

Chicken's soaring popularity leads to MBL further securing the Co-op's future with an \$8 million rendering plant at Wingfield dedicated to poultry

Full story pages 4-7



MBL CEO Warren McLean with the three-stage waste heat evaporator at the new low-temperature poultry plant, which can process 15 tonnes of offal an hour.

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Less service can be more

An Adelaide Hills butcher says average customer spend per visit has increased by about \$6 after he added a self-service cabinet to his shop.

Taking a leaf from supermarkets, Balhannah Butchery's Aaron Reddy installed the three metre long chilled cabinet to appeal to customers wanting to "grab and go."

The cabinet displays an evolving array of products – from roasts and pulled pork to sausages and bacon – in varied packaging, much of it vacuum sealed.

Traditional personal service and expert advice remain the shop's cornerstones, with the self-service cabinet adding an extra dimension.

The strong level of positive response has been rewarding and a little surprising for Aaron, 39, a multiple SA Sausage King winner who has operated at Balhannah for 12 years.



Adding a new dimension... Balhannah's Aaron Reddy with a section of his 3m self-service cabinet.

"Our number of customers is unchanged but the average extra spend is up by around \$6 per customer," he says.

"We wanted to appeal to the grab and go market, showcasing meal solutions for busy people and enticing them to buy, now or at another time.

"Some people just come in, make their selection and pay for it but the display is also appealing to others who are waiting to be served by one of us.

"They can browse at what we have on display and they might have put two products, as extra purchases, on the counter by the time we get to serve them in the traditional way."

Aaron says the new cabinet brings more products from "out back" into view.

"People are seeing and buying products which we have always had but couldn't always display - some customers may not have known that we had them," he says.

"For example, butterflied lamb

is now packaged and people are buying it because they can now see it and it's ready to go.

"We've always done butterflied lamb but customers had to ask for it and they'd have to wait for us to get it ready. It would only take a few minutes, but this would put some people off.

"So in a way, the new cabinet allows us to 'educate' customers about our range.

"It (packaging) works for people who buy early in the week but don't want to eat what they buy until the weekend.

"Our bacon sales have always been strong but now (with vacuum packaging) people are buying extra to have in the fridge.

"From our point of view, the cabinet is easy to stock, usually being filled on Mondays and Thursdays with daily top-ups as required."

While the addition of self-serve

has largely been embraced, Aaron says some customers were initially wary.

"Some shied away (from the cabinet) but they became interested when they realised we were displaying our own products which had been packed fresh," he says.

Aaron, who did his butchery apprenticeship at Foodland, says he is open to adapting some supermarket selling techniques while still preserving traditional service and expert advice.

"I started in supermarkets so I suppose the supermarket style of butchery remains at the back of my mind," he says.

"Supermarkets do a lot of smart things. We don't have to copy them, but some of their ideas can apply (to independent butcher shops).

"My new cabinet works for me, making use of what was really a waste of space."

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Pink Butcher returns p10



The rising popularity of pork is reflected in the growth of Adelaide pork specialist O'Briens Meat Wholesalers, which is owned and run by brothers Ben (pictured) and Adam Cormack.

Starting from scratch 25 years ago, the brothers have built a proud reputation for quality, expanding their premises several times along the way. Their story is on pages 8 and 9.

PORK OUTSELLS BEEF

As chicken sales keep surging, pork overtakes beef and lamb

For the first time, Australians are eating more pork than once-dominant beef, which has now slid to number three in the meat sales pecking order.

Chicken continues to increase its dominance as Australia's biggest selling meat, popular for its lower price and cooking versatility, according to a Federal report.

Both chicken and pork have never been more popular, enjoying sustained growth as price-conscious consumers switch from more expensive beef and lamb.

Beef sales are at a record low, according to the latest statistics by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES).

ABARES says the average Australian consumes 45.3kg of chicken a year, ahead of pork (27.9kg), beef (27.6kg) and lamb (10.5kg).

Although pork edges out beef by only 300g, the recently released report is dated 2016 and is based on data from 2015, leading to belief that beef and lamb have slid further behind in 2017 due to substantial price rises in the past two years.

NATIONAL MEAT CONSUMPTION

Average amount consumed per person

Chicken	45.3kg
Pork	27.9kg
Beef	27.6kg
Lamb	10.5kg

Source: Newly released ABARES data from 2015

The 27.9kg of pork which the average Australian consumed in 2015 is more than double the amount of 11.7kg in 1975.

Comparatively, beef's 27.6kg in 2015 is a massive slide from 62kg in 1975. Beef consumption peaked in 1977, with a whopping per person average of 70.3kg.

Chicken's growth – from just 4.4kg in 1960 – has been dramatic. In the 1970s, chicken consumption ranged from 13kg to 18kg per person per year and has risen to a record 45.3kg in 2015.

Changes over the 10 years from 2005 to 2015 further underline the trends.

In that time, chicken consumption leapt by 7.6kg and pork rose by 4.5kg, while beef dropped by 10kg and lamb fell by 3.5kg.

In 2014, ABARES forecast chicken to increasingly continue as the most consumed meat and to hit 49.2kg in 2020 – roughly double of beef's 25kg.

But if the latest stats are a guide, chicken will smash 50kg well before 2020. Australia is already the world's third largest consumer of chicken after Malaysia and Jamaica.

The rise of chicken and pork at the expense of beef and lamb has affected the entire meat industry, from retail butchers amending display space to MBL adjusting our rendering operations.

MBL has secured contracts for the supply of rendering material from expanding chicken and pork factories, and has built a dedicated poultry plant at Wingfield (*full story starts page 4*).

While chicken has dominated, pork's rise to number two spot has surprised many as the sales battle has largely been portrayed as chicken versus beef.

Two years ago, there was a relative "shortage" of pork but more pork is now

Continued page 12



Warren McLean inspects the internal viewing window of the Haarslev dryer at the new plant.

MBL ADVANCES WITH CHICKEN

New poultry rendering plant heads \$9 million investment to secure your Co-op's future

MBL has responded to chicken's soaring popularity by unveiling a new \$8 million rendering plant dedicated to poultry at Wingfield.

At the same time, the Co-op is investing \$1 million to expand poultry processing at the Keith plant to increase production of feather meal and blood meal.

The developments, designed to further secure the Co-op's future, come after MBL secured long term contracts with leading poultry processors for the supply of raw material.

MBL estimates the poultry industry has grown by about 70% since 2011.

Wingfield's state of the art poultry plant, which has begun operating, is extremely energy efficient, incorporating a number of features to temper rising electricity and gas prices.

Built as a turnkey project by the huge Danish company Haarslev, the new plant will more than double MBL's poultry processing capacity as chicken sales continue to soar (see consumption table page 3).

Latest figures show Australians are eating an average of 45.3kg of chicken a year but this is conservatively predicted to top 50kg by 2020 – double the consumption rate of beef. 



The new container loading facility and poultry tallow storage tank.



The new plant's imposing three stage waste heat evaporator.

➤ Chicken processors are moving to meet demand. Ingham has begun a \$275 million program to double its chicken production in South Australia.

MBL CEO Warren McLean says, "Because the poultry industry has grown at a rapid rate, we had to jump in and grab an opportunity to shore up the future of the Co-op.

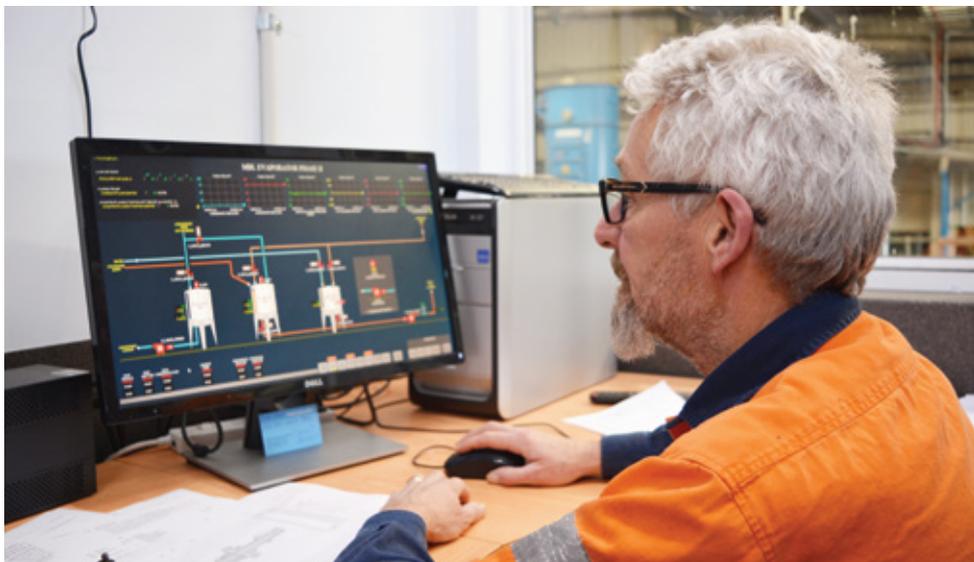
"Had we not acted, Ingham may well have built its own rendering plant and we would have lost the opportunity – now we're

Ingham's processor of choice."

Warren says the key to MBL deciding to invest \$8 million in the new plant was the securing of raw material supply contracts.

"The payback of the plant is matched against the first five years of contracted work. At end of the first five-year contract, Members will own a modern, efficient poultry plant," he says.

Continued page 6



The performance of the plant is observed in the control room.



BACKGROUND

Historically, the Wingfield plant converted all raw materials into just two products – tallow, and one kind of generic meat meal which contained many different species, including chicken.

Then in 2009, Coles decided against buying chicken that had been given feed containing any recycled avian (bird) content.

Our generic meal didn't comply, and MBL had to rise to the challenge or be left behind in the marketplace. Our future was at stake.

We now needed the ability to separately process various raw materials into different products to meet our customers' requirements.

But before we could commit to expanding our rendering capabilities, we had to secure the long term supply of more raw material.

We were already being supplied by a mid-size Adelaide poultry processor and in 2010 we held fruitful negotiations with Ingham about securing further supply of poultry material.

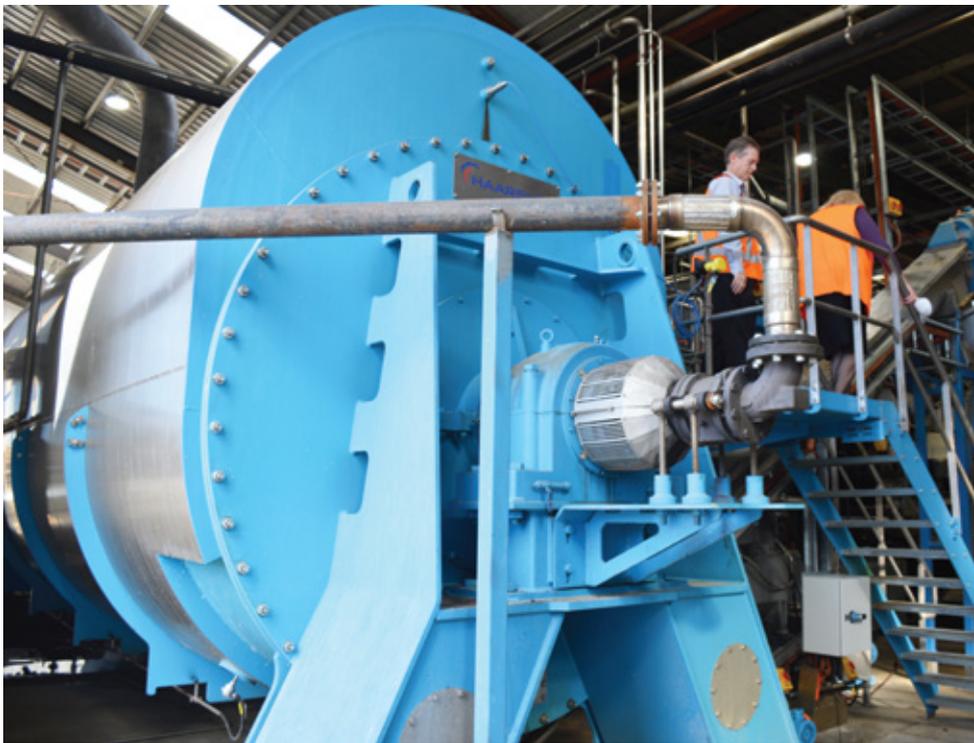
As a result, MBL committed to spending what turned out to be a little over \$4 million to effectively build a second plant.

We chose a Low Temperature rendering system from Flo Dry Engineering, an Auckland company, to operate in parallel with the existing High Temperature plant.

The new plant was commissioned in 2011, giving us a plant which would process chicken separately.

But since 2011, the poultry industry has increased rapidly - probably increasing in volume by 70%.

MBL again needed to expand, moving to secure our future by building Wingfield's third plant, dedicated to poultry.



The huge Haarslev dryer.



Reconditioned boiler with economiser on the stack.

From page 5

The builders of the new Wingfield plant, Haarslev, manufactures processing equipment for the meat, fish, pet food, oil and biofuel industries around the world.

Haarslev built the MBL plant to a configuration it used for the first time. Some equipment, including a three phase decanter, are new to Australia.

Installation took less than four months, managed by Haarslev's engineers from Denmark and New Zealand. MBL staff were then trained how to operate the plant, taking control after one week.

Warren says, "It's an extremely energy efficient low temperature plant. We use waste heat, under vacuum, to extract protein – we're using energy we've already paid for.

"We use mechanical means to remove most of the liquid from raw material rather

than boiling it off, greatly reducing heat energy usage.

"The new plant uses 1.9 GJ of gas per one tonne of raw material compared with 6.3 GJ at the old high temperature plant.

"Raw material is pumped rather than mechanically transported.

"The material is treated for five minutes at 96 degrees – this short period saves energy and the product is not exposed to high levels of heat.

"Also, the plant is stacked up so we can use gravity to move the product."

MBL now operates three plants at Wingfield and one at Keith.

The Co-op is investing \$1 million in high grade equipment to expand feather processing at Keith.

MBL does all its blood and feather process-



New load-out with height adjustable retractable load-out screw.

ing at Keith, using raw material from Adelaide's chicken processors.

"We had to expand to cater for increasing supply. There's now a bottleneck at Keith - we're presently processing there seven days a week, 20 hours a day," Warren says.



LTP 1 offal receiving bins.



The new offal receiving pit holds 130MT.

Here, we reprint a report on the new Wingfield plant from *Rendering Circles*, the newsletter of the Australian Renderers Association.

It appeared under the headline “**MBL Installs Unique Haarslev Plant**” and contains detail for the technically minded.

Haarslev has installed and commissioned a novel rendering plant at MBL Wingfield.

MBL Operations Manager Gary Deutrom said the plant is a combination of what MBL knows works combined with the best advice about additional technologies.

The innovative aspect of the plant is that it combines the latest generation MLTR (MIRINZ low temperature rendering) render vessel with a twin-screw press, tri-canter, disc dryer and waste heat evaporator.

The plant, intended to process poultry material, has been installed next to the existing Flo-Dry poultry plant.

MBL CEO Warren McLean explained that raw material can be divided between the two plants to produce single species products as required.

The design capacity of the plant is 12 tonne of raw material per hour based on the evaporation capacity of the drier, but with attention to raw-material water content and other tweaking, Warren expects to process up to 15 tonne per hour.

This is on top of MBL's existing poultry processing capacity of 7.5 tonne per hour.

The new installation starts with a 130 tonne offal bin in a fully enclosed receival area.

Warren said the new raw material handling facility combined with the existing receival means that two trucks can unload at the same time; there will be no delays in getting raw material out of the trucks.

The bins can feed either the new plant or the existing Flo-Dry plant.

Raw material is pumped to the grinders through a 28 tonne per hour lamella pump. The material passes over a metal detector, through a super grinder and is pumped to the render vessel.

From the 15 tonne per hour render vessel, all material passes over a rotary screen for primary separation of solids and liquid phase.

The solids are fed to a Haarslev MS49FK twin screw press. The expressed liquid phase from the twin screw press joins the free run liquid from the screen.

The liquid phase is then separated into

The technical side

solids, oil and stick water through a GEA three-phase decanter.

The decanter is GEA's new generation CF6000 MeatMaster model and is the first in Australia for this application.

Oil from the decanter goes through a polisher centrifuge to remove any traces of solids and the decanter stick water goes through a three stage waste heat evaporator.

Some stick water is bled off to the render vessel to help keep the material in the vessel well fluidised.

Meanwhile, concentrate from the WHE joins solids from the press and three phase decanter at the feed to the disc drier. Dried solids go to a solids bin and existing mill.

The rendering method is not the only innovation. Drainings from the raw material

The innovations have extended to a re-conditioned boiler. The boiler stack is fitted with an economiser that pre-heats the feed water to 80C. More efficient and quieter Weishaupt burners have also been added to all four boilers.

The new plant has more than doubled the poultry processing capacity at MBL's Wingfield site.

It has raw material and load out facilities to match the increased processing capacity.

Henning Haugaard, of Haarslev, told *Rendering Circles* the project for MBL was a complete mechanical and electrical turnkey job.

Installation had taken less than four months and was managed by Haarslev's engineers from Denmark and New Zealand.

The process started by conducting a 3D



Render vessel and first stage liquid removal trammel.

sump are screened and measured in a collection tank.

Warren said the ability to control both water and physical contaminants in raw material is high priority and the new drainage monitoring system will help this.

MBL has also installed a new load out system from ASTW to allow for the increased production capacity. It is capable of loading a 20 tonne container in 30 minutes.

Once the container is positioned, the load out screw extends into the container and automatically withdraws as the container fills.

The load out screw is also height adjustable - this feature is believed to be a first for this type of load out in Australia.

scan of the site to generate a 3D map which was used to make sure that everything could be fitted into place, as space in the building was limited.

The installation was done with a supervisor from Denmark working with two local Haarslev engineers and local contractors from Adelaide as required.

When the installation had been completed, the plant was cold and hot tested before raw material was processed.

On the first day of processing, saleable oil and meal was produced and only minor adjustments and tweaks had to be done.

The MBL operators were involved in the testing and start-up of the plant and were able to take over the operation within the first week.

CHAMPIONS OF PORK

Adam and Ben flourish after starting O'Briens from 'zilch'



Ben Cormack

Adam Cormack

As pork sales rise in the wake of high beef and lamb prices, Adelaide pork specialist O'Briens Meat Wholesalers is enjoying solid growth.

But it has never been an easy ride for brothers Adam and Ben Cormack who began from scratch and have overcome obstacles through sheer hard work.

"We really started 25 years ago with absolutely nothing – zilch," Adam says.

"We were backrolled by a friend, Graham O'Brien, and worked from a small rented room behind a butcher shop, making deliveries in an old van.

"We built the business, moved to a bigger space which we rented at MBL's old base at Kilburn and then we built our

own factory where we expanded again."

O'Briens is a classic success story built on hard work and perseverance.

Today, as the preferred pork

supplier to many SA butcheries and with a staff of 30, Adam and Ben are working as hard as ever, with long days always starting at 3.30am.

Typical of their thoroughness is that delivery trucks cannot

leave the Burton factory until either Adam or Ben check the orders and the quality of the pork.

"We oversee everything that goes out in the trucks. I can't recall ever losing a customer because of quality," says Adam, 52.

Ben, 45, says, "A lot of customers like to deal with us personally, sometimes after normal hours - it's part of our service."

The personal touch and attention to detail are cornerstones of a best-practice business that began on a shoestring in 1992.

But the Cormack family's involvement in the pork industry began much earlier through Adam and Ben's grandfather Jim and continued with their father Terry. ➤



‘We started doing 30 pigs a week. Now, we do 1,300 to 1,500 a week’ - Adam Cormack



➤ Jim, a livestock trader, had a piggery at the corner of Hanson Rd and Cormack Rd, Wingfield, before moving the piggery to Golden Grove in 1957.

In the late 1970s, Terry and his brothers Alan and John established a meat wholesale business which they named TAJ after their Christian name initials.

TAJ Meat Wholesalers was essentially a pork wholesaler which sold smaller quantities of lamb and beef.

Terry and his brothers leased a boning room from SAMCOR at Gepps Cross in 1981 before building adjacent offices and boning rooms, with the new TAJ premises quickly dubbed the “Taj Mahal.”

But the business folded towards the end of the 1980s, rocked by the high interest rates of the time.

Adam, who worked as a truck driver and sales rep at TAJ, says, “Dad lost everything - the house, furniture, car, absolutely everything.

“We just had an old Holden Kingswood and for a while we had to sit on the floor because we had no dining table or lounge suite.

“Then family friend Graham O’Brien noticed we were really struggling and, knowing we had knowledge of the pork industry, he came up with a proposal...

“He’d put up money and Ben and I would scrounge together what we could, and we’d form a



pork business.

“We put in as much money as we could but Graham more or less financed the business and got us going with a small amount of working capital.”

Adam, Ben and Graham worked fulltime in the business with Terry, in semi retirement, lending a hand occasionally.

They rented a small room at the rear of Seaton butcher shop Gleneagles Meat, on Grange Rd. This became their depot, with deliveries in a small van.

“We started doing 30 pigs a week. Now, we do 1,300 to 1,500 a week,” Adam says.

“Graham only stayed in the business for 12 months, having to leave due to ill health. We bought him out and kept the business name O’Briens.

“We stayed at Grange Rd for two or three years but the place was rundown and it was the mid-1990s when QA standards rose after Garibaldi.”

The Cormacks then rented space at MBL’s old base on Churchill Rd, Kilburn, in 1995.

“We moved into the area at MBL where Springfield Catering used to be. They did whole lambs there, so there was refrigeration



Another load of pork offal bound for MBL’s Wingfield plant.

Continued page 10

Pink Butcher returns

Registration has opened for this year's Pink Butcher promotion, with AMIC saying some butchers have begun planning in earnest.

The promotion, which was introduced last year as a way for butchers to connect with their local communities, will again be in October.

AMIC's Paul Sandercock hopes some 100 to 120 SA butchers

will take part, up from 80 in 2016.

"The first Pink Butcher was a success, raising just over \$36,000 for women and families affected by breast cancer," he says.

An SA initiative suggested by butcher Rodney Sims, Pink Butcher will spread to Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia this year.

"About six Victorian butchers got involved at short notice last year but the promotion will be bigger there this year," Paul says.

"Pink Butcher will be launched in Tasmania and Western Australia this year.

"It's a great concept that really strikes a chord with people and I'm pretty confident it will become a national promotion."

Paul, whose "patch" for AMIC extends to Tasmania and WA as well as SA, says he expects butchers to initiate assorted ideas to raise funds.

"It can be as simple as putting a collection tin on the counter or donating an amount from sausages sold," he says.

MBL contributed in 2016 by subsidising specially-made pink caps and aprons for participating butcher shops.

This year's gold partners in SA are MBL, Holco, Positive Group and D.R. Johnston.

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and rails," Adam says.

"I initially thought the space was too big for us – we only had one meat-carrying truck and one delivery van - but our business grew.

"MBL was a good landlord, doing everything they could to help us, but we outgrew the space. We now had 8-10 staff and we were bursting at the seams.

"It was very hard work. We had only one load-out dock and we had to carry everything through to the back of the truck."

After 13 years at Kilburn, O'Briens left in 2008 to a purpose-built factory on a large 7,800 square metre block at Burton, near Salisbury.

"The builder insisted he design the factory in such a way that should we need to expand, construction work could go on while our business still operated," Adam says.

"I told him we wouldn't need to expand but I'm pleased we went along with him because business increased and we had to double the size of the plant after three years.

"We're getting pretty close to capacity again now..."

The Cormack brothers take pride in the efficiency of their factory, insisting on attaining the highest QA standards.

"The auditors are always pleased," Ben says.

Since 2008, O'Briens has distributed moisture infused pork for NSW-based Riverlea, Australia's biggest pork wholesaler.

CHAMPIONS OF PORK



Leaner, higher quality pork from SA growers is helping drive pork's popularity.

"We don't produce moisture infused pork so if our customers want it, we can supply it," Adam says.

O'Briens sources pork solely from SA growers – some 10-12 scattered from around Murray Bridge up to Eudunda and the Mid-North.

Adam says growers have played a big role in pork's rising popularity by producing leaner pigs.

"They are doing a great job, increasing pork's quality by producing leaner meat," he says.

"Also, production is more efficient. It once took about six months to grow pigs to the ideal weight but the time has been lowered to 21 weeks."

Late last year, O'Briens purchased Salt Lake Bacon's 600-sow piggery at Lochiel in the Mid-North and have recently begun marketing the product.

"Our pork goes into a good percentage of Foodland supermarkets and a lot of Adelaide shops. We are now selling in the Northern Territory," Adam says.

"A measure of our growth is that we now have six meat-carrying trucks plus two livestock trucks."

MBL collects protein waste from O'Briens' factory for rendering into pork meal and pork tallow at Wingfield.

The Co-op supplies assorted machinery and merchandise ranging from sawblades to twine and bags.

\$20,000 tax break extends

Butchers and other MBL customers have been given another 12 months to take advantage of the Federal Government's instant \$20,000 tax break for machinery and other equipment.

The unprecedented write-off was introduced in the 2015 federal budget and was intended to end in a few weeks' time, on June 30, 2017, but the government announced in the May budget its extension to June 30 next year.

Under the scheme, small businesses can upgrade equipment and claim up to \$20,000 of the cost at their next tax return rather than having to depreciate the item



over a number of years.

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

More businesses are able to claim the tax break due to a change in the definition of a small business.

Previously, the scheme classified a small business as one with a turnover of up to \$2 million but the threshold was extended to \$10 million.

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

The extension of the \$20,000 write-off scheme for machinery would be welcomed by butchers and other MBL customers, says MBL Machinery Manager Chris Mountford.

"People have certainly been aware of the scheme and have been taking advantage of it, so the extension is a bonus," Chris says.

Apprentice group growing

The fledgling Apprentice Butchers of SA group is moving to formalise its structure as word spreads of the assorted benefits of participation.

A membership structure will be introduced to create a more formal "club" of young butchers sharing similar aspirations and to help cover the group's running costs.

A number of events, including shop tours and a burger competition, have so far been held, and founder Luke Moody expects the group to gradually grow in numbers and status.

"I'm putting a membership package together to make the group more formal," says Luke Moody, who hopes to share the responsibilities of running the group.

"We are getting good responses to events, such as 14 people attending a burger competition,



The apprentice group's burger competition at Veale Gardens, Adelaide.

and we're refining both the types of events we hold and the way we organise them.

"I'm enthusiastic in forming the group and running it, but I'll need some help – I'll eventually need to hand over the baton."

Luke, who has now qualified as a butcher, formed the group late last year to help young butchers and apprentices to network and improve their skills and knowledge through mutual support.

At the most recent event, 14 people gathered at Veale Gardens in the city for a burger competition. There were 11 apprentices, including seven

from Bruce's Meat.

"The event moved along nicely. Everyone had a good time and there was a good degree of learning," Luke says.

"We looked at things like what products go best with what, down to whether to use shoulder or leg meat. The networking side is also valuable, of course."

Zac Young won awards for best tasting burger and best innovation, while his Bruce's Meat colleague Rob Bull's burger won Best Appearance.

The group's next event will be an early morning tour of the

Barossa Fine Foods' factory at Elizabeth on June 21.

General manager Andreas Knoll will lead the tour, with bacon rolls later served for breakfast.

Luke says, "It's necessary to book and I'll have to charge \$10 to cover costs.

"I've walked through this factory previously, and it's fascinating for a retail butcher to see the work and effort that goes into producing such large volumes of products.

"The factory is really like a massively ramped up butcher shop."



Zac Young

PORK TOPS BEEF

From page 3

available, resulting in lower prices. At the same time, beef and lamb have become more expensive.

Australian Pork spokesman Mitch Edwards puts pork's growth down to simple marketing strategies, including "product championing" by chefs through the PorkStars campaign.

"We had a very simple message with the six,two,two campaign; for pork steaks, cook for six minutes on one side, two on the other side, and then let rest for two," he says.

"It really resonated. Grandmothers told us for so long that pork had to be really heavily cooked, which damaged the eating experience – now people are happy to cook it a bit pink.

"In Europe and Asia, pork is the most consumed meat, but in Australia, there used to be a big barrier to people understanding of how to deal with pork and cook pork."



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Belfast beckons for Caleb

Caleb Sunquist worked in a butcher shop for years without holding any solid ambition of becoming a butcher.

He enjoyed working with food and interacting with customers as a clean-up boy and later as a server at Goodwood Quality Meats, but he was essentially at a loose end.

Then, in 2013, Dave Armstrong bought the popular shop and saw untapped potential in Caleb, including natural customer service skills. He looked at Caleb and saw a butcher.

Caleb, pictured, says, "I was 25 when Dave offered me an apprenticeship. I enjoyed working at the shop but I decided I wanted to go to the next level; to challenge myself."

He hasn't looked back. He has completed his apprenticeship in style, his competition skills earning him a ticket to Ireland for the World Butchers Apprentice Challenge in Belfast, Ireland, next March.

"I'm absolutely looking forward to Belfast. I've never been overseas and I'm so pleased I've been given the opportunity," says Caleb, 29.

"Jimmy Neville, from Victoria, and I will be representing Australia against butchers from maybe 10 countries. It will be a terrific learning experience.

"I started here at Goodwood as a clean-up boy with Mick Hammond, tried a few other things and came back as a shop assistant – I never dreamed I'd get this far."

Dave says, "I saw potential in Caleb. He got on well with people, he could talk the talk with customers and he could cook, which is a big advantage for a butcher these days.

"Caleb was a familiar face in the shop but I thought he had more to offer.

"He has done fantastically well, showing his skills in several competitions."



Caleb's first competition was the Lifeline Young Butcher contest in Perth where he came third to qualify for the World Butchers Apprentice Challenge trial, run by Mintrac, on the Gold Coast.

Between these events, he came third in AMIC's 2016 Apprentice of the Year competition.

"Both the AMIC and Mintrac events were mystery box competitions. My experience from the competition in Adelaide gave me confidence for the Gold Coast," Caleb says.

"I'm looking forward to improving at competitions in Melbourne and the Gold Coast this year in preparation for Belfast.

"Competitions are great for your development - I wish I had entered earlier, and I urge other young butchers to do the same.

"If you start with smaller competitions, you gain the experience and confidence to keep progressing.

"It's interesting to see how other butchers work and to see their ideas taking shape - the networking side is an important part of competitions."

Caleb appreciates the support given to him by the Goodwood crew, including AMIC Master Butcher Paul Suleyman.

"He didn't quite know what we wanted to do career-wise but he has applied himself and has come a long way," Paul says.

"It shows what people can achieve if given the chance."

STOP PRESS: Goodwood butchers Paul Suleyman and Luke Leyson shone at the Meatstock event in Melbourne, finishing first and fourth respectively.