

GAS DEBACLE

Outrageous price gouging of **OVER \$1 MILLION A MONTH** hammers your co-operative

MBL's gas bill for our Wingfield recycling plant now tops a crippling \$1 million a month after a series of astronomical price hikes that threaten your co-operative's viability if something doesn't change.

Wingfield's gas bill of \$150,000 in May last year leapt fivefold to over \$750,000 in May

this year. It jumped to \$900,000 in June and will be over \$1 million for July.

"If this pricing were to continue for a full year, it would mean a \$10 million increase in our costs which would severely impact our business," says MBL CEO Jamie Higgins.

"Soaring gas prices reflect a market failure that's damaging manufacturing businesses across the board. The gas rises are too big to absorb; they have to be passed on.

"Manufacturing businesses are bleeding; some are going broke. MBL is in a world of pain, too.

"If nothing changes and the government doesn't move to fix the problem, MBL's only option to stay viable would be reducing the amount we pay butchers and processors for raw material by as much as 80%.

"This would be a last-resort option that would in turn lead to butchers and processors having to increase their product prices, but it's something we're now seriously considering because the co-operative must be sustainable."

MBL has little room to manoeuvre to counter gas price hikes because the value of Wingfield's end products – meal, tallow and oils – reflects global markets.

Because we cannot raise our by-products prices, MBL's only option would be cutting the price we pay butchers and processors for raw material.

Adelaide would face a major waste management dilemma and public health risk without MBL's Wingfield recycling plant as waste protein and fats generated by the meat, chicken and seafood industries cannot go to landfill.

MBL is strongly lobbying both the Federal

It's Captain Luke!



Photo: Jon Burke

Adelaide's Luke Leyson, 30, has been busier than ever honing his competition skills after being named as captain of the Australian Butchers Team for the World Butchers Challenge in Sacramento, California, in early September. Full story page 3

Apprentice of the Year nominations

Nominations close on August 9 for AMIC's Apprentice of the Year competition to be held at TAFE SA Regency Park on August 23.

The event involves apprentices competing in a mystery box competition, creating value added products from a selection of ingredients, as well as sitting theory exams.

Judging criteria includes preparation and performance, food safety and WHS, use of equipment, product knowledge, use of ingredients and creativity.

The winner will receive \$500 and the runners-up \$150. Entry is open to apprentices from AMIC member and non-member butcher shops.

Winners from all States will go to the national final in February.

Entry forms are on the AMIC website. Phone Chris Kelly on 0472 545 190 for details.

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GAS DEBACLE

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and State governments to fix the gas-pricing debacle in a gas-rich country which is among the world's biggest gas exporters.

"This is a chance for State Labor to stand up for SA manufacturers and prove it's not a puppet of Federal Labor," Jamie says.

He says the Federal Government urgently needs to retain greater volumes of gas from export markets to meet domestic demand and protect Australian manufacturers by triggering the Australian Gas Security Mechanism, dubbed the "gas trigger."

"The government threatened to pull the trigger in 2017 and gas prices halved from \$20 per gigajoule to \$10gj. This and other measures must now be considered by the government to immediately address the crisis," Jamie says.

"If the government won't pull the trigger, another option is bringing in a tax on the super profits the gas exporters are achieving and giving this money to manufacturers to help recover the over-inflated price of gas.

"The government is walking on egg shells because Australia is now the world's largest LNG exporter, and gas exports account for 10% of Australia's export revenues."

MBL consumes around 270,000gj of gas annually – or 22,500gj monthly – at our Wingfield plant which has modernised and implemented energy-saving measures over the past decade.

Over recent years, we have been purchasing gas for around \$6gj, giving an average monthly gas bill of \$135,000, or \$1.6 million a year, plus supply charges.

"We have seen the price steadily increasing this year, with the market blaming everything from cold weather to the war in Ukraine," Jamie says.

"On June 1, the price was \$45.01gj. Like for like, this equates to our Wingfield gas cost going from \$135,000 to \$1,012,725 a month – an increase of \$877,725 a month.

"The cost of gas used for every tonne of product went from \$18 to \$120. We currently process around 7,500 tonnes of product a month."

MBL's other recycling plant at Keith does not use gas. It's powered by light fuel oil. Keith's energy costs have increased by 40% during the past 12 months.

Jamie says, "Australia's current gas prices are far



above what we charge export customers for the same gas. There's more gas in Australia than we could ever use but so much is being sent overseas that we're being starved and gouged.

"About 99% of our export gas goes to Asia, with China the biggest customer. When these export agreements were first put in place, domestic supply was guaranteed by the government and LNG producers."

Australia's gas prices are tied to international market spot pricing that has spiralled with Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Australian manufacturers are calling on Canberra to adopt a national interest test or domestic pricing regimen.

The price of gas for manufacturers is now just \$6gj in Western Australia where gas producers must retain 15% of production for the domestic WA market.

Israel, Indonesia and Egypt have laws mandating 40% to 60% of extracted gas must remain for domestic markets, while Norway, Qatar, Russia, Algeria and Malaysia protect domestic advantage by having state-owned production.

As well as earning export dollars for Australia, MBL's Wingfield recycling plant solves the problem of Adelaide's waste protein and fats as they are banned from being sent to landfill.

The waste would fill dwindling landfill space within weeks and the methane it would produce, at 21 times the effect of carbon dioxide, would be an environmental disaster.

"We're also managing a public safety risk as failure to properly process this waste would see it spoil and have the potential to create a health risk," Jamie says.

"You'd think governments would bend over backwards to help us continue to recycle and solve this waste problem."

Goodwood pair plot Australia's tilt at World Butchers Challenge

Behind their smiling shop faces, Luke Leyson and Paul Suleyman share a steely determination for Australia's success at the upcoming World Butchers Challenge in California.

The event involves teams of six crack butchers from 16 countries in a two-day test of knife skills, creativity and presentation in Sacramento on September 2 and 3.

Teams will be given a side of beef and pork, a whole lamb and five chickens, which they must transform into a themed display of value-added retail products within three hours and 15 minutes.

Luke, 30, has the honour of captaining the Australian Butchers Team while Paul, 56, is a senior advisor after having to decline a place in the travelling team.

The Goodwood Quality Meats pair has been meticulously planning tactics and value-added products, along with team co-ordinator Shannon Walker, of Sydney.

The other team members are Victorian Tom Bouchier, Queenslander Gary Thompson and the NSW trio of Brett Laws, Craig Munro and Garreth Gorringer.

MBL is a bronze sponsor of the Aussie team which will use our Butchers Banquet gold range rubs in a competition billed as the "Olympics of meat."

Luke, who along with Tom, represented Australia at the last WBC in Belfast in 2018, says, "It's a new team and our preparation has been fast-tracked."



"We've twice got together in Sydney for practice and we'll do so again a week before we fly out but due to logistics, we've had to do a lot of (practice) manufacturing in our own shops."

"We'll be under pressure in Sacramento but pressure is what retail butchers are used to. We deal with pressure every day."

"We have a team with a great deal of diverse experience. I'm enthused at what we are going to put together as a display and really push the boundaries within the competition."

Luke says the experience of Paul, an AMIC Master Butcher and veteran Meatstock competitor, has been vital in preparing Australia's gameplan.

Paul says, "The guys are going great guns, making some great products. I would love to go overseas with them but I have too many commitments to travel."

Australia's WBC team from Belfast decided not to compete in Sacramento in 2022 after the event was postponed in 2020 and 2021 due to Covid-19. Luke had been selected in the team.

Concerned that Australia would not be represented, WBC Chairman Rod Slater, of New Zealand, contacted Shannon Walker, a NSW TAFE Meat Studies lecturer and Meatstock promoter.

Shannon says, "Rod asked if I would put together an Australian team. I agreed, without realising what a big job it would be. The first person I called was Paul Suleyman who's a great butcher and has great contacts."

Paul says Luke, with his WBC experience, was a natural choice to skipper the carefully-selected team.

Luke says, "I really learnt a lot from Belfast and I'm stoked to be leading a new team. Fresh faces bring new ideas," he says.

"I've always enjoy networking with like-minded butchers from interstate. We learn from each other, bouncing off ideas."

"You might run half an idea past someone who adds to it. One thing leads to another and the original idea for competition grows into something for your shop."



Luke sets the Australian display at the last World Butchers Challenge in Belfast in 2018.

Bexley Carman has resigned after helping navigate MBL's merchandise division to new heights over the past decade. He will finish as General Manager of Sales and Marketing in late September with an imposing record of driving strong sales growth through innovation for the benefit of butchers and other members. Here, we look at how Bexley has helped orchestrate MBL's growth.

THANKS, BEXLEY!

Thanks in no small part to his drive and dedication, the MBL that Bexley Carman joined a decade ago is hardly recognisable from the modern, multi-faceted business it has become today.

Bexley arrived in late 2011 to take charge of the merchandise division when MBL's base was at Kilburn in a building long past its use-by date, attached to a single cramped and inefficient warehouse.

Today, the merchandise division occupies a spacious, modern complex with four warehouses and offices at Athol Park, allowing us to offer better service, introduce new products and diversify into other food manufacturing markets.

Working with the now-departed Board and management of the day, Bexley played a key role in the crucial transfer to Athol Park to secure the co-operative's future.

"It's amazing how much has changed at MBL in so many ways. The whole business has transformed," says Bexley of the past decade.

"MBL has never been stronger, thanks to a lot of hard work by a lot of great people who have persevered to achieve the best outcomes for our members.

"I've had a challenging, varied and interesting role and I feel fortunate to have worked with, and become friends with, so many great people.

"It's now time to find a new challenge. I'll take a break, enjoy some time with my family and reset before looking for a new opportunity."

CEO Jamie Higgins says, "Bexley has contributed enormously to the co-operative over the years and we wish him well in the future."

Bexley joined MBL, replacing retiring Sales Manager John Phillips, in the newly-created role of Operations and Business Development Manager of the



merchandise division, with broader responsibilities under General Manager Warren McLean.

MBL had decided that the successful applicant did not necessarily need to be experienced in the meat game as we already had people with vast meat industry knowledge.

In Bexley, MBL found a senior manager who could look at the "bigger picture" and adapt successful practices from other food industry sectors to expand the co-operative's traditional meat industry focus.

Bexley's experience ranged from a senior position with On The Run, where he had worked for the previous seven years, to mainly sales and key account roles involving energy drinks (Fruco Beverages), milk (Dairy Farmers), wine (Southern Cross Wines), bakery (Balfours) and seafood (Cappo Bros).

By late 2011 when Bexley joined MBL, plans were advanced to build a new warehouse and office complex on land we owned next to our by-products plant at Wingfield.

More warehouse space was badly needed to better serve existing customers and to allow expansion into new markets.

High returns from the Wingfield plant had given MBL the confidence to expand the business but while opportunities were identified, we were shackled because our sole warehouse at Kilburn was too small.

Bexley recalls the warehouse conditions, "None of our products were slotted, so there were no bin and bay locations.

"The location of products was all in the heads of staff.

"We had to pack the aisles full of finished



Bexley accepts a sponsorship-appreciation award from AMIC's SA Retail Council Chairman Trevor Hill at the awards night of 2021.



Room to move... Bexley with sales stalwart Dale Rowe soon after the move into spacious warehouses at Athol Park in 2013.

➤ products to go out, then we had to pull them out of the aisles to go to slot locations. It was slow and inefficient.

“We not only lacked warehouse capacity, but we didn’t even have the space to properly unload containers.”

To ease the bottleneck, MBL rented a much larger warehouse at Gepps Cross to supplement the Kilburn premises but this created the burden of double handling between the two warehouses, with extra wage and transport costs.

There were other space problems at Kilburn, including a cramped showroom area for merchandise and machinery causing day-to-day service inefficiencies, and a shortage of car parking for visitors.

With assorted business opportunities beckoning, MBL began planning for a new larger home at Wingfield but instead settled on buying a large property with ample warehouses and offices at Athol Park.

As head of the merchandise division, Bexley played a big role in the management team adapting Athol Park to suit MBL’s needs and planning the orderly exit from Kilburn while keeping everyday business ticking over.

MBL began operating at Athol Park in February 2013, with the doors flung open for tours at a gala official opening in April.

“After huge efforts by a lot of people to get our new systems bedded down, we improved operating efficiencies by a most

conservative 20%,” Bexley says.

Four warehouses and other modern facilities enabled greater stock holding, improved buying power and a wider product range. A streamlined and faster supply and delivery system for merchandise and machinery began.

We were able to establish a best-practice quality control system, coupled with greatly improved working conditions that led to a more proactive culture.

The move also allowed for an expanded retail area, a larger machinery showroom and space for offices.

Bexley says, “We now had room to handle multiple containers. We were able to bulk buy, store bulk products and have a wider product range.

“In a huge improvement from Kilburn, we were able to put everything in bin and bay locations, so pickers could pick to a location, not a product. The same orders could now be completed significantly faster with greater accuracy.

“We became more competitive, offering products exclusive to us. We were able to sell more at



In 2014, Bexley posed at the controls of a new huge blender capable of producing one tonne of sausage meal in the one blend. The blender was a feature of Athol Park’s modern blending facility where output tripled to open new markets.

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MAKING LIGHT WORK

‘Fantastic’ sausage filler’s a game-changer for Doug



Doug Costello-Smith and his wife Alice... more time for home life thanks to the labour-saving Rex RVF 327 vacuum filler.

Award-winning smallgoods maker Doug Costello-Smith needs only one word to describe his new automatic sausage filler from MBL – “fantastic!”

Doug, who runs Costello’s Smallgoods with his wife Alice, says the Rex RVF 327 vacuum filler has had an immediate impact on home life as well as business.

“Without it, I’d be flat-out working right now, not having time to sit here talking to you,” he tells MBL News at the Fulham Gardens factory.

“Most importantly, I’m able to go home earlier to see our three young kids because the Rex has sped up production and freed up time for to do other things.

“It’s a fantastic machine, able to do 100 links a minute – I’d never be able to do it that fast.

“Not only is it fast but it does the job well.

I’m pleased with the final products it churns out.”

Doug knew he was on a winner when he first used the automatic machine in May. “It did 750kg of kransky in just two hours,” he says.

He also uses the vacuum filler for another big seller, his traditional bung fritz, which was judged SA’s best at last year’s AMIC awards.

With sales growing strongly, Doug and Alice operate with five staff but, as with most businesses, they have had trouble finding suitable extra workers in the wake of Covid-19.

Doug says modern machinery, such as his Rex RVF 327 vacuum filler, can help ease the problem of staff shortages.

“We have the peace of mind that this new machine will always be



The Rex RVF 327 vacuum filler.

➤ here doing a fantastic job. We don't have to worry about absenteeism through Covid or anything else," he says.

"It only cost the equivalent of one year's pay for a worker and we'll get years of production from it."

MBL Machinery Manager Ryan Mercier says retail prices for Austrian-made Rex vacuum fillers start at \$55,000 for the base model.

"Once your sausage-making gets close to one tonne a week, it becomes viable to look at these machines," Ryan says.

"The RVF 220 is a perfect and cost-effective introduction to vacuum filling technology for medium-size butcher shops, yet is also suitable as a replacement for an existing filling machine.

"It comes with all the technical features necessary for the trade and is ideal for frequent product changes.

"It handles sausages with collagen or natural casings as well as thicker products such as fritz."

Doug's latest machinery purchase continues a policy of "buying skins, seasonings - everything" from the co-operative and being rewarded with an annual rebate and shares.

A member of AMIC's SA Retail Council, Doug made a name for himself at Gumeracha Gourmet Meats but his love of making smallgoods saw him outgrow the premises.

"We opened at Gumeracha in 2014 with just \$17,000 so things were really pretty tight. We worked hard and did well but it was a small shop and we needed bigger premises to become a smallgoods wholesaler," he says.

Doug and Alice moved into premises on Tapleys Hill Rd in mid-2021 and deliberately have a limited product range of award-winning bung fritz and saltbush jerky, plus black pudding and five types of kransky.

"We have a minimal range to help maintain good, consistent quality. You can stretch yourself too thin by making too many products, and it's also easier to train staff with less lines," Doug says.

"We have had incredible growth. It's a no-brainer for butcher shops, with staff shortages, to buy quality smallgoods rather than trying to make their own.

"It frees butchers to spend more time on other things such as customer service which is more important now than ever.

"Bung fritz is my biggest passion and it's awesome that I can help butchers continue the tradition of giving slices to kids."



Our goal's creating efficiency

Creating efficiency is a core mission of MBL Machinery, where a broad range of larger, high-end machines is now available.

"We have a strong focus on machines to create efficiency and help medium-to-large butcher shops remain viable into the future," says MBL Machinery Manager Ryan Mercier.

"The industry is moving towards bigger machines, seeing them as essential for efficient productivity.

"In the past, butchers often had to reach out interstate to buy high-end machines but they are now available at MBL, along with factory-backed service and maintenance."

With AMIC reporting that one in three



butcher shops nationally need staff, Ryan says today's efficient machines can help fill a void.

"Machines like the new Rex automatic sausage fillers, Mainca automatic batter and breading line, and Foodlogistik automatic portioning machines are essentially plug-and-play," he says.

"Once set up, a butcher shop's value-added product, portioning, smallgoods and sausage manufacturing capacity can greatly increase with reduced labour."

MBL has increased the floor stock of machinery displayed in our Athol Park showroom to a record level.

With MBL rebates to members and government incentives, there has never been a better time to buy machinery.

An unprecedented Federal Government concession gives businesses until June 30, 2023, to claim immediate tax deductions for any number of machinery items purchased at any cost.





OUTSIDE THE BOX

Creative trio have taste buds singing in the chase for points of difference

The talents of a clever butcher, an experienced barbecue competitor from Brazil and a barbecue rubs whiz have combined to create a thriving Adelaide shop with a difference.

Meat Your Needs opened at Clapham just as Covid-19 hit in 2020 and continues going great guns, largely through the popularity of American-style low and slow barbecuing.

"We see ourselves as being a point of difference," says butcher Kane Laundy, pictured, co-owner of the shop with the owners of two separate barbecue businesses, Adriano Andrade (BRZ Food) and Kyle Leffers (Rub & Grub).

"We've combined my knowledge as a butcher with the knowledge of Adriano who seriously knows how to cook meat. He has a lot of competition barbecuing experience overseas; he's about to head over to Brazil.

"Like Adriano, Kyle understands flavour profiles and rubs. He also looks after all our social media, including Facebook and emails to customers.



"We try to be creative and flamboyant to stand out in the marketplace. What's the point of everyone being the same and making the same things?

"We're a new school butcher shop with old school style. You have to think outside the square but also provide what people want, hence our shop name Meat Your Needs."

Kane, 41, says about 50% of the business caters for barbecuing, including a huge selection of South American-style rubs made in SA plus some of the world's best rubs imported by Kyle.

He runs the shop with fulltime butcher John Graham, a casual butcher and a two-day server. He hangs beef elsewhere before processing in the shop and gets smallgoods

from Cimarosti Bros at nearby Daw Park.

The shop may be small but it's big on everything for barbecues, from quality rib-eyes, tomahawks and scotch fillets to an impressive selection of rubs, gourmet sauces, charcoal and smoking woods.

"We still have traditional meats to help out Mrs Jones with her half-kilo of mince but then we've got platinum pieces of brisket and more crafty things," Kane says.

"We run four specials a week. I look at the weather forecast and then choose what we'll do as specials.

"Being on a busy street (Springbank Rd), we don't have much foot traffic so we use weekly specials to attract people."

When MBL News visited, the week's specials were Louisiana cheesy beef burger patties, Boston pork butts, lamb shanks marinated in red wine and garlic, and buffalo chicken tenders with Frank's hot sauce.

"The Louisiana cheesy beef patties



are a consistently good seller for us. I created them in the back room and they just took off, winning some awards,” Kane says.

Kane’s patties won the Best Butchers Burger section of AMIC’s Metro awards last year and went on to be second-placed in the State final. The trophies are prominently displayed in the shop – along with the bottle of red wine.

He uses The Butchers Friend Shiraz from the Barossa, and garlic, in his marinated lamb shanks. “They are pretty popular this week,” he says.

He also makes eye-catching products in collaboration with, and using ingredients from, Kyle (Rub & Grub pork hotlinks) and Adriano (BRZ Brazilian Toscana sausages).

Kane previously worked at four Adelaide shops, beginning with an apprenticeship at Holco’s Central Market Meat where he worked for nine years before joining Lazy Lamb at Colonnades shopping centre.

A stint at Ciro Meats at Coromandel Valley followed and he later moved to The Meat Market where he became manager. The Edwardstown shop, which was part of the Richard Gunner group, closed in early 2020.

The Meat Market was a sponsor of the low and slow barbecue circuit, leading to Kane meeting Adriano and Kyle.

“We formed a friendship, sharing a passion for the meat industry and barbecuing. We talked about buying a butcher shop and when this one (at Clapham) came up, we formed a partnership,” Kane says.

Kane, Adriano and Kyle bought St James Quality Cuts from award-winning Kellie Walduck. They renamed the shop, starting trading as Meat Your Needs in early March 2020.

“Over the years, I’ve taken on board what I liked at shops where I worked and disre-



Meat Your Needs joint owners Adriano Andrade, Kane Laundry and Kyle Leffers.

garded what I didn’t like. I thought it was now time to have a go myself,” Kane says.

“Trevor Hill (from nearby Bruce’s Meat Mitcham) was among people who helped us set up, lending us a mincer until we got on our feet.

“As it turned out, we began here the week before Covid first hit Adelaide. We didn’t know what to expect – it was a new experience for everyone.”

As with butchers everywhere, sales boomed over the ensuing months with closed pub and restaurant dining resulting in more home cooking. The spaced lockdowns saw panic buying.

“When the November 2020 lockdown was announced, we did a full week’s trade in four hours. All I had left at the end of the day

was one piece of brisket,” Kane says.

“It was hard to know what people really preferred – they’d just bought everything in the window. Many people were filling up freezers so we didn’t expect to see them for a month but they kept coming back.

“People experimented with different cooking methods at home and this really helped us because we had things that you can get at a niche restaurant and we’ve got a rub and a sauce to suit.

“You can come in here and grab a nice piece of meat, a rub, a sauce to go with it, your charcoal, your flavoured wood and you’re done.

“We ploughed back the money from the Covid period back into the business, buying a mincer, tenderiser and vacuum packing machine from MBL.”

Kane says the Covid boom meant it was more than 18 months before sales settled down to what he now recognises as normal.

“As new business owners, we had to be patient to find out the normal trading level of this shop. Now, we are happy with our turnover,” he says.

“We have small overheads with reasonable rent so buying this shop and building it up has been a good move – we have no regrets.”

What’s Kane’s tip for the next big thing in barbecuing? Brazilian-style! And with Adriano on board, he’ll be at the forefront.



Kane displays some of his products – Louisiana-style Andouille sausages, Rub & Grub pork hotlinks, BRZ Brazilian Toscana sausages and South African boerewors – made in collaboration with shop co-owners Kyle and Adriano.



Bexley as he appeared in MBL News after joining the co-operative in late 2011. He was pictured in the old warehouse at Kilburn.

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lower prices, beginning with bulk buying of cheaper black foam trays and moving on to home compostable packaging.”

With storage space now available, Bexley was instrumental in forming the Australasian buying group, Ikon Pack, resulting in significant purchasing benefits across a vast range including trays, knives, protective clothing, plastic containers, film and bags.

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

Bexley says, “We’re individual businesses operating independently but as a group we have better buying opportunities and greater combined purchasing power to access cheaper products worldwide without compromising quality.

“Along with Vadals in Queensland, we were the main drivers in starting Ikon Pack which

THANKS, BEXLEY!

has been an exciting way to change our purchasing model.

“Instead of MBL talking to manufacturers in numbers just for the SA market, Ikon Pack covers Australia and New Zealand with a combined 65 reps on the road and nine or 10 warehouses.

“Our members and customers benefit from a bigger range of quality products at better prices.”

Through Ikon Pack, MBL has become a leader in the home compostable packaging market which will strongly grow when plastic packaging is banned in 2025.

Bexley has also been instrumental in MBL developing blending prowess. A state-of-the-art blending facility was completed in April, 2014, giving capacity to more than triple our blending room output with an eye to the future.

“Many things that MBL sells are commodities, like knives, boots and aprons from other companies, but products from our blending room are our intellectual property. They are ours, they can’t be copied easily,

our name is on them and there is great scope for growth,” Bexley says.

In 2018, we created a modern test kitchen to develop better flavour profiles for a range of products, from marinades to sausage meals. Our latest success is our Butchers Banquet range of Australian-themed rubs and sprinkles.

In a major development in 2020, MBL CEO Jamie Higgins oversaw our acquisition of innovative food ingredients manufacturer Medani Foods, adding new products to our already-strong ingredients portfolio and opening extra markets in the growing food and beverage sectors.

While Bexley has largely enjoyed his time at MBL, unexpected and unprecedented problems thrown up by Covid-19 over the past few years have been challenging.

“Like many businesses, we have had to cope with global supply chain issues, rising costs and staff shortages. Just as you think things are settling down, they kick off again,” he says.

“At the height of it, butchers were at their busiest and we were under pressure for some merchandise that was either unavailable from our suppliers or was unpredictably late in arriving.

“Surprisingly in some ways in the Covid climate, two independent surveys found that over 90% of randomly-picked members were more than satisfied with MBL’s overall service and support.

“We were delighted by this support. It showed the members appreciate what we do and know that our great team always tries to do the best for them. It’s always nice to be appreciated.”



Bexley in the new MBL test kitchen in 2018 with Darryl Vaitkus and Dale Rowe.

Adelaide to host AMIC's national awards in 2023

After two years of false starts, AMIC has confirmed that its national competition finals will be held in Adelaide in February next year.

An exact date and venue had not been announced when MBL News went to press but AMIC's SA State Manager Chris Kelly says it's all systems go.

"Adelaide was due to host the national finals in 2021 and 2022 but they did not go ahead because Covid-19 decimated lead-up competitions," Chris says.

"It still remained Adelaide's turn to host the next national finals but nothing was official until we got the word in early July."

National finals are traditionally rotated around the States, held in the February after the previous year's regional and State finals.

In SA, competitions for the South East and Riverland, Mid-North, and West Coast have been held, with the Metro competition to be held on August 11.

SA last hosted the national finals in 2015.



Brighton City wins

Thriving Brighton City Meats has won MBL's Home Compostable Hero promotion from a hot field of contenders.

"We're stoked," says manager Kris Richardson, who was surprised when his regular MBL rep Shane Reynolds broke the good news.

The prize is a weekend away in an Airbnb Eco Getaway of the winner's choice to the value of \$600.

Since September, monthly winners have been chosen from members and customers who buy any two products from MBL's Home Compostable packaging range.

The monthly winners went into the mix for the grand prize and Brighton City, our hero for May, came up trumps.

"We've been using MBL's home compostable trays and bags for quite a while and a lot of people like the option of choosing them over standard packaging," Kris says.

"We use the 5 x 8 and 5 x 11 eco-cane trays mainly for things like burgers and kebabs, and also for steak.

"The number of people asking for compostable packaging is definitely increasing. It's the way of the future.

"It appeals to wide demographic, from people in their 20s right up to pensioners."



MBL's Shane Reynolds with Kris Richardson.

Windsor's expansion



One of Adelaide's most treasured butcher shops has effectively doubled the size of its premises in a strong vote of confidence in the future.

Windsor Meats at Malvern was quick to act when the seafood shop next door became vacant, taking over to create extra space for production, refrigeration, storage and an office.

In turn, this allowed the shop to expand backwards into the former work area and be reconfigured and updated, drawing continuing praise from impressed customers.

"People are absolutely loving the shop, saying they can't believe how much bigger and brighter it is. Customer numbers are up by 5%," says owner Sam Burt, *pictured*, who prides himself on a top-class display that oozes quality.

"With Covid and the flu season here, customers feel more comfortable with the extra space, and our new automatic sliding door means no door handles to touch."

A huge range of accompaniments is displayed. A customer-accessed fridge has been added for milk and cheese plus a selection of vegetables.

The reconfiguration included "straightening" the angled shopfront to gain more space and extending the back of the shop into the old production area.

"A ceiling bulkhead was removed to create a more open feeling," Sam says.

"We have always enjoyed incredibly loyal support. Customers' sense of ownership has translated into pride in awards and now the new extension."

The butchers are delighted with having ample space for production, with easy access to a new large cool room, freezer and dry storage room for assorted items, including MBL packaging and ingredients.

"Previously, we had to call MBL for top-ups because we couldn't hold enough stock but we can now order enough to stay in front," Sam says.

Hitting the open road and enjoying rapport with country people as an MBL rep has put a spring in the step of Greg Goodfellow.

"I have a new love for the industry," says Greg, 49, *pictured*, who began as a clean-up boy at his local butcher shop and went on to carve a varied career across butchery.

"I love my new involvement in the industry, visiting butcher shops in three States and meeting lots of friendly people. I love talking with people.

"I enjoy my rounds in the southern and western suburbs of Adelaide but I've found there's nothing quite like getting out into the country."

Greg clocks up 4,000km monthly on his MBL rounds which include the South-East and the Riverland with border-hops into towns in western Victoria and NSW.

He also covers all of Fleurieu Peninsula, and for good measure has a northern run from Clare to Peterborough.

"It's quite good. The Ks (kilometres) don't worry me as I like driving and I'm happy to work long hours," he says.

"The country is great and the people are fantastic, always friendly and happy to see you. They make sure you are travelling well, asking if you want a coffee or something to eat.

"I've been on the road for about 15 months now and I value the good friendships that have developed along the way."

In towns where he stays, Greg sometimes shares an evening meal with butchers and their partners or families.

"Sometimes, if a butcher is under the pump and I'm finished for the day, I'll tie some snags or help with the knives. I enjoy keeping my hand in and the help is appreciated," he says.

With a laugh he adds, "There's a shortage of butchers, so I've had no shortage of job offers!"

It's been a long journey in many ways since Greg, as a schoolboy of 13, began working for pocket money as a clean-up boy at a butcher shop not far from the family home at Newton in Adelaide's eastern suburbs.

"I worked before and after school for an old-school butcher, Bruce McGilvray, who had Tranmere Meat Store," he says.

"I liked working there and I took up the offer of a four-year apprenticeship. I was fully qualified when I was only 19."

Greg worked at Springfield, Tea Tree Plaza,

"Meet the Team"

Profiles on MBL staff members



before joining a poultry shop in the same shopping complex.

"I learnt to bone-out chicken there. At night for extra money, I'd bone-out lamb for butchers," he says.

By now, Greg was ready to run his own shop, purchasing Windsor Village Butchery at Windsor Gardens with his wife Julie who served, made deliveries and did the paper-work.

"We bought the shop from butcher Adrian McGilvray, who happened to be the brother of my first boss, Bruce McGilvray," Greg says.

"It was a very good little shop and we were doing nicely but then the Housing Trust began selling off local houses. Developers demolished a lot of them to build multiple new houses on the big blocks.

"Unfortunately for us, we lost a lot of customers because there was a two-year lag between demolition and the arrival of new residents. We ended up selling the shop."

Greg worked in the Bi-Lo supermarkets' meat room, for several catering companies and at a Mawson Lakes butchery before joining MBL early last year from Murray Valley Beef.

"I worked for Murray Beef at Golden Grove,

Kilburn and Mt Barker before becoming production manager for Aldi products," he says.

"I've done a lot and now I'm doing something different again at MBL.

"I spent some time getting to know MBL by working in the shop and picking orders before getting some experience on the road with Chris Rowe and Shane Reynolds and getting my own rounds."

Q & A

Do you have a special interest or hobby? I have a few - dog-sled racing, V8 supercars and, of course, food!

What would you do with a spare \$50,000? I'd have a big holiday to Canada, the US and Hawaii.

If you were a car, what would you be? A zippy Holden Torana.

What food can't you live without? I love low & slow meats and pizza.

If you could meet anyone, living or dead, who would it be? Love to meet the late Holden hero Peter Brock, and I've always wanted to meet Billy Connolly.

What's the best thing about working at MBL? Being on the road and working with so many different people.