud of their two Top Notch entities which have a total of 12 employees.

"We started from scratch and we've made a lot of mistakes, but we've kept going to get where we are today," Corey says.



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Conroy's 60 years with MBL

a time when the term hadn't been coined.

During the lunch period, venetian blinds were lowered across part of the shop to create a deli section offering bread, butter and smallgoods to city workers and shoppers.

Pat says, "Dad foresaw that migrants coming to Australia would want a taste of home, so he provided a range of continental smallgoods such as mettwurst and salami.

"Then in the early 1950s, he visited the US with a group of butchers and saw packaged

meat being sold in self-service shops.

"He implemented this here but not fully successfully – his shop was about 50% traditional service and 50% pre-packed. Nevertheless, he was ahead of his time.

"Meat was placed on trays and wrapped in cellophane – I recall four chops on cellophane-covered trays.

"But not everyone wanted to buy meat this way... it was a fair few years ago; supermarkets

hadn't been established and Adelaide was very much a conservative place, with ladies shopping in white gloves.

"Times changed and suburban shopping centres became popular, so Dad closed his Rundle Mall shop and operated the factory at Richmond."

Pat says the biggest single change to face Conroy's has been the rise of supermarkets at the expense of independent butchers.

That said, two of Conroy's

biggest customers today are IGA and Foodland.

Andrew says, "As far as retail changes are concerned, change is a constant in life and you have to adapt."

Despite the advent of continental smallgoods, Andrew says traditional hams and bacon remain Conroy's biggest sellers by weight.

"Bung fritz, of course, has always been a big product for us. It remains popular with kids."



The fresh new faces of retail butchering

Young butchers are jumping aboard the new Apprentice Butchers of SA group, as evidenced by this photo.

It was taken at Bruce's Meat, Mitcham, where the group had its first of many "butcher shop tours" in March, with 17 attending the event.

An aim of the group, which was formed late last year, is to help young butchers and apprentices improve skills and broaden their knowledge through mutual support.

"I was stoked at the good attendance," says group founder Luke Moody.

"Trevor Hill showed us through, speaking about the shop and its workings. He gave us a good insight into how his business operates.

"Things started quietly but Trevor's personality and passion for the industry broke the ice. It turned out to be a great night.

"We plan a shop tour or a development event once a month, and we hope to get good numbers as word spreads."

MBL, AMIC and training organisations are lending support to the group.

Luke, who completed his apprenticeship in 2015, formed the group as a way for young butchers to network and support each other.

He plans to help run the group in the short term, expecting to step back as other young butchers become involved and take control.

SA had 192 apprentice butchers in June, 2016, according to the Department of State Development, but apprentice numbers are falling.

The number of apprentice butchers "signing on" has dropped by an average of 17 a year for each of the last five years.

The new networking group is for young people as a whole – apprentices, newly qualified butchers and school students looking to enter the industry.

As well as shop tours and development nights, the group will have a strong social media presence for interaction at any time and to include country apprentices.

"Digital delivery will be vital. We're all time poor but it's easy to communicate on Facebook, Instagram and by emails," Luke says.

"We will have 'real world' meetings but Facebook and Instagram will allow people to get to know each other rather than going into a meeting cold.

"Until now, there has been no or little connection between apprentices through the on the job apprenticeship process. You can feel isolated.

"But today thanks to social media, we can easily communicate and, with agreed agendas and programs, we can help each other."



[/ApprenticeButchersSA](#)



[/Apprentice_Butchers_sa](#)

The pies have it for winter

Butchers looking to set their value-added "menus" for winter should note new research into demand for meat pies.

Roy Morgan Research says the nation's biggest pie fans live in South Australia where 52.8% of us enjoy pies.

Nationally, some 50% of Australians who live in rural areas are partial to pies, compared with 45.6% of city dwellers.

Australians' love for meat pies is stronger than ever – 47.5% of people like eating pies compared with 42.6% in 2013.

This translates to almost one out of every two Australian adults enjoying meat pies, and the number is growing.

While the research was commissioned for a major pie manufacturer, the findings are interesting for butchers who can offer gourmet varieties using their own quality meat.

Pies made by Adelaide butchers include lamb rojan josh, Black Angus and Guinness, lamb with rosemary and mint, beef stroganoff, steak and kidney, chicken with leek and bacon, and red wine beef.

Some butchers are also venturing into shopmade sausage rolls which are traditional at butcher shops in England, along with pasties.

Qualified chefs have also been bought into the pie equation in recent years, led by Alan Bence who won multiple pie awards for Richard Gunner's Feast! shops.

His offerings have varied but have included Coorong Angus beef and kidney; Pure Suffolk Moroccan lamb; chicken, buttered leek & roast pumpkin, and wild venison, mushroom & fresh herbs.

Six years ago, an American handed Franz Knoll a bag of smokey seasoning with the suggestion he should use it in a sausage.

“He missed smokey sausages from his homeland, so he got some seasoning from the US and asked me if I could develop a smokey sausage,” Franz says.

“It was a nice idea. The seasoning had a smokey, cajun base from America’s south. After I found a good quality smoke flavour, I looked to base a sausage around it.”

Franz, loving a challenge, experimented before developing a smokey sausage with medium ground pork, a hint of capsicum and generous cheese.

“The smoke flavour is nice. I don’t like too much chilli. There’s some cajun, and when we packed some cheese into it, the combination worked well,” he says.

Franz called his new creation Mississippi. People loved it, and it quickly became a big seller before performing well in SA Sausage King competitions.

Production of the Mississippi has reached up to 600kg weekly at Barossa Fine Foods, where it has overtaken beef as the biggest selling sausage.

Now the Mississippi has kicked another major goal for Franz, winning the Gourmet section at the national Sausage King finals in Hobart.

It was Franz’s third national crown after wins in 1999 and 2001, making him the third South Australian in AMIC’s Sausage King Hall of Fame after the late Stan Ciechanowicz and Clare’s Jason Mathie.

Franz has won more than 1,000 national and State competition trophies and medals,

Franz enters Sausage King’s Hall of Fame after a 16-year wait

but he clearly takes special pride in his Hall of Fame honour, which closely follows his naming as an AMIC Master Butcher along with Wilson Lowe and Paul Suleyman.

But Franz had to endure a long wait to win his third national Sausage King title to



Delighted... Franz Knoll's win in Hobart for his gourmet Mississippi sausage clinched his place in the Hall of Fame.

qualify for the Hall of Fame.

“It took 16 years – we had four second placings in the last four years but getting the third win seemed to be evading us,” he says.

“We’ve been fine tuning our whole range (of sausages) and, as part of this, we revised the Mississippi – and it won in Hobart!”

Franz says every batch of the same type of sausage varies because the quality of the ingredients, led by the meat, can vary.

“It’s like a vintage – every batch is different. So much comes down to the ingredients,” he says.

Franz will be inducted in the Hall of Fame at AMIC’s Awards of Excellence dinner in Adelaide on August 12.

Under AMIC rules, he will be banned for entering the Gourmet section of any level of Sausage King for the next two years.

Other South Australians to perform well in AMIC’s national awards were:

Mick Lamond, of Collins Court Butcher, Mt Gambier, second in Traditional Pork.

Reece Jeffree, of Bruce’s Meat, third in Apprentice of the Year.

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