

AUSTRALIAN MeatNews

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**MINTRAC CEO
reflects on training
Mature-age
dedication
Super Butcher
to Senator**





Season's Greetings

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Bec Gamble took the plunge to follow her dream to be a butcher. Image courtesy William Angliss TAFE

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Win 3 recipe books. See page 27

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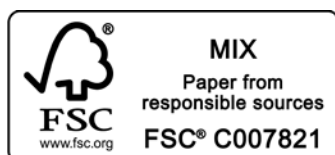
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Meat Business Women – the future

More than 250 attendees gathered in Brisbane in October for the second Australian Meat Business Women (MBW) conference, headlined by founder and global chair of MBW, Laura Ryan.

The theme of the conference, “Changing the culture of the industry” unpacked the challenges of female participation and took some practical and direct actions towards providing solutions.

The high calibre speaker line-up included gender diversity advocate Julie McKay, RMAC CEO Anna Campbell, ex-butcher and Queensland Senator, Susan McDonald and inspirational and talented technology leader and founder of Lumachain, Jamila Gordon.

It was a reassuring message provided by AMIC CEO Patrick Hutchinson in his opening address when he said, “The time for talk about inclusion and diversity is over. We now need to deliver practical tools and programs to ensure we make progress and the gap can be closed on diversity, labour shortages and poor retention of women in the industry.”

Over 300 ideas were tabled in the energetic session and these will now form the basis of a toolkit being developed to tackle these issues. Due for release next year, the toolkit will provide practical solutions to help businesses make their workplaces attractive to female talent and keep them there.

“We are committed to providing more events, the toolkit, awards and continued advocacy,” said Patrick.

Laura Ryan praised the work the Australian MBW team has achieved in the short time it has been formed. She also shared what the future holds for the group, including further global expansion, commercial partnerships and an international mentoring program.

The next Australian Meat Business Women event is scheduled for May 2020.

To learn what Senator Susan McDonald had to say, check the story on page 30.

For more about the event and future Australian events visit www.amic.org.au/mbw

For information on MBW globally head to <https://meatbusinesswomen.org/> ■



(L-R) Patrick Hutchinson – AMIC CEO, Laura Ryan – Founder of MBW Global, Susan McDonald – Senator for Queensland and Terry Nolan – Director of Nolan Meats.

Queensland producer claims top honour at Sydney Royal Fine Food Show



Mort & Co have taken out the Dick Stone Perpetual Trophy for Branded Meat Grand Champion Exhibit at Sydney Royal show.

Queensland producer Mort & Co has impressed the judges at the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW (RAS) 2019 Sydney Royal Fine Food Show, taking home the Dick Stone Perpetual Trophy for Branded Meat Grand Champion Exhibit for its Phoenix F1-F4 Wagyu.

Branded Meat Judge George Ujvary said the Phoenix F1-F4 Wagyu exhibit was a truly exceptional piece of beef.

“While its visual appearance in the raw state was of the highest standard, it was in the tasting that it truly stood out from its competition, having all the eating qualities inherent in Wagyu products,” Mr Ujvary said. “The beef was exceptionally tender and juicy, with its unparalleled flavour making it stand out from other competitors.”

Over the past month, more than 1,800 Fine Food entries across nine categories were judged by some of the finest palates in the country; supporting excellence within the industry by providing invaluable feedback to exhibitors and awarding quality producers. Sydney Royal Fine Food Committee Chair, Lachlan Bowtell said consumers should be proud of the outstanding products made available right here in Australia.

“A Sydney Royal medal is a symbol of excellence and those awarded here today can be proud that their products are of the highest standard in Australia,” Mr Bowtell said.

“We have some of the best produce in the world, and through competitions, like Sydney Royal, we can continue to uphold these standards and keep evolving.

“This year’s Show again demonstrated that despite the current adversities our farmers are facing, local producers continue to persevere and deliver outstanding quality time and time again. Australian’s should be proud of their local producers and the standards they adhere to.” ■

Processors facing Day Zero on water

The processing sector of the meat industry in most instances has taken a number of measures in recent years to minimise water use and wastewater outputs.

In part, it made economic sense, but also to comply with environmental statutory requirements, such as wastewater discharge into local river and council systems.

However, for parts of New South Wales and Queensland, the current drought conditions are posing a major problem – there is very little water to be had, and likely to run out in the coming months if there is no substantial spring rain.

Tamworth, Dubbo, Orange, Warwick and Narromine are among the towns approaching ‘day zero’ water supply restrictions. Regional jobs and industry are at risk as water supply crises threaten several towns, according to the Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC), which is calling for immediate government support to counter the devastating impact of the ‘Day Zero’ water supply crisis.

According to AMIC CEO, Patrick Hutchison, the lack of water means that daily operational capacity diminishes from washing stockyards through to sterilisers, hand washing, refrigeration and end of day cleaning procedures.

He says even with a strong focus on water efficiency, the sector simply cannot operate without reliable water supply. Some of the water use reduction strategies implemented by industry include water-saving equipment such as low flow/high-pressure taps and hoses, sensors on hand and apron wash stations and automated clean-in-place systems. Many processors are already capturing wastewater to reuse or recycle, using steriliser and handwash water to wash stockyards, water landscaped areas or clean trucks.

“Red meat processors have invested a huge amount of effort and money in water efficiency and the industry has made great steps forward in terms of reducing water use and recycling water. But at the end of the day, every business within the meat supply chain relies on water to deliver dependable, safe meat to all Australian homes and businesses.”

AMIC is calling on Water Minister David Littleproud to engage with industry as a matter of urgency, to end uncertainty around water restrictions.

“We’re very concerned that if this is not dealt with swiftly, we may see processors forced to reduce production, leading to job losses and potential plant closures. Once a facility is closed it is very difficult to get it up and running again, which would be devastating news for regional areas which are already under enormous pressure.” ■



Be Prepared for the Summer Season

'Tis the season to celebrate. Friends and family gather around BBQs and dinner tables – and that creates a lot of work for all those along the food chain, from the shop floor to kitchen benchtops.

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Tom Collyer wins 2019 Eddie Andriessen Award

Tom Collyer has been named as the third winner of the Eddie Andriessen Award, presented at the Meat Inspection and Quality Assurance Dinner on 23 October. The Eddie Andriessen Award is a MINTRAC annual award made to an individual who has made an exceptional contribution to Meat Inspection and Quality Assurance training in the red meat industry.

Tom Collyer began his career in meat inspection as a Meat Inspector with the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS), where he spent 26 years before joining TAFE SA as a meat safety facilitator. Tom is currently lead facilitator for all Department of Agriculture Authorised Officer training for Response Consulting and also works independently for other organisations, most recently South-West TAFE, as trainer for the Federation University meat inspection students.

Tom's extensive knowledge of meat processing and meat inspection has come from his involvement in the TB eradication program and positions as the Senior Supervising Meat Inspector of six separate export meat processing plants and various non-slaughtering plants.

Tom is a qualified slaughterperson, boner and retail butcher. He holds Certificate IVs in Meat Processing (Meat Safety), (Quality Assurance) and (Leadership). As a highly respected trainer across Australia, in February 2019 he joined the 'Legends Group' who combined to pass on their knowledge and skills to the 'next generation' of meat inspection trainers in Wagga Wagga.

Tom has contributed extensively to the development of new qualifications and training materials for MINTRAC, in particular the meat safety qualifications, MHA training,



Tom Collyer (left) is pictured with Clive Richardson who was the inaugural winner of the Eddie Andriessen Award.

image library and multiple species ante- and post-mortem materials.

The Eddie Andriessen Award was set up to recognise Eddie's services to the meat industry as well as acknowledge the services and skills of meat inspectors and quality assurance officers, and the importance of their role in the Australian meat industry.

Eddie, a retired veterinary surgeon, wrote *Meat Safety Quality and Veterinary Public Health*, for many years the key textbook for meat inspectors. He has also written training and assessment materials for meat inspectors, acted as a consultant during the development of training and assessment materials and been a regular speaker at industry conferences.

Previous winners of the Eddie Andriessen Award were Clive Richardson (MINTRAC) and Mark Rickard (TAFE Qld). ■

MOU reconfirms strong Australia-China trading relationship

A new memorandum of understanding between the Australian and Chinese meat sectors highlights the importance of China to Australian industry and underlines a commitment to collaboration on both sides, according to Australian Meat Industry Council CEO Patrick Hutchinson.

The MOU is the result of 18 months of preparations and discussions which kicked off at the China International Meat Industry Week in 2018.

AMIC CEO Mr Hutchinson signed The China Australia Red Meat Agreement (CARMA) MOU with the China Meat Association in Chengdu, China today on behalf of the Australian Meat Industry Council, Meat & Livestock Australia and the Australian Meat Processor Corporation.

"China is the biggest export market for Australian meat, and maintaining and enhancing our relationship with this critical partner is essential for the future of our industry. This MOU serves to reinforce the strong value our sector places on the

relationship and our great respect for China as a very important trading partner," he says.

In the year to August, Australia has sent more than 172,000 tonnes of beef, 45,000 tonnes of lamb and 39,000 tonnes of mutton to China, with a total market value of close to \$2 billion.

"The aim of this MOU is to establish long-term and formal cooperative relations, strengthen effective and practical food safety processes and enable bilateral exchanges around technical know-how, marketing, and research and development investment. Ultimately, the MOU will help secure trade outcomes that are beneficial to all parties."

The longer-term aims of the CARMA include development of both sides' red meat industries, an enhanced supply chain for Australian meat into China, and working to streamline product specifications and labelling requirements. ■



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Cliff Ward (right) and family from George St Butcher Shoppe Mackay, Queensland.

Meat your local butcher

What is your name and the name of your butcher shop and where is it located?

I'm Cliff Ward, and I own and run George St Butcher Shoppe, in Mackay, Queensland.

How long have you been a butcher?

I started my apprenticeship in 1980 in Proserpine and Cannonvale and worked as far as Townsville. We purchased the shop in Mackay in 2010, the shop originally opened in 1923 and was operated by the State Government of the time.

Why did you become a butcher?

Butchering is in the family, my uncles were butchers, so was my grandfather, some were cattle buyers so the beef industry has been part of our family for years. I was lucky to be offered an apprenticeship in Grade 10 to be a butcher with Tom Jones in Proserpine. I didn't really want to do anything else. I bought my first set of work clothes out of my lawn mowing money and rode a bike to work everyday.

Where did you do your training?

In those days we used to go to Coorparoo College of Catering and Hospitality in Brisbane for blocks of six weeks where we did the theory and practical, then work placement in the shop. We paid our own way ourselves and saved up the money to have when we got there. The old rattler train to Brisbane from up north took two days, and filled with apprentices from as far north as Cairns to do the block release. It was a load of fun.

What are the typical products you have in your store?

We are a traditional butcher, breaking body beef and chickens; we make our own smallgoods like sausages, bacon and the Christmas Hams. We have a little property out at Bloomsbury where we fatten cattle for the shop and processed locally at McGill's. They also supply the rest of the beef we can't supply along with the pork, we use box meat to supplement the bodies. We are pretty lucky around here to have a small, local processor like McGill's.

Who is your typical customer?

Most of our customers are working class like us, but we also get a lot of miners and travellers. Sometimes the miners will come in and load up before heading back out west, it wouldn't be unusual for us to have the complete display cleaned out. We've got plenty of parking space around us so sometimes we have had B-double trucks deliver to us and can pull up on their way through.

What is your favourite products?

At the end of the day, I like to eat a good steak. Basic butcher meats are fine by me.

What has been the highlight of butchering so far?

Getting a freehold butcher shop in Mackay, which has given me the opportunity to put my two sons through butcher apprenticeships. We now own the business and the shop. Having our own backgrounded beef is a highlight as I get to grow and fatten the steers through to display. Our customers look forward to when we get local supplies

What are some of the challenges you have faced?

Biggest challenges at the moment are rising costs and smaller margins. Electricity has gone up two and half fold, beef and lamb price increases and the cost of running the business, like insurance and council fees, all mean that our margins are smaller. We can't pass on those costs to the consumer. It's tight competition here in Mackay.

What goals do you have for the future?

We would like to expand the shop for more storage and coolrooms, because we could sell a lot more hams at Christmas. I'd also like to get both my sons through their apprenticeships and ready to run their own businesses, so they can be the next generation of butchers. There is just not enough young butchers coming through the training system and they need good quality education which includes making a good sausage and how to run a business.

What is your retirement dream?

I'd like to keep fattening cattle at Bloomsbury and when I get the chance, crabbing for blue swimmer and mud crabs at Thompson Creek (near the Whitsunday airport).

How is superannuation important to you?

I grew up with a philosophy of 'save for a rainy day', and that is what superannuation is, putting money aside every pay for when you need it, it is so important. AMIST Super is the best super fund I've ever been in. Our local rep comes and spends the time with me to show me where I'm at – I like that, I'm old school, the personal contact is appreciated.

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Amcor buys Bemis

Amcor has announced the acquisition of Bemis to create the world's biggest packaging company. Effective from mid June 2019, the combined company will have sales in excess of US\$13 billion with operations in 245 locations across 40 countries.

Amcor is already a major supplier of packaging to the Australian and New Zealand meat industries. Amcor works with leading companies around the world to protect their products and the people who rely on them, differentiate brands and improve value-chains through a range of flexible and rigid packaging, specialty cartons, closures, and services.

The company is focused on making packaging that is increasingly light-weight, recyclable and reusable, and with increasing amounts of recycled content.

The addition of Bemis' shrink bag and barrier film capabilities in New Zealand, China, Europe and the US, combined with Amcor's print and converting capacity from its 10 Australian and New Zealand plants provides a real alternative for fresh meat processors in the region.

Amcor has created a dedicated meat packaging team, with experienced sales, technical and customer service support to focus on delivering this new capacity and capability.

"As the global leader in consumer packaging, Amcor is uniquely positioned to capitalise on shifting consumer preferences, an evolving customer and retail landscape and the increasing need to develop packaging that best protects the product as well as the environment," Amcor Chief Executive Officer, Ron Delia said.

"The acquisition of Bemis brings additional scale, capabilities and



Amcor Chief Executive Officer Ron Delia described the acquisition as: "a significant milestone as two strong companies with histories each dating back over 150 years look forward to one great future."

footprint that will strengthen Amcor's industry-leading value proposition and generate significant value for shareholders." Mr Delia said. ■



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Pies a Powerful \$value-add

The Great Aussie Pie and Sausage Roll Competition is a signature event of the Fine Food Australia exhibition, and while the majority of entrants are bakeries, every year, a few butchers give it a go, and actually do quite well. But there is more to one of this year's entrants, The Squealing Pig, than a decent meat pie.

The Squealing Pig opened its doors two and a half years ago, the shop name created some controversy, but owner Gary Thompson is not fazed by the publicity they received. Instead, the business, based in Burpengary in the Moreton Bay region, has gone on to attract customers from both sides of the highway that splits the town and the pies have put the local bakery out of business. The shop is set to take over the baker's premises in an expansion program.

The butcher shop turns over more than 400 pies per week in a variety of flavours under a 'no waste' policy. Gary started making pies in order to value-add to the meat in the butcher



shop – anything from pork shoulder that becomes a pulled pork pie, to a roast lamb pie.

"Making the pies is about minimising the waste from the shop," says Gary. "If an item has been on the shelf for a day or two it gets re-purposed into a pie. The flavours of the pies will vary from day to day depending on what needs to be used."

The business runs on a tight margin and as a consequence there is no fat and bone bin behind the shop – nothing goes to waste, particularly in an environment where the cost of meat is high and the returns from the fat and bone, low.

Gary went into the Great Aussie Pie and Sausage Roll Competition after seeing the listing in the competition pages of *Australian Meat News*, to see how his pies measured up compared to the many bakeries that enter the competition.

The final result for The Squealing Pig were two silver and four bronze medals for BBQ pulled pork and cheese, traditional chunky beef pie, pizza supreme, Tex Mex and Mac Daddy which featured brisket and traditional macaroni cheese and bacon.

Quietly pleased with the outcome, Gary acknowledges that the competition attracts high quality bakers, and his own entries would always be limited by using pre-made cases. For the moment, Gary is happy to see that he is comparable to top bakers and may look to making his own cases for future competitions.

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continued from page 11

Other butchers in the competition were Griffiths Butchery, ACT (two silver, two bronze) and Brannans Butchery, WA (silver).

The Squealing Pig is more than just medal winning pies.

With a broad customer base from tradesmen to retirees, Gary and his team, know that many of their customers are time poor when it comes to the family meal.

Breakfast, lunch and evening meals are all available from the store, where the take home meal with vegetables, particular a roast, is a favourite for many customers. Traditional butcher cuts are also available sourced from a local farmer for the lamb and pork from Biggenden.

Boasting a full commercial kitchen to prepare the value-add and ready meals, the business has a regular staff of eight, including a full-time chef who operates five days per week, with Gary doing two days as cook. Gary readily admits he is not a qualified chef, but with many takeaway shops, catering

and restaurants in his past, he is more than capable of holding his own.

“I did my apprenticeship 36 years ago, and in that time had a number of businesses in the food industry, plus I was meat trainer and assessor for a number of years. Coming back to a butcher shop with ready meals was a natural progression for me.

“We do a range of value-add products not just pies and roasts, but burgers, slow cooked brisket, lasagne, stir fry and vegetable bakes. The brisket is done in the combi oven overnight, while the roasts go in at about 3.30 in the morning ready for use by 7am. People can give us a call at lunchtime, order a meal for that night and pick it up on their way home.”

Gary is supportive of apprentices, and encourages his staff to learn from the chef, recognising that there is a shortfall in current training programs to meet the needs of the rising trend in value-add butchers. Gary believes that business models like his are the way of the future for butchers and

with more interest from foodies, bringing the butcher and the chef together is important.

The rising popularity of butcher competitions such as World Butchers' Challenge and Meatstock Butcher Wars has done much to raise the profile of butchers, says Gary. The 2018 Kingsford Invitational Baleout Butcher competition saw Gary's team of young butchers from Queensland, take out the event, beating the New South Wales team, many of whom were part of the Aussie Steelers team.

“Competitions have been a great way for the public to understand what butchers do – our shop sponsors a couple of teams for the low n slow competitions and we will be taking part in the Kingsford Invitational again this year.”

A combination of trying something new, learning new skills and understanding your customer has given The Squealing Pig recognition for their food, and growing success with their customers. ■



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Dry Aged Beef – *Elite to Special Staple*

In this digital age of globalisation, customers have access to more information and options about the food they buy and eat than ever before. This creates a society which places more emphasis on superior quality and specialty foods. Transforming the average buyer into a gourmand, expectant of luxury. Unique ethnic ingredients, sustainable produce and extravagantly indulgent dishes are becoming mainstream.

Furthermore, the increasing popularity of cooking shows like *MasterChef* or *My Kitchen Rules*, and the consequent perception of amazing chefs almost as international celebrities, has inspired a new generation of home cooks. People now see the food displayed on such shows as the norm and expect to be able to reproduce this type of food at home.

This presents traditional butcher shops with the dilemma of how to fulfill this new type of demand – to provide products that inspire their customers and remain on trend. One great way to do this is to present a dry aged range.

Dry Aged beef has inspired such a huge trend in the food industry recently. It has become a staple on menus at premium restaurants and steakhouses alike, as a widely acknowledged delicacy. And it's a trend extending further than fine dining, gaining great momentum amongst home foodies as well.

The process of dry aging is an age-old tradition used to prepare meat. For hundreds of years, butchers left their meat on hooks to mature over long periods, drying out as they age before selling them. Then, with the onset of new technology with barrier packaging, the trend died out. It has since resurfaced at full force, but now



Left to right: Rod Benedek, Head Butcher; Ray Shipley, Retail Manager and Wayne Shipley, Owner.

combining new technology with an age-old idea.

The concept involves hanging a fresh carcase in a completely climate and temperature-controlled environment. As it ages, the meat loses moisture, to intensify and concentrate the flavour. It also allows the enzymes in the meat to break down muscles tissue and hardened glands, making the meat far more tender and textural.

The result? Meat with that signature luxuriant, dark appearance, where the marbled veins of fat stand out against rich wine-red flesh. Even with a typically lesser quality cut, it becomes meat to die for.

The dry ageing process brings out a greater depth and range of flavour for customers to enjoy – and then become obsessed by. Many of these customers try such a steak in a premium

restaurant, and dream from then on about recreating it for themselves.

For retail butchers, competing against large, chain supermarkets has never been harder. So, going back to the roots of meat preparation can be a telling point-of-difference. Offering delicious, artisanal meat as well as an aesthetic display feature adds considerable theatrical credence to a customer's in-store experience. It also builds your brand as an epicurean, gourmet trader, and allows you to inspire everyday customers to bring new complexity of flavour and sophistication to home cooking.

A great example of the difference a Dry Ager can make in a retail butcher's store is George's Fine Meats, a specialist butcher in Sydney.

Ray Shipley, of George's Fine Meats, Sydney recently incorporated the Dry



Ager in his retail butcher shop, to showcase the high quality of meat to customers, which 'needed to be on show, recognised and displayed in its whole primal', taking customers on a journey of flavour and education of the traditional method of aging meat.

Ultimately, it was his customers pointing them in the direction of dry aged meat, which inspired them to extend their product range. He believes that consumers are becoming increasingly enthusiastic about the meat they eat, and, paves the way for retail butchers to pass on their passion and knowledge to customers, introducing them to a new depth of flavour.

This new demographic of meat connoisseurs prefers the experience of seeing the meat displayed and will often go one step further to select their preferred cuts, and Ray's customers are excited to wait until the ageing process is complete to pick their own steak or roast.

'Customers are very intrigued to know the history and the difference of meat displayed in the cabinet, whether it is grass-fed, or Wagyu, or whether it's dry age pork.'

Ray commends the dry ager's elegant design, being a plug and play solution, meant that he could place the meat on the shelves, set the temperature and humidity and leave it to work, knowing that the meat will age flawlessly. 'Customers are now looking for something different, not just a little piece of steak in a plastic wrap tray' Ray says. Incorporating a Dry Aged range to their shop in Sydney has been phenomenal, and provides a higher element of sophistication to the way meat is appreciated.

For them, a Dry Aging cabinet has been an unqualified success, in terms of brand and product, and it has the same ability to upscale any retail butcher looking for a unique point-of-difference.



Viking Food Solutions are the exclusive distributor of the Dry Ager in Australian & New Zealand, providing CAD drawings and expert assistance to shop or restaurant owners wanting to incorporate a Dry Aged range in their offerings.

To learn more about the Dry Ager, head to dryager.com.au ■

Strong competition, strong butchers

The emergence of competitions for butchers is giving many in the industry an opportunity to improve their knowledge, network with peers and promote their business. The biggest challenge is knowing what competitions are on and where.

As we move forward with each issue, *Australian Meat News* will keep you updated on competition dates.

Have we missed a competition or has a date changed?

Let us know at optimalnews@majestic.net.au

COMPETITION	DESCRIPTION	DATES	WEBSITE	CONTACT
Meatstock Butcher Wars	A feature of Meatstock, the competitors are given 30 minutes to produce a range of retail-ready products from a half saddle of pork and half a lamb. Judging is based on technique, speed, creativity and final presentation.	Auckland: 15 – 16 February, 2020 Melbourne: 14-15 March, 2020 Sydney: 1 – 3 May, 2020	www.meatstock.com.au	Shannon Walker shannon.walker7@tafensw.edu.au https://meatstock.com.au/
AMIC Sausage King	Designed to give AMIC member butchers an opportunity to produce the very best sausages	State competitions held May-July 2019, National winners announced in February 2020	www.amic.org.au	
AMIC Apprentice of the Year	Recognises the skill and training of butcher apprentices	National winner announced February 2020. Check state AMIC reps for state competitions	www.amic.org.au	
Great Aussie Pie and Sausage Roll Competition	During Fine Foods Australia	September 7-10 2020, Melbourne	www.greataussiepiecomp.com.au	Danielle Lindsay admin@greataussiepiecomp.com.au
World Butchers Challenge	Teams have now been selected! Congratulations	Sacramento, California, USA September 2020	www.worldbutcherschallengeaustralia.com.au	Senior Team: Trevor Saville, Savillesho1@bigpond.com Apprentices/Young Butcher, Robert Retallick, robert.retallick@gourmetbob.com
Royal Sydney Fine Foods	54 classes of smallgoods and charcuterie for butchers and manufacturers	26 June entries close 26-27 August 2020 judging	http://www.rasns.com.au/sydney-royal-competitions/competitions/deli-meat/	Fine Food Show Coordinator dtomsen@rasns.com.au
PorkMark Ham and Bacon Awards	The Australian PorkMark Awards for two categories of ham and bacon	June 2020, Sydney Winners announced August 2020	www.Porkmark.com.au	
Australian Fine Awards	Branded meats and smallgoods as part of the Royal Melbourne Show	Products due in July 2020, results announced September 2020	https://www.rasv.com.au/australian-food-awards/	
State Butcher Challenge	State butcher teams battle it out for bragging rights to support Aussie Farmers	November 9-10, 2019 Sydney		Shannon Walker shannon.walker7@tafensw.edu.au

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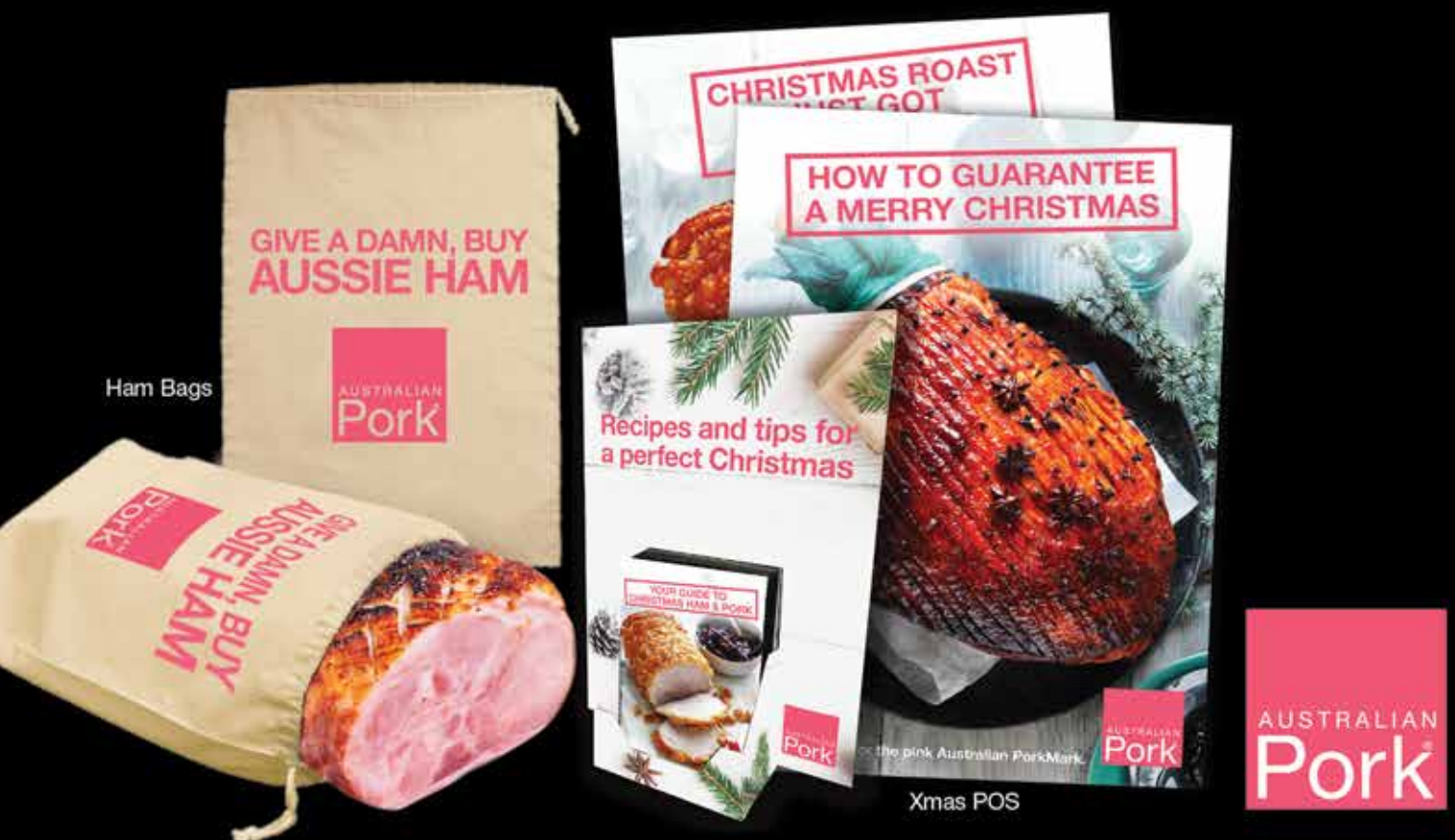
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Bec Gamble is passionate about becoming a butcher, and as a mature-age apprentice has committed to making some pretty big life changes to make it happen.



Determination and Dedication make a Butcher

A mature-age apprenticeship is not a decision to be taken lightly – it often means a change in career, lifestyle, and in Bec Gamble's case, moving from the country to the city. With a passion for charcuterie, Bec has done all that and loving the rewards.

A self-confessed foodie, who contemplated taking on a chef or bakery apprenticeship, Bec Gamble has turned 20 years of admin and finance on its head and is undertaking a Certificate 3 in Retail Butchery to work toward her dream of specialising in charcuterie.

The dream began around four years ago, when on a trip to London, Bec found herself looking in all the butcher's windows at the different products available – so different to what she had seen in her home town butcher shops in north east Victoria.

Realising that there was more to charcuterie than bacon, Bec researched her developing passion options online to find ways to break into the industry.

"In all honesty, it probably started with an obsession with bacon," said Bec. "Then salamis and terrines and whatever else I could learn from my charcuterie/cook books and online.

"I am very much a process-focused person, so if I wanted to do a lamb shoulder at home, I would bone it out myself in order to learn. Doing a butcher's apprenticeship never really

crossed my mind. I did a workshop in breaking down lamb, and investigated what training I could do, but there wasn't much I could do specifically for charcuterie."

An opportunity to use her skills in admin and finance led Bec to working for a small RTO (registered training organisation) in her home town. Response Learning, offer training in the meat industry. Whilst not working with meat herself, this allowed her to be surrounded by people in the meat industry, and to keep her passion alive. Opportunities also arose that enabled Bec to do part time work with LambTastic, a saltbush lamb farm in southern NSW, and a local butcher shop, Meat on Melville, who offered, should the chance arise, to give her an apprenticeship.

In the meantime, Bec's inspiration and desire to be in the industry grew with social media, following groups such as Grrls Meat Camp, Farce Charcuterie and butcher shops such as Victor Churchill in Sydney, Kitchen and Butcher in Healesville, and MeatSmith in Melbourne on Instagram. An opportunity with Kitchen and Butcher proved to be not the right timing, but two years ago, an opportunity with MeatSmith became available.

"I had followed MeatSmith on social media and loved what they did and was pretty excited to see an apprenticeship was available. My resume was 20 years of admin, with no real experience in the meat industry, so in the end I sent a letter describing my passion.

continued on page 20



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continued from page 19



Bec followed Meatsmith, Fitzroy, on Instagram, and jumped at the chance to follow her dreams.

"I hadn't even really considered that I would actually get a job with MeatSmith, but a week later, I made the trip to Melbourne for an interview and the following week was planning how the hell I was going to make such a big move from my home town to the city."

The move represented a massive change for Bec – change in income, new city, new job – but with characteristic determination, she has made it work.

MeatSmith has two stores – St Kilda is more wholesale and fresh meat production, while Fitzroy is geared toward smallgoods with smokers and dry ageing onsite. This has allowed Bec to work with some of the country's amazing producers. Bec has now experienced many facets of butchery, completing her theory elements with William Angliss TAFE.

Bec has now completed two years of her Certificate 3 in Retail Butchery and about to undertake a Smallgoods on Scope course which will see her finish her training in around 12 months.

"I've enjoyed all aspects of the training, from working with people from different areas of the world with different skills and styles – there is no one way to truss a chicken, or bone a leg of lamb – through to the process and methodology that goes into production, I'm also interested in the scientific side of butchery and working with meat – anatomy and physiology which appeals to my academic brain.

"The creativity of value-add products is appealing, it's a great outlet for my cooking skills. Presentation skills still need some work!

"I'm not sure where this journey will take me, but by placing the necessary stones in place in front of me, I can keep moving forward toward a career in butchery and charcuterie, I don't have any current plans for when I finish my apprenticeships, I still have so much to learn when I have finished, and want to absorb as much knowledge as I can. I would like to travel and work with different people all over the world, and one day could end up with my own store or as charcuterie trainer – the sky is the limit." ■



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A mobile abattoir concept is showing promise in New South Wales, created by Red 8 Produce.

Mobile and agile abattoir

In the past farmers slaughtered their own animals on the farm for the local supply chain. But regulation and the centralisation of meat buying saw the practice decline.

Another problem was the big abattoirs would not handle small herds again restricting local supply of meats. Today it can be a long time between the farm and the supermarket shelf.

But two New South Wales farmers have been working on a solution to bring locally produced meat back to butchers in the surrounding area.

Uralla farmers Anita Taylor and Sarah Burrows have developed an on-farm abattoir to meet the demand of farmers wanting to process their own animals under the brand Red 8 Produce.

Their lightweight, mobile abattoir will be able to process cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, deer, and kangaroos.

Ms Taylor said the idea has been formulated over a number of years.

"I married into a farming family and it was a sudden introduction into farming life where the farm processed its own animals for the families use," she said.

"Having come from the city, it helped me understand how delicious and tender farm slaughtered meat is."

This led Ms Taylor and Ms Burrows to think why can't farm processing of animals happen commercially?

They discovered the stringent hygiene regulations that had deterred many farmers from going down this route to supply farm killed meat.

"We wanted to save our animals from the stress of live transport, feedlots and holding yards and allow them to live their whole life on the farm," Ms Taylor said. But there were also obstructions of micro processing meat

on a small scale and making any investment in such processes productive and profitable.

"An abattoir has to be used on more than one farm to meet these criteria," Ms Taylor said.

"Both of us looked overseas, but we didn't want a big semi-trailer based mobile abattoir."

This is where Ms Taylor's pastime, gliding, produced the idea of a mobile abattoir that could be towed behind a car.

When a glider lands away from an airfield, it is towed back in a long trailer, so the idea of towing an abattoir was born.

Ms Taylor said it has taken three years from the idea to producing a prototype mobile abattoir, but during this time the pair has been helped with NSW State Government funding.

This was through the government's Local Innovation Network, a scheme to develop regional entrepreneurship and support start-ups.

From this the pair developed the start-up business Red 8 Produce with the help of network member, the University of New England's Smart Region Incubator (SRI).

"Joining the incubator gave us access to mentors, meat scientists, engineers, legal advice and meat processors," she said.

"The SRI introduced us to the CEO of Meat and Livestock Australia Donor Company who invited us to join their producer innovation program, including a grant and in kind support throughout the development process. We're also grateful for the expert support received through the Farming Together program"



Ms Taylor said they are also working on connecting the business with like-minded butchers and suppliers

“We want to reward sustainable farmers and also provide consumers with high quality, ethical and sustainable meat,” she said.

The mobile abattoir is made up of four modules, including slaughter and chilling, and at present the prototype central processing module has been built.

“The central unit takes the slaughtered animal into the main processing part of the abattoir,” she said.

“It has now been tested and regulatory validation has been achieved.”

Market research has found retail butchers are looking for something different to stock and farm killed meat free from additives is an opportunity.

“We have found there is a market for butchers to stock small quantities of farm killed meat,” Ms Taylor said.

“We shall start by supplying local butchers in the New England area but we are looking to expand in the future.

“Each farm producer is different and this will produce a product that is working for our business model.”

Ms Taylor said Red 8 produce was not aiming to replace the big abattoirs and their product is aimed at a niche market.

“Initially we will start with small volumes, processing beef and lamb as we both come from sheep and beef farms,” Ms Taylor said

“We know consumers want to understand what they are eating and trust their local butcher to deliver such quality produce.

“We are taking the concept of local farmers supplying local butchers back to almost the old days.”

After the initial testing in NSW, Ms Taylor said there was no reason why their mobile abattoirs could not be made available to groups of producers or larger producers to operate in other parts of Australia.

“What we have produced is not just an abattoir, but a certified food system that can operate on any farm where the farmers want to slaughter their own animals,” she said. ■

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Food Processing Company gets amazing results with Venturi Aerator

In 2018, the Environmental Manager at Bega, Northern Victoria, Mr Sean Trebley, was given the task of upgrading their Strathmerton Plant's wastewater aeration system.

The wastewater system consisted of a DAF unit, which flowed into an aerated lagoon, and after this the effluent was stored in two non-aerated lagoons during winter, before irrigation in summer.

Aerators are needed to keep the COD down and reduce odours in the aerated and the downstream non-aerated lagoons.

They had an ageing system of surface aerators in the aerated lagoon, consisting of two 22kW units and six 8kW units, however generally only 1 or 2 of these units were operated at any time.

Over a number of years these surface aerators had progressively failed because of their age and repairing them meant deploying cranes and/or boats to access them.

This process was expensive and had resulted in damage to the dam liner. Eventually it became uneconomic to keep repairing the aerators.

Therefore it was decided to look for a solution that was safer for operators and easier to maintain.

Mr Trebley contacted Hydro Innovations to discuss the use of their "bank-mounted" Venturi-Aeration systems. These are mounted on the banks of lagoons and use a self-priming pump to draw water from the lagoon. The pump discharges it under pressure through the Venturi-Aerator. The unit draws in atmospheric air using the "venturi effect", mixes it with the water being pumped, and discharges it back into the lagoon, charged with dissolved oxygen.

Sean and his team really liked the idea of bank-mounting because it gave



operators easy access to equipment for monitoring and/or repair, making it much safer and more cost effective to maintain. Their only concern was whether the units were as efficient as the surface [floating] technologies.

Hydro Innovations were able to provide information indicating that with the use of the right pump, oxygen transfer efficiency [OTE] for Venturi-Aeration units can be as high or higher than 1.86kgO₂/kWh, making them as at least as efficient as the surface [floating] technologies.

The aerated lagoon contained 45ML of effluent, with in-flows from 80-120ML per year. This required a 150mm Venturi-Aeration unit and was paired with a Gorman-Rupp V6A60-B self priming pump, with a hydraulic efficiency of 70%.

Bega installed the unit early in 2019. The above photo shows the condition of the lagoon at this point, after the previous system had been decommissioned several months previous.

In this photo, it can be seen that ripples from the aerator "radiate" to all parts of the lagoon, ensuring a good level of mixing.

Since installation, operators have seen a continued increase in the dissolved oxygen [DO] level, and have seen COD fall by 50% even though the higher level of mixing was re-suspending settled solids, which became more "bioavailable" to the CFU's.

Sean and the Bega crew are happy with the ever-increasing levels of DO, the reduction in COD, and their odour free lagoon. The Wastewater & Maintenance Teams are also pleased that monitoring and maintenance can be done safely, and without the use of cranes, boats or winches.

More information about Venturi-Aerators or Gorman-Rupp pumps can be obtained from info@hydroinnovations.com.au ■

Livestock have a positive role to play in our environment

The most recent report of the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) suggested that amongst other things, a diet with less meat and greater emphasis on vegetables, legumes and grains is more conducive to improved land use and emissions reductions.

However, it is not all doom and gloom for the Australian meat industry.

The report, released in August 2019, assessed current land use practices and the implications for how we grow and eat food. And the problem of food waste.

Professor Annette Cowie of University of New England, a contributing author to the report, said reducing red meat consumption would give the potential of 3-8 Gt CO₂e/year reduction (assuming there is less cleared land for grazing as well), but the flip side is that cattle provide high quality protein and iron for a healthy diet.

Specifically, the report states: "...ruminants can have positive ecological effects if they are fed extensively on existing grasslands. Similarly, reducing waste at all points along the entire food chain is a significant opportunity for improving demand-side adaptation measures ... the unique capacity of ruminants to produce high-quality food from low-quality forage, in particular from landscapes that cannot be cropped, ... could be seen as an effective way to improve the feed to meat ratio."

The report says that: "meat analogues such as imitation meat (from plant products) cultured meat, and insects may help in the transition to more healthy and sustainable diets, although their carbon footprints and acceptability are uncertain."

Efficiency

Efficient production, transport, processing, packaging and storage are highlighted as key areas for emissions mitigation.

The report says up to a third of global food production is lost to wastage, contributing 8-10% of global emissions and costing around US\$1trillion a year, globally.

Many companies in the packaging sector – Sealed Air, Krehalon, Multivac and others, have committed to the Australian Packaging Covenant to reduce plastics by 2025, to maintain the integrity and shelf life of meat products to reduce food wastage and emissions from plastic production.

In Australia, most cattle graze on rangeland and improved pastures that are unsuitable for cropping. With good management these soils can be improved. Lower chemical inputs will also reduce emissions.

The feedlot industry represents a fraction of the cattle inventory. Two to three per cent of Australian cattle are finished in feedlots to maintain production in the off-seasons – winter/autumn or during extended dry spells.

Changing Climate

Changing weather patterns, some of which is already being felt, such as lower rainfall indicators across the country, are also impacting on the ability to grow pasture and bounce back from severe events – whether it is drought, frost or flood.

continued on page 26

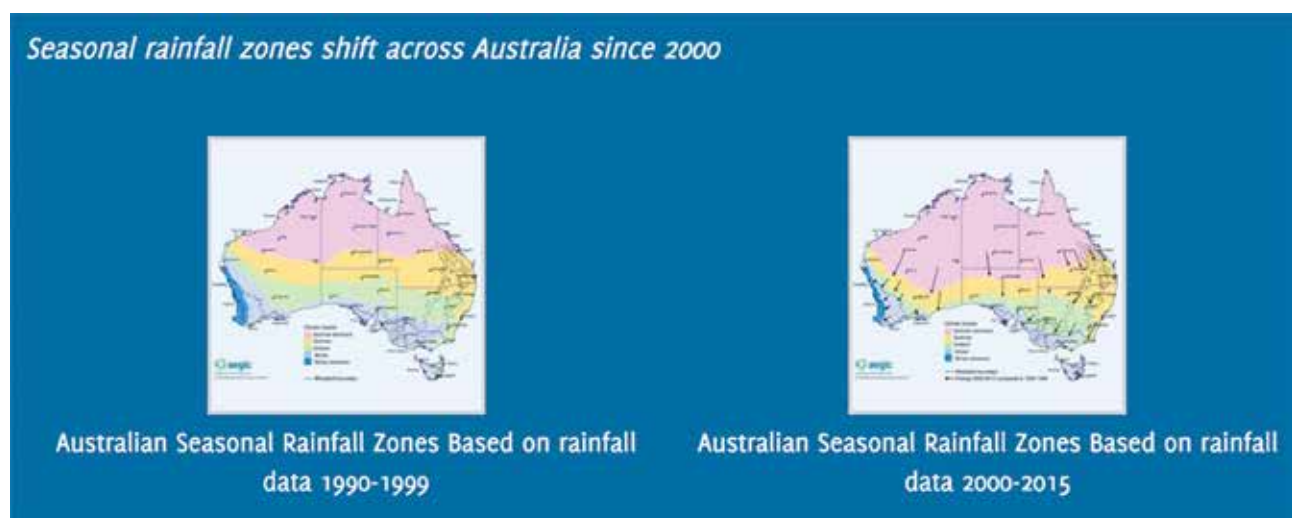


Fig 1. Changes in rainfall patterns 1990 – 2015. Source: Australian Export Grains Innovation Centre

continued from page 25

Changes in rainfall patterns are clearly evident in Fig 1. Showing the patterns taking a downward shift into New South Wales giving lower rainfall patterns and higher temperatures, that are causing so many producers and processors of crops and livestock, heartache in the current drought.

The IPCC report suggests that changes in climate will affect pastoral systems through reduced production, increased costs of water (if it is available) and degradation of land. For livestock, the dry and hot conditions affect reproduction, weight gain and the numbers of animals that can be carried per paddock.

Farm Initiatives

According to Richard Eckard, a climate specialist for livestock at University of Melbourne, farmers who engage in planting more trees for shade and shelter and undertake soil improvement practices, see improvement in pasture, better fertility rates and better livestock growth rates.

Recommendations of the IPCC report, to reduce land degradation, improve soil fertility and pasture, is not confined to one single action, but rather a collaborative approach to whole-farm care.

“We really do need to take drastic action urgently to reduce greenhouse gas emissions,” Professor Cowie said.

“When we plant trees, when we do sustainable land management practices that build organic land and soil, we actually take carbon out of the atmosphere and we store it in the land.” ■

Based on comments made by Professor Cowie and Dr Eckard, the industry can undertake a few suggestions to ensure the meat industry can meet the challenges of a changing climate:

Farmers:

- Plant more trees to hold carbon and water in the soil and provide shade and shelter for livestock.
- Manage grazing to allow pasture to recover.
- Plant grasses with deep root systems to hold water and soil.

Processors and abattoirs:

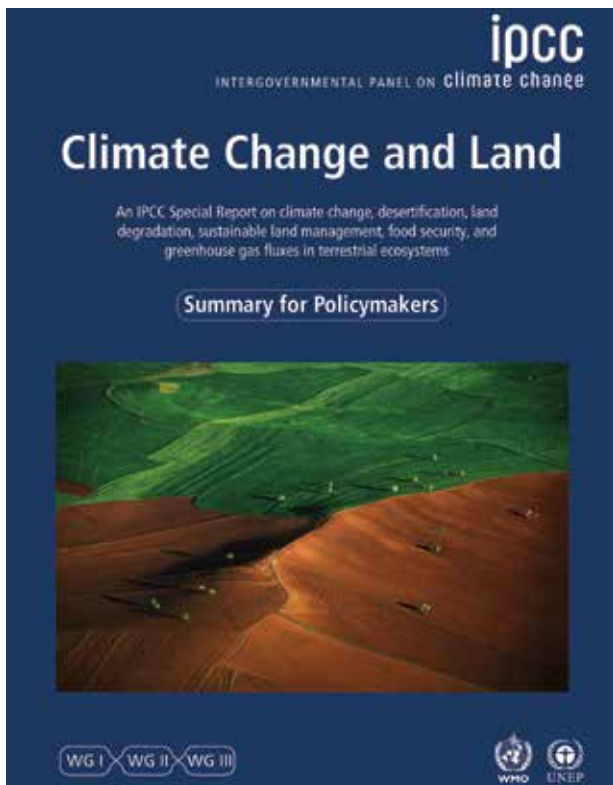
- Improve methods of manure composting.
- Wastewater management such as biogas, irrigation for pasture.
- Find a customer for every cut.
- Work with food charities for excess product.

Manufacturers:

- Less plastic content in packaging.
- Appropriate storage to maintain or extend shelf life.
- Careful handling of products to minimise wastage through damage.
- Work with food charities for excess product.

Butchers:

- Use less plastic in packaging eg no carry bag, plastic that is more sustainable.
- Encourage customers to buy from producers committed to land and cattle management practices.
- Encourage better quality, but less quantity meats.
- Utilise the whole carcass.
- Value-add a ready meal with legumes and grains – eg lamb shank casserole with barley or lentils.
- Work with food charities for excess product.
- Establish a relationship with a farmer.



Changing Times

Cruising the “The Already Read Bookshop”, in Euroa, north east Victoria, AMN found a shelf of pre-loved recipe books from the 1980s and early 1990s. In some respects, Australian cooking habits, culture and lifestyles were very different. At the same time some basics don’t change. The three books described below are memories for some and ancient history for others.

The Complete Australian Barbecue Kettle Cookbook by Ross McDonald & Margaret Kirkwood (1995 edition). First published in 1988, is a comprehensive guide on how to choose and use a “BBQ Kettle” a.k.a a Weber.

The first seven pages describe the essential elements of a BBQ Kettle – including material, handles, vents, racks, leg and enamel finish. It’s no coincidence that a Weber scores highly on all these attributes!

The next 15 describe how to set it up for cooking – selection and placement of fuel, positioning of racks and temperature management. The next 10 set out the basic principles of cooking in a kettle context.

Recipes for all meats including fish and game, vegetables, deserts, breads and cakes and even vegetarian BBQ represent the biggest portion of the book at around 200 pages.

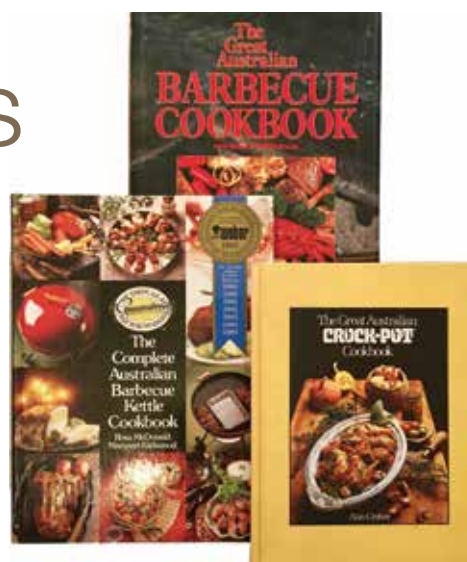
To get a feel for the tone of this book: “Something we all know is that Australians love steak. However some barbecue kettle owners may think it is hard to justify lighting their barbecue just to cook a few steaks... After tasting just one steak... grilled inside your barbeque kettle, you will never want to cook a steak any other way.”

The Great Australian Barbecue Cookbook. No author, but published by Peter Antll-Ross and Associates in 1991.

A weighty volume of 200 plus pages. It’s about BBQing at home, but also while camping where one has fewer resources on hand. It starts with the basics. Place your BBQ in a safe place, sheltered from wind and be mindful of fire risks such as overhanging tree limbs. Ensure kids are supervised by a responsible adult. Keep water on-hand to suppress flairs-ups and spot fires.

Twenty pages provide a guide to building your own BBQ using bricks, concrete and rocks. Then there are 150 pages of recipes for basic bbq and no fuss cooking. There is an extensive section on marinades, sauces and salads to compliment.

The Great Australian CROCK-POT Cookbook by Ann Creber. Published in 1980, this book was designed to promote the ‘Crock-Pot’ slow cooker. In the introduction the author says when first approached to write a Crock-Pot cookbook she was concerned there were not enough recipes to justify the project. But after three months of practical recipe development she found the opposite – endless great recipes – which ones to leave out!



The book has hundreds of recipes for slow cooking (4-10 hours) all meats.

1980 was early-days for electric slow cookers and the book provides some basic guidance. “Readers are advised: Voltage variation, which happens everywhere can still cause recipes not to be done after 8 hours ... when the recipe says 8 to 10 hours. Altitude and extreme humidity can have the same effect.”

Convenience had a slightly different definition 30 years ago. “Your ‘Crock-Pot’ can help you get the best advantage from your freezer. You can prepare double the usual quantity of a favourite casserole and when cooked freeze the extra amount ... When you want a meal without any extra preparation, just place the frozen food in the ‘Crock-Pot’ and heat for 8 to 10 hours...”

Another great insight by the author when discussing chicken recipes: “The age of the chicken – often a secret between the chicken and the poulterer – makes a great difference to the length of cooking time...” ■

WIN WIN

To enter our competition to win: *The Complete Australian Barbecue Kettle Cookbook* AND *The Great Australian Barbecue Cookbook* AND *The Great Australian CROCK-POT Cookbook*. (all 3) Combined market value \$6.

Answer the question below:

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Australian Meat News Book Competition

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Question: *How many students started their apprenticeships in 2018?*

Entries close 15 February 2020

MINTRAC has a positive future

After twenty-seven years of operation, the MINTRAC Board and Staff can confidently say that the Australian meat processing industry has a world-class training system. But, there's still more to be achieved. Retiring CEO, Jenny Kroonstuiver, reflects on the past, present and future of MINTRAC.

When MINTRAC was formed in 1993, it was in an industry where there was industrial unrest, different training systems in every state, and some major work health and safety challenges.

MINTRAC was formed to develop a national training system for the Australian meat processing industry. From the outset it was a partnership between processors, the Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union (AMIEU) and the industry peak bodies, including the research and development corporations. This partnership continues today and is reflected in the membership of the MINTRAC Board.

MINTRAC's very first task was to develop national qualifications for meat processing, meat inspection and butchery. Over our twenty-seven years of operation we have continued to manage the national qualifications for meat processing, and have added qualifications in smallgoods, food services, stock handling, wild game harvesting, poultry processing, Quality Assurance and management.

In the early years the industry was training around 10,000 new trainees every year, and still trains an average of 6-7,000, transitioning an industry with no qualifications to a highly skilled workforce with clearly identified career pathways. Productivity and safety improved dramatically, as did knowledge and understanding of meat safety and animal welfare.

Many of the industry's senior staff are now graduates of the Diploma, Advanced Diploma and Graduate programs, and they see training as being integral to business processes.

One of the great strengths of the meat processing training system is the direct engagement of both company and employee representatives in the development and



Jenny Kroonstuiver.

implementation of the system. Training is taken directly to the job, with over 90% of the training occurring in the workplace – it is only at the higher levels of management training that some training occurs off the job.

Another major strength of the system has been the ability of MINTRAC to ensure that the training system remains current. The relationship with AMPC and MLA has meant that research and development outcomes have been consistently incorporated into the training programs. Similarly, relationships with regulators have ensured that regulatory changes and changes to customer requirements are also quickly adopted.

To achieve this, meat processing is one of the few industry sectors which provides its trainers with industry-developed training resources, as well as access to a wide range of professional development opportunities. A key aspect of the training system is the national consistency, currency and high-quality delivery of training and assessment. In an environment where the industry is regularly audited by overseas customers, a strong and consistent training system is a valuable asset.

Keeping the resources current is one a great challenge. Everyone sees the value, but few want to pay for the development – sourcing funding for new resources and major updates is always on the go.

Industry engagement and relationships are also an important aspect of MINTRAC's success. In 2000, Senior Project Officer Clive Richardson proposed a concept of creating an industry network bringing together researchers, regulators, trainers and industry quality assurance personnel. The very first meeting involved about thirty people in a small room at TAFE NSW.

Over the years, the network evolved into two meetings offered in each state every year, and similar networks for HR Managers and Trainers, Engineers and Environmental Managers, as well as two National conferences. Originally funded through MLA, responsibility for funding these networks transitioned to AMPC in about 2010. Earlier this year, AMPC decided to run the networks themselves, although MINTRAC continues to run the conferences.

When we reflect over MINTRAC's first 27 years, it is clear that the organisation has gone from nothing to an internationally respected system. I often see evidence of our system and materials being used in other countries and translated into multiple languages.

But there are always new issues and the work of MINTRAC is far from done. Labour skills and retention remain key challenges for the industry, and issues such as animal welfare and traceability demand a supply-chain approach that is not fully reflected in the training system. Shortages in meat inspectors are leading to the development of new training models in partnership with universities.

MINTRAC is already building its capability in developing and offering on-line and webinar training programs, as well as an expanded professional development program, due to be fully implemented early in 2020.

The industry organisational restructuring proposed by the recent release of the White Paper, may also mean changes for MINTRAC, which has always depended on industry funding support for much of its work. The MINTRAC Board is determined to ensure the ongoing viability of MINTRAC, as well as to ensure that it continues to provide and maintain the industry training system.

After over twenty years of service to MINTRAC, Clive Richardson is shifting into a consultancy role. Clive's ability to find training solutions for some of the most critical industry challenges has been invaluable to MINTRAC over many years.

MINTRAC is also searching for a new CEO. Since it began in 1992, the organisation has had only two CEOs, and after sixteen years, I move on to retirement in 2020.

But, MINTRAC's continuity lies in its Board and in its ability to attract and train excellent staff. It has been a privilege to work in such a dynamic organisation and I have every confidence that the staff will continue to provide the high-quality services the industry has come to expect. ■

Mobile abattoirs for Victoria

The Victorian parliament has passed legislation that will allow livestock to be slaughtered, for human consumption, in mobile abattoirs. Victorian food safety regulator PrimeSafe has been developing relevant regulations and licensing requirements. It is expected mobile abattoirs will become operational in 2020.

The change in the legislation follows some years of lobbying by Geelong based mobile abattoir operator Provenir. The company has operated in NSW where legislation was passed, earlier this year, allowing mobile abattoirs.

The Provenir facility is a mobile slaughter floor that can handle up to 15 carcasses. Stock are slaughtered in the vehicle, while parked at the farm. Carcasses are transferred to a central facility for aging, further processing and packing. ■

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The power of communication

Building on the well-received event in April, October's Meat Business Women was held in Brisbane under the theme "Advancing the Culture in the Industry". The aim was to provide women a means to help advance the image, culture and landscape through conversation, networking and relationships for the meat industry.

Speakers for the Brisbane event included Laura Ryan, founder of the Meat Business Women organisation in the UK, to give a global perspective on the rapidly growing organisation; Anna Campbell, CEO, Red Meat Advisory Council and Amy Brooks, marketing manager at Stockyard Beef. To cap off the speakers directly involved in the meat industry was Senator Susan McDonald, who is well known through her role as managing director of Super Butcher and the family's extensive cattle station network based around Cloncurry, Queensland.

Throughout her career, Senator McDonald has sought to employ staff based on merit, not gender, – 'if it was a netball team, you wouldn't just have shooters' – but rather a mix of skillsets, experiences and knowledge. She recognises that women can bring a dimension to business, and the meat industry, based on relationship building and communication, that might otherwise be lacking.

McDonald's family are well known in Queensland; her family operating MDH, a sixth-generation beef cattle operation based around Cloncurry, and her father was instrumental in rebuilding the state's Liberal National Party in the wake of Joh Bjelke-Petersen scandals.

Susan's personal career began with a desire to be a bookkeeper after high school, undertaking a commerce and economics degree, but later found herself in a variety of roles including chief of staff to the then Minister for natural resources and mines. The death of her brother in 2013 meant taking on his role as manager of the six Super Butcher stores on top of her fulltime job. Realising that it couldn't continue in this vein, Susan took on Super Butcher in a fulltime capacity, drawing on her knowledge of cattle and business. To further her knowledge in retail, Susan also completed a butchery apprenticeship.

No stranger to state politics, Susan made the decision to enter parliament to give the meat industry and rural Queensland a voice, and to bridge the disconnect between the policy makers and the community that it affects.

Senator McDonald shares her thoughts ... on butchers and retail

After the Meat Business Women event, Senator McDonald explained some of her thoughts on the bigger picture for the meat industry to *Australian Meat News*.

I was fortunate to have a background in cattle and business to bring to Super Butcher so I knew the people, enjoyed the



Senator Susan McDonald

product and knew what to cook. The one thing that really became apparent – and for retail butchers in general – is that we weren't focused on the customer.

At an AMIC Butcher fightback meeting a few years ago, butchers were fairly animated that MLA was not supporting us well enough, but was instead focusing on supermarkets, which meant that meat consumption through independent butchers was going down. The response from the MLA representative was, "I'll be honest with you, and suggest that a lot of butchers aren't doing a very good job – the shops are a bit smelly, products not cut to what people want, and many of you are not providing a greater range of products."

Looking at what we were doing at Super Butcher, showed that perhaps he was right – we weren't doing a better job than the supermarkets. I asked our store managers what they took home to cook – none of them actually did the cooking, nor did they ask the customer what they wanted. It was a real turning point for Super Butcher, we started to ask the question. What our customers wanted was a take home meal, ready in 15-30 mins, nutritious, value for money and guidance on how to cook it. We also discovered that Saturday and Sunday were the busiest days, so I lobbied the state government to change the legislation that allowed for extended trading on those days.

I see the future of butcher shops being based more and more on value-add to cater for a growing population that does not cook from scratch.

... on training and apprenticeships

Training and apprenticeships are more than learning the core skills to do butchery or customer service. It is as much about gaining the skills to learn more, such as knowing the role AMIC plays with government compared to RMAC. Or perhaps understanding what a PrimeSafe or SafeMeat audit means and how to be prepared, or if you need, questioning the outcome.

For apprenticeships, the NSW government have invested in the TAFE system for butcher training, but in Victoria and Queensland it is workplace based with regular visits from assessors. The workplace system has resulted in less opportunity to share ideas and network between their peers, so the younger ones are not building relationships and growing.

The training structure is still good, but how good the apprentice becomes depends as much on the mentor and shop owner as it does on the apprentice. It is disappointing to see that the supermarket butcher is really only learning basics like slicing, which worries me as we will have less fully trained butchers and it is hard to get staff that are qualified. Butcher shops have to be run by butchers.

... on advocating for the meat industry

Since I became a Senator in July, much of my time is on the road talking to business operators and employees particularly in agribusiness and the meat industry – this area has been fairly neglected in years past at a federal level.

There has been an increasing disconnect between the policy makers sitting in an air-condition in a city where the power is reliable and the water comes out of the tap, and people where those issues are a daily challenge.

I see myself as an advocate to the policy makers to ensure that they understand what the impact of the regulation or legislation will have on the ground. If the policy is not making it easier and safer for people to do their tasks in an effective framework, then why are we doing it?

As an industry we grow meat to an incredibly high standard; our animal welfare, environmental standards and food safety are world's best practice. But most of the industry is busy doing what they do, and often their voice isn't told or heard. In the absence of our voice, it is the activist that is getting the ear of government. I see myself working with business and government to make sure that our industry does have a voice.

That voice can also be with our own regulators, too much regulation means that businesses become less effective as they work to comply, making it increasingly difficult to do business. So many are walking away from the industry because it has just become too hard. We need those small business risk-takers to provide a business that is part of the community and has the capacity to give the kids a job and a future.

... on the big picture of the meat industry

I was part of the red meat sustainability framework, and I'm proud of the work that has been done. The decision was made to not utilise the global framework, but to develop one that suited Australian conditions, our own pillars (animal welfare, anti-microbial stewardship, land management, manage climate change risk, people safety, profitability) to work by and how we measure our performance.

The Red Meat Advisory Committee Meat Industry Strategic Plan 2030 is helping local industry develop strategies that will help their sector move forward. I have been helping to communicate that information back to stakeholders to give a voice to industry, so that everyone is well briefed and understands what we are doing, what government is doing and our roles within it. I encourage people to get involved so that the broader industry stands together to find a common beneficial path.

It is challenging to deliver that message given that 80% of the industry are small businesses devoting much of their energy into keeping their business going. It is up to us to be part of the solution whether it is the butcher shop, processor or producers. ■



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The State of Meat Industry Training

Earlier in 2019, AMPC released the results of research into cost to operate, compiling a Top 10 of challenges to compete on the global stage, including costs related to utilities and certification. The other cost category was labour-related costs, representing around 58% of total per head cost for beef processing.

Lack of qualified labour continues to be a challenge, as does attracting students into training either as newcomers or to upskill. Most consumers and newcomers would be familiar with butchers and smallgoods makers, but there are many other opportunities within the industry.

Most training is classified as a traineeship and undertaken in most instances on-the-job as a Certificate I, II, III or IV; the retail butcher is an apprenticeship and requires some degree of class-based learning usually through a TAFE. Many traineeships are conducted through both TAFE and registered training organisations (RTOs). Opportunities for post-graduate learning is also an option for those wishing to move into more managerial roles such as plant manager or quality assurance.

All the courses come under the Australian Meat Industry Training Package which covers the requirements to complete training from entry level (Certificate I) through Vocational

Graduate Diploma – and for processing, retail, smallgoods, game harvesting and food service.

For many education providers, government subsidies are available to eligible students to go toward training costs. Check with the RTO for eligibility requirements and the level of funding available.

According to the Australian Apprentice Pathways, more than 4,000 apprentices started their journey in 2018, with the majority graduating.

To get going in an apprenticeship, candidates can either approach a business directly to apply – many retail butchers will take on an apprentice, as well some of the major processors; or work with an apprenticeship network provider or group training organisation who will help with administration of setting up the apprenticeship and assist job hunters to team up with an employer.

Useful websites:

Australian Apprentice Pathways: www.aapathways.com.au

Australian Apprenticeships:
www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au

National Meat Industry Training Council (MINTRAC):
www.mintrac.com.au ■

Staff development top priority at Western Meat Packers

Western Meat Packers Group has initiated and supported training, at all levels, for all staff ever since it was started in 1983 by qualified butcher, Rod Russell.

In 2019, WMPG had a turnover of \$150 million and employed 450 people at its Osborne Park processing and packing facility, Margaret River abattoir and Bibra Lake value-adding unit. Mr Russell as a Director co-owns the business with wife Shana. Andrew Fuda, also a qualified butcher, is the CEO.

The company's commitment to upskilling, on-the-job training and professional development was recently underlined when it hosted the state's 2019 Australian Meat Industry Council Apprentice of the Year competition at its dedicated staff training boning room at Osborne Park.



Director and co-owner of Western Meat Packers Group, Rod Russell. Trained as a butcher, Rod founded the company in 1983.

continued on page 35

COURSE	COURSE CODE	DURATION (fulltime)	JOB OUTCOMES	AVAILABLE WHERE
Certificate II in Meat Processing (Food Services)	AMP20116	12 mths	Meat Packer	NSW
Certificate II in Meat Processing (Food Services)	AMP20117	12 mths	Wholesale Meat Packer	VIC QLD WA TAS ACT NT
Certificate II in Meat Processing (Smallgoods)	AMP20216	18 mths	Smallgoods Trimmer	NSW VIC WA SA NT
Certificate II in Meat Processing (Abattoirs)	AMP20316	12 mths	Abattoir Worker Slaughter Floor Worker	NSW VIC QLD WA SA TAS NT
Certificate II in Meat Processing (Meat Retailing)	AMP20415	24 mths	Meat Retail Assistant	NSW VIC TAS ACT NT
Certificate III in Meat Processing (Boning Room)	AMP30116	24 mths	Boning Room Processor	NSW VIC QLD WA SA TAS NT
Certificate III in Meat Processing (Food Services)	AMP30216	24 mths	Food Services Worker, eg value-add, preparation, gourmet, shelf-ready	NSW VIC QLD WA SA TAS NT
Certificate III in Meat Processing (Meat Safety)	AMP30316	24 mths	Meat Inspector	NSW VIC QLD WA SA TAS NT
Certificate III in Meat Processing (Rendering)	AMP30416	24 mths	Rendering Plant Operator	NSW VIC QLD WA SA NT
Certificate III in Meat Processing (Slaughtering)	AMP30516	24 mths	Slaughter Room Operator	NSW VIC QLD WA SA TAS NT
Certificate III in Meat Processing (General)	AMP30616	24 mths	Meat Processing Plants, Game Harvester	NSW VIC QLD WA SA NT
Certificate III in Meat Processing (Quality Assurance)	AMP30716	24 mths	Quality Assurance Officer	NSW VIC WA TAS NT
Certificate III in Meat Processing (Retail Butcher)	AMP30815	36-48 mths Apprenticeship	Butcher	NSW VIC QLD WA SA TAS ACT NT
Certificate III in Meat Processing (Smallgoods – General)	AMP30916	2-3 years	Smallgoods Producer, usually factory-based	NSW VIC QLD WA NT
Certificate III in Meat Processing (Smallgoods – Manufacture)	AMP31016	36 mths NSW, VIC, NT; 12 mths WA; 48 mths SA	Smallgoods Producer, usually for traditional smallgoods production	NSW VIC WA SA NT
Certificate III in Meat Processing (Livestock Handling)	AMP31116	24 mths (36 mths NT)	Livestock Handler (yards and lairage)	NSW VIC WA TAS NT
Certificate III in Meat Processing (Packing Operations)	AMP31216	24 mths	Packing Supervisor	NSW VIC WA TAS NT
Certificate IV in Meat Processing (General)	AMP40215	24 mths	Meat Processing Supervisor	NSW VIC NT
Certificate IV in Meat Processing (Leadership)	AMP40315	24 mths	Meat Processing Team Leader	NSW VIC WA NT
Certificate IV in Meat Processing (Quality Assurance)	AMP40415	24 mths	Quality Assurance Officer	NSW VIC WA NT
Certificate IV in Meat Processing (Meat Safety)	AMP40516	26 mths (24 mths WA; 48 mths NT)	Supervisor/ Meat Export Inspector	NSW VIC QLD WA TAS NT
Diploma of Meat Processing (Meat Retailing)	AMP50115	24 mths	Meat Retail Manager	NSW NT
Diploma of Meat Processing	AMP50215	24-36 mths	Production Manager	NSW WA NT
Advanced Diploma of Meat Processing	AMP60115	24 mths	Plant Manager	NSW



AMICs Apprentices of the Year – State

WA AMIC APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR

The AMIC Apprentice Competition is available to all second- and third-year apprentices in independent local butcher shops throughout Australia who are currently under a Certificate III in Meat Processing (Retail Butcher) apprenticeship.

Apprentices must be within their apprenticeship contract term at the time of the State Competition in the year immediately prior to the National Competition.

The state winners go to Sydney to compete against the other state winners for the national title.

The national winner receives a perpetual trophy plus a trophy to keep and other awards supplied by AMIC industry partners.

The competition is generally judged on the following criteria:

- Personal Hygiene and Appearance
- Preparation & Performance
- Food Safety & WHS
- Use of Equipment
- Product & Underpinning Knowledge

- Use of Ingredients
- Creativity & Practical Application of End Products

The four apprentices assessed at Western Meat Packers Group for the AMIC Apprentice of the Year for WA, were (pictured above left to right) Liam MacLennan, The Corner Butcher, Morley; Trey Flower, Tenderspot Quality Meats, Broome; Shannon Telfer, Continental Meat Supply, Hamilton Hill and Jesse Rausch, Rumpshakers, Southern River.

Trey Flower, from Tenderspot Quality Meats, Broome won the WA division and will represent his state in the national finals in Sydney, in February 2020.

After the Saturday morning judging at Western Meat Packers Group, Osborne Park, AMIC's Chris Kelly said all four apprentices performed admirably and did themselves, their employers and the meat industry proud.

"It can be a little unnerving for young people to perform in unfamiliar surroundings and in a competitive environment. As such, although there is ultimately only one winner, they should all walk away from the competition feeling like winners and hold their heads high for having the drive and ambition to compete," Mr Kelly said.



Bonnie Ewan

In other state finals, the ladies have done particularly well:

- Bonnie Ewan from Lucas Quality Meats, NSW Apprentice of the year
- Jess Bartles from Hygienic Butchery, Somerset TAS Apprentice of the year
- Shannae Corbett from Boodles Meats QLD Apprentice of the year ■



Jess Bartles



Shannae Corbett

continued from page 32

The Apprentice of the Year competition, which has been held for more than 50 years, encourages apprentices to strive to be the best, according to Chris Kelly, AMIC Member Relations Officer SA and WA.

“It also allows them to network with other apprentices and compare their personal skills levels with other apprentices,” Mr Kelly said.

Andrew Fuda attended the Saturday morning judging and was happy to pass on boning and primal cut hints and techniques he has acquired over 25 years in the industry.

“We are excited to be making significant changes and improvements to all areas of our business, including production, quality assurance, human resources and safety, while creating exciting and innovative ways of working as we strive to be an employer of choice,” Mr Fuda said.

“The meat industry is now absolutely quality driven and knowledge-based across all work spaces from slaughter floor to commercial kitchens. This necessitates acquiring high-level skills and committing to all-of-career learning to deliver fine meat products.

“At Western Meat Packers we encourage staff development and regularly support employees to further their skills through training, which is why we were delighted to offer our modern boning room facility and meat products when invited by AMIC.

“Aside from cutting and boning skills, we also prioritise safety and we continuously strive to ensure occupational health and safety requirements are adhered to, hence we recently put several employees through Emergency First Aid Training and Fire Warden Training, for example.

“Also, as a culturally diverse company Western Meat Packers ensures equal opportunities in recruitment, training and development,” Mr Fuda said.

WMPG has a Quality Assurance team of six. The QA team is working on updating current systems and updating staff. Recent workplace initiatives have been noticed by auditors and customers and the company has received positive feedback.

“Worker morale at the Osborne Park site has benefited from the initiatives, while product integrity has been maintained and verified regularly by the QA team,” Mr Fuda said.

The site is currently certified for organic (including the National Organic Program), export accreditation, Halal, HACCP, SQF, Woolworths, Coles supplier approved, AUSMEAT and Accredited Air Cargo Agent, and has an ongoing relationship with the Department of Agriculture, whose representatives are regularly on-site where they hold weekly meetings and monthly audits.

WMPG’s recent training emphasis has included having key members from across various departments attend the AUSMEAT Beef & Lamb Specification courses. ■

Resurrecting Cowra from the floor up

The liquidation and subsequent closure of the Cowra abattoir has been well reported, leaving the community with a loss of jobs and no local processing facility.

Since it's re-opening in 2007, the Cowra abattoir facility has once again become an important part of the local community, providing employment and giving local farmers a facility to process beef, lamb, pork and goat.

Chris Cummins, owner of Breakout River Meats was instrumental in getting the Cowra plant operational. Now the owner of the Cowra plant, Chris is the principle buyer of livestock, with Breakout River Meats the major supplier. Using his extensive buying knowledge, Chris sources the best possible livestock from a wide network of farmers in the region to produce the best possible dressed meat. The philosophy of the buying team is to provide customers with good quality meat every day.

Currently, the facility processes 8,000 lambs, 480 cattle, around 2,000 pigs and 500 goats per week selling into domestic markets under the Watervale Beef, Cowra Lamb and Chiverton Pork brands.

The facility under its previous owners had not been adequately maintained and as a consequence, extensive work was required to bring the premises up to current NSW food hygiene standards.



The Cowra abattoir floors had seen better days, the Roxset floor installation ensures that the facility meets HACCP and NSW health regulations.

The floors in particular were becoming increasingly difficult to maintain hygienic standards, with cracks and pitting occurring in the concrete surface.

In a series of progressive works, the plant has replaced the floors starting with the slaughter floor, hallways, 12 chiller rooms, offal room and office spaces. Approaching 1,000sqm, the floors have been installed by Roxset, working within the operational shifts so as not to interrupt work flows.


A further 16 chiller rooms are scheduled to be done in the future. The chiller design is such that the meat can be given a longer bleed time with ample refrigeration so that hot carcasses are not placed in the same chiller as chilled meat due to a lack of space. The end result is a longer shelf life and freshness compared to their competitors.


"We chose to go with Roxset as they are the best at doing abattoir floors," said Pete Browne, managing director, Breakout River. "The end result looks far more professional and appealing, as well as easier to clean. Sometimes getting the floor product in is a challenge as it needs to go upstairs, but the team has been manually bringing it as needed."

Since the installation, the team has not seen any slips or falls. It is a lot easier to clean – it has actually reduced water consumption because it needs less water to wash away the byproducts. In addition to the new floors, the facility has installed new wall surfaces to make it easier to clean. They are a fire retardant wall, installed over the top of the previous wall. Once the walls are done, Roxset ensures that the floor surface extends part way up to ensure that there is no floor to wall join crevice that can harbour bacteria.

Roxset recommended the use of the meat grade flooring which is 5-6mm thick to create a seamless, anti-bacterial, gap free coating to give an easy to clean, impervious surface. The surface is non-slip, chemically resistant with a light reflective surface to give a professional look.

"It has been a pleasure to work with Breakout River and the Cowra plant to ensure that their facility is meeting HACCP requirements," said Bruce Willan, director, Roxset. "They have a great facility and it is great to see it is back up and running and supporting local farmers and the community." ■


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Last issues winners and answers, see page 39



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CLUES

The name of this publication (3 words)

Butchers' Tools of Trade (6 letters)

A working dog puppy has to be ??? (7 letters)

Three typical points of rural conversation (3 words: S...; P...; W...)

Type of dog used to guard livestock (7 letters)

Latest technology to assist crop farmers (2 words: D...; S....)

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Book Competition winner

Congratulations to Dominic van Dyk who operates the Wimmera Super Meat Market in Horsham Victoria. Dominic correctly answered the question: *In China, how many households are predicted to earn more than US\$50,000 by 2022?* Answer 13.2million.

Dominic won a copy of: *The Art of Beef Cutting* by Kari Underly



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Winners September 2019 Crossword

Congratulations to the winners and thank you to our sponsor BUNZL. Bunzl will contact all winners and make arrangements to deliver your prize.



Simitar Steak Knife and Lesnie's Steel

Jessica Hinton, Freddy's Meats, Condell Park NSW

Victory Narrow Curved Boning Knife

Steve Fleming, AMIST Super, Sydney NSW

Wayne Barker, Barker's Oberon NSW

Ben Freeman, Barraba Beef, Barraba NSW

Lauren Burk, Morses Butchery, Latrobe Tas

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L		T		A			A			E		Y	
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	P	I	E				M				T	R	U
P	E	N		D	E	I	F	Y		H			
E		O		O			T			U		E	A
A	S	U	N	D	E	R			L	U	M	P	N
T		S		O			E	K	E		T		D

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