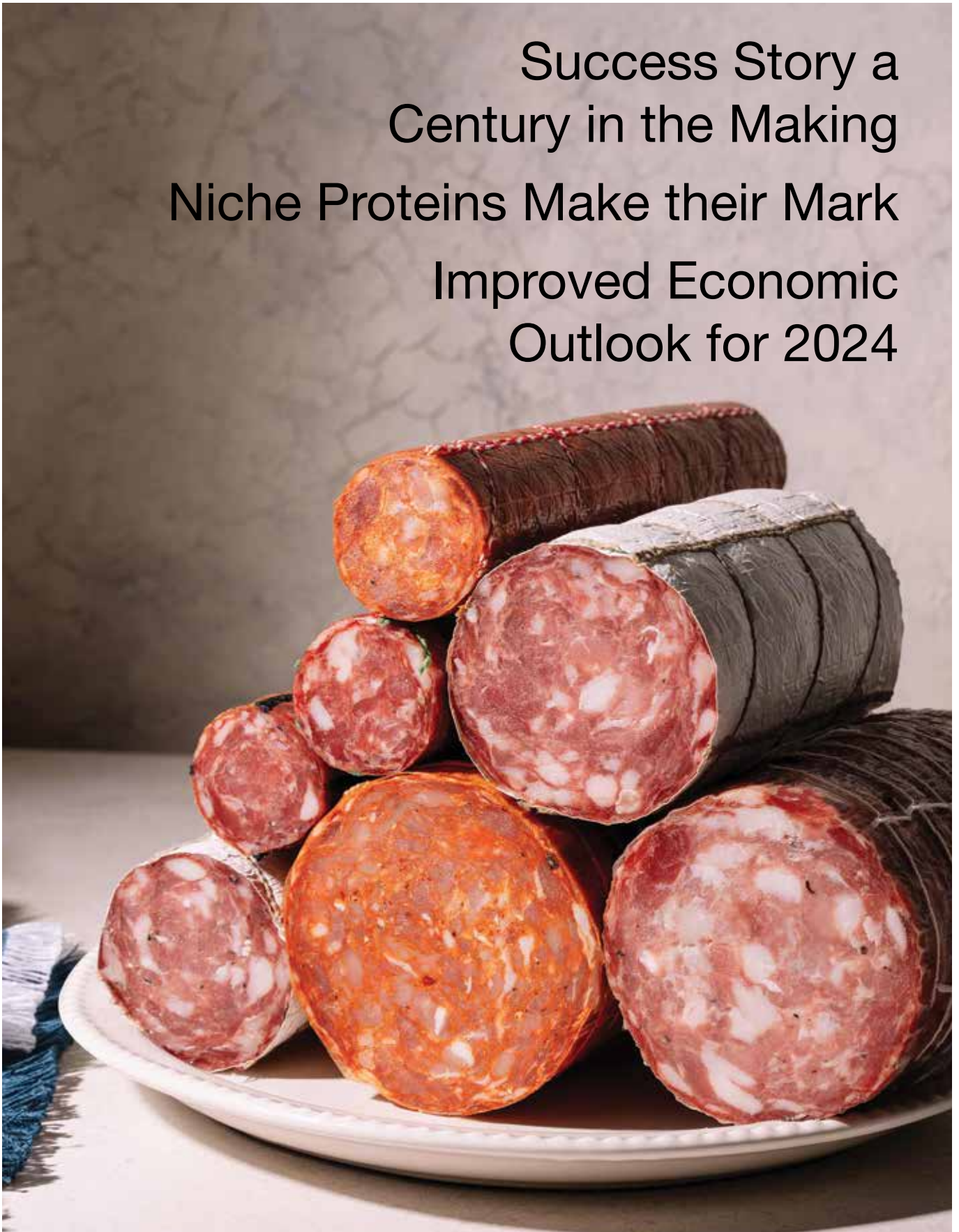


Success Story a
Century in the Making
Niche Proteins Make their Mark
Improved Economic
Outlook for 2024



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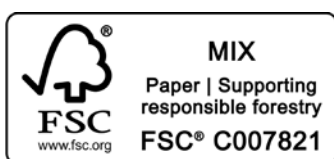
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Pictured: (L to R) Kai Dennis, Jayden Herman, Matthew Papandrea, Justin Wade

Proud Young Butchers Head to Paris 2025

By Deborah Hill

The lead up to the next World Butchers Challenge is in full swing and, with the Australian Butcher Team performing well in 2023, the next generation of young butchers is keen to get in on the action.

The tryouts for the Young Butchers & Apprentices took place in Brisbane, hosted by Meat at Billy's in mid-February, with 14 talented butchers keen to make the team.

Within one hour and 45 minutes, the apprentices had to break, trim, prepare and make retail-ready products from a rump, a leg of lamb and a chicken, while the Young Butchers had a side of saddle pork, rump and a chicken.

Judges for the day were Suze Roegers, Gary Thompson, Lisa Land and Doug Piper.

"I was so impressed with the speed and skill of these young butchers, you could see the tension rise as the time ticked away but the final display tables were filled with some amazing products," butcher Craig Munro said.

"You could see the sense of pride, satisfaction and a little bit of relief on their accomplishments," he said.

Team Announcement – Results are in!

The iKONpack Young Butcher & Apprentice team is...

Apprentice

- Kai Dennis (QLD), La Carne Butchery
- Jayden Herman (NSW), Munro's Quality Meats Wilberforce

Young Butcher

- Justin Wade (VIC), Meatsmith
- Matt Papandrea (NSW) Joe Papandrea Quality Meats

These talented butchers now join our Makani Meats Senior Australian Butcher Team.

A huge thank you and well done to the other 10 butchers who made it through to the finals and performed above and beyond. ■

AMIC Celebrates Excellence at National Competitions

The Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC) hosted an exceptional weekend at the Twin Waters Novotel on Queensland's Sunshine Coast last month, marking the culmination of the National Apprentice of the Year and Sausage King competitions and showcasing the industry's brightest talents and innovative spirit.

The weekend began with six of the finest apprentices embarking on a tour and dinner at Kilcoy Global Foods' innovation hub, which provided an invaluable learning experience, highlighting the importance of understanding the supply chain through advanced virtual reality technology.

The competition's intensity kicked off on the Friday with a theory exam followed by practical tests involving lamb and pork preparation.

The evening celebrated the apprentices' hard work with a BBQ hosted by Cured Compliance and NBN Co, where the fruits of their labour were enjoyed by all.

The Saturday introduced a unique challenge with the "Mystery Box" component, pushing apprentices to creatively incorporate leek into their dishes.

This task not only tested their culinary skills but also their ability to innovate and balance flavours.

Esteemed judges Robert Constable, Dom Melrose, Trevor Hill and Doug Piper, with over 85 years of combined industry experience, evaluated the apprentices.

"Each of the competitors should be immensely proud of their work and accomplishment, their passion and willingness to learn and take-on feedback is a credit to them and their employers," said AMIC's National Retail Council Chair Robert Constable.

The national final of the Sausage King and Best Butchers Burger competition also took place, with finalists from across Australia demonstrating their skill and creativity.



The six finalists in the National AMIC Apprentice of the Year competition: (L to R) Courtney Byrne (Tas), Jordan Lowry (WA), Jayden Tindale (NSW), Nick Parasbakis (SA), Luke Thomas (Qld) and Robert McLean (Vic)

The Ikon Pack gala evening announced the winners, celebrating the prestige of being named Sausage King, Best Butchers Burger and Apprentice of the Year.

Guests enjoyed a sumptuous three-course meal, highlighting the event's significance and AMIC's commitment to excellence.

RESULTS

AMIC Apprentice of the Year,
proudly presented by Response Learning

Winner Luke Thomas (QLD)

Runner Up Jordan Lowry (WA)

Traditional Australian Beef Sausage,
proudly presented by MLA

1st Peter Augustus Craft Butcher (Gatton, QLD)
BBQ Beef

2nd The Corner Butcher (WA)
Australian Beef Sausage

3rd Mountain Side Meats (NSW)
Thin Aussie Sausage

Traditional Australian Pork Sausage,
proudly presented by APL

1st Swallow Drive Meats (Mount Gambia, SA)
Traditional Pork Sausage

2nd Nigel's Gourmet on Tamar (TAS)
Breakfast Pork Sausage

3rd Marcos Fussy Meats (WA)
Classic Pork Sausage

Poultry Sausage,
proudly presented by Australian Food Super

1st Borella Butchery (East Albury, NSW)
Free Range Chicken Parmy

2nd Gympie Meathall (QLD)
Chicken, Cheese, Garlic and Cracked Pepper

3rd Meat Matters (VIC)
Chicken and Leek

Australian Lamb/Open Class Sausage,
proudly presented by MLA

1st Mark on Macquarie (South Hobart, TAS)
Spicy Lamb Merguez

2nd Buckingham The Butchers (WA)
Lamb, Feta, Sun Dried Tomato and Spinach

3rd Premier Meats (NSW)
Honey, Lamb and Mint

continued on page 6

continued from page 5

Continental Sausage,
proudly presented by Cured Compliance

1st Robert's Meats (Singleton, NSW)
German Bratwurst

2nd The Corner Butcher (WA)
German Bratwurst

3rd Vermey's Quality Meats (TAS)
Traditional Bratwurst

Gourmet/Open Class Sausage,
proudly presented by iKON Pack

1st Hunt & Co. Quality Meats (Bellbowrie, QLD)
Beef, Jalapeno, Maple and Vintage Cheddar Sausage

2nd Pyrenees Premium Cuts (VIC)
Worcestershire and Cracked Pepper Sausage

3rd The Corner Butcher (WA)
Beef, Jalapeno and Cheese Sausage

Best Butchers Beef Burger,
proudly presented by MLA

1st Compass Meats (Mount Compass, SA)
Beef, Cheese and Jalapeno Burger

2nd Strath Hill Butcher (VIC)
Brisket Burger

3rd Nigel's Gourmet on Tamar (TAS)
Beef, Bourbon, BBQ and Brisket Burger

Best Butchers Gourmet/Open Class Burger,
proudly presented by MLA

1st Edge Hill Butchery (Edge Hill, QLD)
Lamb and Halloumi Burger

2nd Meat Matters (VIC)
Brisket, Jalapeno and Cheese Burger

3rd Rathmines Butchery (NSW)
Gourmet Lamb Burger ■

Dietary Guidelines not the Place for Environmental Messaging

The meat industry has responded strongly to the announcement that the current review of the Australian Dietary Guidelines intends to incorporate messages about food sustainability into the revised guidelines when they are released in 2026.

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), which is currently undertaking the review, announced its intention to establish a Sustainability Working Group, applications for membership of which closed earlier this month.

According to the NHMRC, the scoping phase of the review, which was conducted between 2021 and 2023, identified the need to update information on sustainable diets and identified the issue as a priority.

"The revision of the guidelines provides an opportunity to improve integration of messages about food sustainability into the guidelines," the NHMRC said in its call for applications for membership of the Sustainability Working Group.

Both the Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC) and Cattle Australia (CA) responded swiftly to the announcement citing grave concerns that the inclusion of environmental messaging would compromise sound nutritional advice, which ultimately is the purpose and focus of the Australian Dietary Guidelines.

According to Mr Patrick Hutchinson, chief executive officer of AMIC, the review process must not be used as a vehicle to drive ideological agendas at the expense of the latest available nutritional science.

"Australians must have confidence that the review of the

nation's dietary guidelines is based on robust nutritional science," Mr Hutchinson said.

"However, endorsing non-nutritional considerations, such as sustainability, into the guidelines will sow confusion and make it harder for Australians to make healthy choices.

"AMIC recognises improving sustainability as an important industry and government objective, but our nation's dietary guidelines are not the appropriate policy instrument for addressing such," he said.

Similarly, Cattle Australia's Chief Executive Officer Dr Chris Parker said the grass-fed cattle industry held grave concerns the inclusion of environmental messaging would fail to grasp the reality of modern beef production and muddy the waters for consumers on how best to optimise their health through nutrition. ■

Harvey Beef 'Worthy' Ad Push

West Australian meat processor, Harvey Beef, has launched a new campaign aiming to show customers that the best-quality meat is always 'worth it'.

The new campaign was created by advertising agency Marketforce.

Mr Luke Williams, its associate creative director, said that the campaign is one of a series.

"This campaign is a one of a series of ads that we'll be rolling out to show how good taste is always worth it," Mr Williams said.

"Also, the meat tastes great, so it's a pretty easy sell once it's on your plate," he said. ■

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‘Meating Needs’ Combines Training and Charity

By Susan Webster

A charity-driven training programme at Melbourne’s William Angliss Institute has seen meat for 10,000 meals prepared by apprentice butchers.

Across the first three sessions, Angliss butcher apprentices processed approximately 1000kg of donated beef.

The Meating Needs programme, initiated by Angliss Meat Processing, aims to upskill butcher apprentices while helping those in need.

The programme, devised by teachers Peter O’Rourke and Russell Carroll, sees each apprentice boning two beef carcasses that are then packed and donated to Foodbank for distribution to needy Australians.

“They learn the bone structure of a carcass and how to identify the main cuts of meat including the loin and rib, giving them comprehensive knowledge and skills required for the boning task,” said Peter.

BeefBank donates the meat while the Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC) and Corona Manufacturing donate the packaging to make-up meals such as diced beef and beef sausages.



Pictured: (L to R) Trainer Peter O’Rourke, apprentice Nick Nestorowski, AMIC Vic/Tas State Manager, Andrew Meli, and trainer Russell Carroll

Foodbank works with 2,844 front-line charities and 3,379 school breakfast programmes to provide meals to those who need a hand.

Angliss student, Nick Nestorowski, gave up his time from work at Werribee Station Street Meats to participate in the programme recently.

“I was keen to take part after my teacher, Russell, explained that I would receive extensive training in the art of boning four beef hindquarters and four beef forequarters,” Nick said.

“Boning beef is not so common in butcher shops these days so it’s important for upcoming apprentices like me to learn this skill.

“It was a good learning experience plus it was a good feeling knowing that the meals I made and packaged were donated to charity,” he added.

William Angliss Institute offers the Certificate II in Meat Processing (Food Services) under the Victorian Government’s Free TAFE for Priority Pathways initiative.

This can then lead to undertaking the Certificate III in Meat Processing (Retail Butcher). ■



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AMN to Launch ‘Point of View’

Australian Meat News will be introducing a letters to the editor section in 2024.

Your views on any industry issues are invited for publication in the soon to be introduced ‘Point of View’ section.

Although authors can request that their details not be published, all letters to the editor must include your name, business name, address and telephone contact number.

If you have an issue on which you would like to express your views, write your letter to the editor and email to the publisher athol@ausmeatnews.com.au.

Deadline for letters for the June 2024 edition is May 1, 2024.

Biosecurity Levy Revised

Senator Murray Watt, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, announced a revision to the calculation formula for the Biosecurity Protection Levy in his opening address to the Senate Estimates Committee in Federal Parliament last month.

According to Senator Watt's address, rates will now be set using a common and equitable basis for all industry sector products and goods and will not be set by reference to the 2020/21 agricultural levy rates as was originally proposed.

"In addition, imposition of the levy will be tailored to individual products and goods to reduce multiple imposition points across a product's supply chain," Senator Watt said.

Senator Watt said that the changes to the design of the levy have taken into account feedback from industry on the proposed design.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry conducted a consultation with industry on the levy in October last year.

According to the Senator, the key feedback from industry on the proposed design included concerns about:

- the equity and fairness of levy rates across different commodities;
- association and confusion with the existing agricultural levies system; and
- multiple imposition points for some commodities across the supply chain.

"We've listened to that feedback and, as a result, today I'm announcing that we're changing the way the Biosecurity Protection Levy is calculated to make it fairer and more transparent," Senator Watt said.

The Biosecurity Protection Levy, announced as part of the 2023/24 Federal Budget, intends to collect \$50 million a year from Australian agriculture, forestry and fisheries products via a six percent contribution to Commonwealth biosecurity funding for 2024/25.

Contributions from importers of 48 percent of the Commonwealth biosecurity funding and 44 percent from taxpayers also form part of the funding model.

The new laws to establish the levy were introduced into Federal Parliament in late February.

The Biosecurity Protection Levy will take effect from 1 July this year. ■

Meat Business Women Conference Returns

The Australian Meat Business Women national conference is returning this year after a hiatus in 2023.

The conference, to be held on 20 March in Melbourne, will centre around the Meat Business Women's global campaign, #ThePowerOfYou, which aims to empower individuals and drive inclusivity in the meat industry.

Award-winning founder of She Lion Group and Walk Fearlessly Pty Ltd and director of employee strategy and experience at Gilbert and Tobin Lawyers, Ms Kate Dillon, will deliver a pragmatic session concentrated on mastering your brand, clarifying your goals, and leveraging your unique value to seize opportunities.

Attendees will benefit from a practical and insightful workshop hosted by facilitator, Ms Michelle Redfern, a leader in gender equality and diversity, on how women can reach their full potential by deeply understanding leadership and the skills they need to develop and demonstrate.

The conference will also include a panel on diversity in leadership together with a presentation from Ms Sue McKluskey – Australia's representative for Australian Agriculture under the Government's Global Agriculture Leadership Initiative.

The full programme can be accessed at www.meatbusinesswomen.org. ■

New Board at AMIC

The Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC) has appointed Mr Tom Maguire as chairperson of its new board, who will replace outgoing chairperson, Mr Gary Hardwick.

Comprising 10 members, the new board will serve through to 2027.

Mr Maguire who is group general manager at HW Greenham and Sons brings over 28 years' experience within the meat industry to the role.

In accepting the position, Mr Maguire said that it was an important time for the industry.

"I look forward to working with the new board, National Councils, the AMIC team and Chief Executive Officer Mr Patrick Hutchinson, as well as our members to help propel the entirety of Australia's post-farm gate meat industry forward," Mr Maguire said.

Mr Rob Constable of Roberts Meats has been appointed deputy chairperson, with Mr Franz Knoll of Barossa Fine Food taking up the role of treasurer.

Also serving on the Board are:

- Trevor Hill – Bruce's Meat, SA
- Peter Stocker – Magnificent Meat Company, WA
- Dominick Melrose – Melrose Meats, Qld
- Simon Linke – SAMSEX, SA
- Stacey McKenna – Midfield Group, Vic
- Terry Nolan – Nolan Meats, Qld
- Emily Pullen – Jim's Jerky, Qld ■

Success Story Nearly a Century in the Making

By Stephanie Flynn

It has been close to a century since Ivo Fabbris migrated to Melbourne with his parents from the Veneto region of northern Italy, a beginning which has since spawned three generations of butchers and an award-winning specialty smallgoods manufacturing business.

Melbourne-based, Fabbris Smallgoods, won a host of medals in last year's Charcuterie Excellence Awards taking out Category Champion for its Prosciutto and Capocollo Loin as well as nine gold, four silver and two bronze medals for its products.

The credit for the Fabbris success story goes back in time to the foundations laid by Ivo who became a butcher after leaving school and later opened a butcher store in North Melbourne.

He was later joined by his son, Dino, who did his apprenticeship in the family butcher shop and along the way discovered an absolute passion for smallgoods making, pursuing as much training as he could find in Australia and developing hand-made, authentic Italian smallgoods through trial and error.

Dino's love of the craft took him to Italy and Germany developing relationships with renowned smallgoods makers from whom he gained the knowledge on techniques and ingredients as well as the machinery required.

Driven by his deeply-felt passion, Dino established Fabbris Smallgoods in 1980, which has since grown to produce a range of over 70 specialty air-dried and cooked products and employs some 50 people, including his son, David, who also trained as a butcher and is now general manager of the expanding business.



Dino Fabbris has spent his whole working life perfecting the craft of making authentic Italian smallgoods

“He is the most passionate person I know in smallgoods making,” David says of his father.

“He lives and breathes it more and more every day and he is still very hands-on and very innovative in terms of product ideas, despite having (unhappily) stepped-back somewhat, he will never fully retire,” he said.

David has been with the company close to 30 years, a length of service only surpassed by the Fabbris Production Manager, John Sanajko, who has been with the company 33 years and was lucky enough to train with the master from whom he learned the craft and has been the recipient of all the ‘Dino secrets’.

Other members of the family have also joined the business, David's wife, Monica, who holds a Bachelor of Business Degree heads-up the Fabbris marketing function, his sister, Lauren, joined the company to take up the administration function and brother, Taylor, works on the floor learning how to make the smallgoods,

showing signs he will follow in Dino's footsteps.

While the family members are all heavily involved on the floor, despite their respective roles, David says the company values its staff and is fortunate enough to have a high staff retention, a strong and necessary foundation on which to continually expand the Fabbris manufacturing capability and business operations.

David and Monica both note some strong trends which they believe are driving the growing consumer demand for specialty smallgoods products.

“The business has grown a lot over the last five years driven by demand for our good quality, Australian-made products which has been critical to this growth,” David said.

“People are becoming more and more knowledgeable about these products, notably through social media which has had a huge influence on peoples' eating habits.

“Products like Guanciale, made from marbled pork cheeks and air-dried for



A family affair (L to R) Talor, Dino and David Fabbris, now general manager of the company

60 to 90 days, which up until 18 months ago only Italian restaurants or chefs would have even known about for use in pastas and cooking, I have noticed an increase in demand from delicatessens during that time,” he said.

David believes that cooking shows which educate the general public on how to use specialty products are also now a major driver of the growth in consumer demand.

Monica also notes that the trend towards Charcuterie platters is on the rise and is now a major factor behind the growth in demand from the catering sector.

“Now we are all back entertaining again after COVID-19, catering companies are popping-up using these Charcuterie boards and full tables, it is all just taking off for us,” Monica said.

Fabbris Smallgoods has concentrated on the development of air-dried products which include prosciutto, pancetta and salami as well as cooked smallgoods like hams, bacon and mortadella.

Air-dried products are salted, then fermented and placed in atmosphere-controlled rooms for anywhere from one to six or eight months depending on the product line.

Fabbris Smallgoods products are made using only Australian pork and

many of its products are still hand-made to Dino’s traditional flavours and recipes to this very day.

The company salts and massages by hand, working in the space where they are not mass produced whilst still using the latest technologies as far as their rooms and quality control.

While the company is continually innovating and developing new products, a process in which Dino is still very much involved, it can take a long time to bring a new specialty product into production particularly given that products like Prosciutto can take some six months to cure.

Monica notes that there is now a big trend toward retail-ready products which she attributes to the time-poor nature of modern life and the specific product packaging required adds a further time-line dimension into the equation of the introduction of new products.

To meet this trend, Fabbris has developed various retail-ready lines including their convenient 150-gram, vacuum-sealed pre-sliced products which, Monica says, are doing very well and she sees this as a major growth market for the foreseeable future.

She also notices a growing trend for consumers to buy Australian.

“I think consumers these days are very patriotic and want to support

Australian farmers, providing Australian jobs and we have noticed there is a trend around these notions of supporting the nation,” Monica said.

“You do have a lot of consumers who are price-driven but there is a growing number who understand a good product and there is definitely a big demand for products using Australian pork.

“Australian Pork Limited (APL) is doing a lot to promote the use of Australian pork in smallgoods, we are a licensee of APL, we promote that and we stand by that,” she said.

According to David, while the domestic market is very competitive, Fabbris is in the process of expanding its production facilities which will enable the company to further develop its share of the domestic market nationally.

“It is very competitive in the domestic markets, it is tough, you have to be constantly on top of the game to keep pushing forward because there are small producers around and you have your bigger producers as well,” David said.

Fabbris Smallgoods has a higher concentration of market share in Victoria and South Australia where its products are available through independent grocers like IGA and FoodWorks, as well as through food service companies and wholesale distributors.

Fabbris also supplies ham on the bone to retail butcher shops and directly supplies its products to restaurants.

It is now focused on further expanding its marketing and distribution within Queensland, New South Wales and Western Australia.

As to whether another generation of the Fabbris family enters the business, the jury is still out, but Monica says that her and David’s son, Gabriel, has started to come into the business on his school holidays and gets a thrill when he sees the company’s products on menus when he is out and about. ■



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Counter Girl to Classic Diva

By Susan Webster

Fancy a singer with your silverside? A songstress with your sausages? Meet Brisbane soprano Nina Korbe – the coloratura behind the counter.

When she's not serving customers part-time at Andrew's Quality Meats in suburban Indooroopilly in Brisbane, she sings.

In late March, she makes her professional theatrical debut with Opera Australia, starring as the lead in *West Side Story* on Sydney Harbour.

The performance on Australia's largest outdoor stage will include fireworks and a live orchestra.

"It is the opportunity of a lifetime," Nina said.

"I'm so honoured and excited, it doesn't get much better than this, to be making my professional debut with Opera Australia," she said.

The 25-year-old temporarily hung-up the apron and headed to Sydney to begin rehearsals in February and will be away until late April.

She leaves her mum Kym, a former opera singer, and sister Zoe, 19, who she lives with in Brisbane.

"They are so excited for me," Nina said.

"They have been my biggest supporters and they are just about as excited as I am," she said.

The First Nations woman received her Bachelor of Music Performance with distinction from Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University, and was awarded the Griffith University Academic Excellence Award.

In 2020, she was awarded the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music International Postgraduate Scholarship to undertake her Master of Arts studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London, graduating with distinction in 2022.



Ms Nina Korbe balances her working life with Andrew's Quality Meats and the dizzy heights of life on the national operatic stage. Photo: Daniel Boud

She performs with Opera Queensland and other companies and is artist-in-residence with Queensland Youth Orchestras.

Her career highlight to date was being invited to perform at the Sydney Opera House last October for its 50th-year celebration.

But between gigs, to make ends meet ... there's meat.

"Working there (at the butcher shop) is grounding, it keeps me level-headed in all the ups and downs of the (music) industry," Nina said.

She came to the job by accident.

"My mum, Zoe, and I were having lunch at the grill attached to Andrew's meats the day before I left to study my masters in London in 2020 and there was a sign saying they were looking for a 'bubbly counter girl'," Nina said.

"Mum and I convinced Zoe, then aged 14, to apply.

"She'd been working there ever since and when I came back from London in 2022 I needed a job and I went straight into the butcher to see if they had

room for me and started the next day.

"I haven't looked back," she said.

She's no prima donna when it comes to the prime cuts.

"I love working there and the guys are some of the most sincere people I know," Nina said. "The life of an opera singer can be one with pretty giddy high points but also disheartening lows and they keep me grounded and on track.

"They are also some of my biggest supporters, they refer to me as the FIFO butcher because I'm often away for singing at unpredictable times, but I'll come back as long as they will have me, and I'm so grateful for that.

"I've learnt a great deal from them, particularly to take everything as it comes and to not take myself too seriously," she said. What's her favourite? "It would have to be a tie between a beautiful 180-day grain-fed Angus rib fillet which has such a rich flavour, but I also love sharing a 9+ score Wagyu striploin with my little sister for special occasions," Nina said. ■

The Famous Five Go Gluten-Free

By Susan Webster

Australia has only five butcher shops to officially cater for around 10 percent of the nation's total population who eat gluten-free.

Around 2.4 million of Australia's 26 million population follow a gluten-free diet to some degree, according to Coeliac Australia (CA).

Only 20 percent of coeliac sufferers are diagnosed, says the national agency.

This means the vast majority of Australians who have coeliac disease don't yet know it, amounting to a vast untapped market for those five butcher shops.

The average shopper wouldn't think of butchers when avoiding grain-based foods, but gluten from grains also surfaces in other forms of food.

Think of crumb coatings, sausage and patty fillers, stuffed rolled meats, thickeners used in marinades and sauces, in meat rubs and even some herbs and spices mixes.

Replacement ingredients include gluten-free crumbs that are rice-flour based or made from gluten-free bread.

The five CA-accredited butchers comprise two in Victoria and one each in NSW, Queensland and South Australia.

The first shop accredited by the national agency was in the outer south-eastern Melbourne suburb of Lyndhurst.

Brian's Gourmet Meats was accredited in 2018 after Brian was chatting to a neighbour about her daughter, who has coeliac disease.

"She explained how time consuming it was to always cook separate meals and that it was hard to find tasty gluten-free meals that the whole family would eat," Brian said.

So, Brian went on a mission to source gluten-free products and says he spent lots of time experimenting, cooking and tasting.

Queensland's only certified gluten-free butcher is The Butcher Shoppe in the Brisbane suburb of Cannon Hill.

"We listened to our customers, they were the ones who pulled us forwards," said co-manager Mike Smith.

"They are people who have not self-diagnosed, they can get really sick if they eat gluten.

"Going gluten-free in the shop is the sort of thing you can't do half-and-half, you either do it or not," he said.

The store implements gluten-free, best-practice food preparation to ensure compliance for CA accreditation.



Mike Smith, co-manager of Brisbane's The Butcher Shoppe, Queensland's only certified gluten-free butcher

According to Mike it was expensive at the start but, at the same time, it was important.

"The people are ecstatic to be able to find something they haven't been able to enjoy and it's come up trumps for us," Mike said.

"From our crumbs to marinades, sauces and rubs, to the pastry for our pies, everything we prepare ourselves, for both online and instore, is 100 percent gluten-free," he said.

During certain seasons they have to buy in pre-packaged sauces that are not gluten-free but these are only stocked for certain periods of time.

South Australia's first CA-accredited butcher has just opened, offering only gluten-free products.

Gramazio Foods at The Grove Shopping Centre, in the suburb of Golden Grove, was founded by brothers Shane and Danny Gramazio, themselves sons of a retail butcher.

They were running their own butcher shop when COVID-19 hit.

The pandemic made them change direction by selling gluten-free schnitzels, which attracted coeliac customers.

"We'd been in business for over 14 years and we'd never seen customers so excited about what we were doing," said Shane.

The brothers spent a year getting CA certification and training staff.

"When you're talking about people's health, it should be this way," Shane said.

"When customers see that stamp, they can buy with confidence.

“We’ve spent so much time researching and developing our range of flavours, all our products taste just the same, if not better than their gluten counterparts,” he said.

They tested the 75-plus products they sell, asking regular customers to identify the gluten-free samples.

The pair has created an ingredients list and allergen matrix for every product.

They also sell online.

Other accredited stores are Best Health Meats in Niddrie, Victoria and NSW’s The Butchery on Brunner in Adamstown.

Penny Dellsperger, CA’s health advocacy officer, said: “Accreditation gives the consumer confidence and peace of mind that the business is providing a genuine gluten-free product, in addition to giving the business the recognition that their service is reliable.

“The accreditation programme is a means of giving consumers the support and confidence in food services,” she said. According to Penny, butchers handle a product that is unpackaged and produced daily, involving staff handling and meticulous storage.

“All these factors increase the possibility of gluten contamination,” Penny said.

“It comes down to the ingredients used, how ingredients are stored, how product is made and how that final product is stored, displayed and ultimately packaged,” she said.

What is Accreditation?

Accreditation is an annual checkup and costs \$2,145 per site (including GST).

The initial phase is a paper audit of the business process, procedures, ingredients and recipes and a review of ingredients sourcing, storage, preparation and cooking.

There is a requirement for staff to undergo an online training programme in understanding gluten-free requirements and allergen management in the kitchen.

The documentation is reviewed by a consultant dietitian who provides feedback on how to reduce risk. The business then has a third-party onsite audit and, once all measures are met, accreditation is issued.

What is Coeliac Disease?

Coeliac disease (pronounced ‘seel-ee-ak’) is an autoimmune disease caused by gluten, a protein in wheat, rye, barley and oats.

When people with coeliac disease eat gluten, an immune reaction causes inflammation and damage to the small bowel.

Untreated, coeliac disease can cause a range of symptoms and health problems.

Treatment involves lifelong and strict avoidance of gluten in the diet. ■



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Burglar Busting Business Practices

By Susan Webster

Christmas is the time of glad tidings, goodwill ... and Grinch-driven burglaries from retail butcher outlets.

This festive season saw a brazen break-in at a Queensland butcher shop that netted half a tonne of meat, including 16 whole leg Christmas hams valued at \$200 each, while a South Australian business lost \$7,000 of Christmas seafood.

Both thefts occurred overnight, with both caught on CCTV footage, which police were investigating.

A single raider used a wheelie bin to steal about \$6,000 to \$7,000 meat from a cold room at Glasshouse Country Meats on the Sunshine Coast.

Co-owner of Glasshouse Country Meats, Lisa Wagner, posted about the incident on social media, prompting public support.

"I've got 40 minutes of (footage of) him very casually taking his time, doing three runs from the cold room to his car and back again – fill up the wheelie bin with more meat, go back to his car," Lisa said.

"I've got no idea what he's going to do with it – he'll need quite a bit of refrigeration to keep it cold," she said.

Meanwhile, two men broke into a locked trailer to steal the seafood from Collins Court Butcher at Mount Gambier.

Store owner, Mick Lamond, said staff discovered the heist when they opened the trailer.

"The trailer was locked (at) night when I left, so when we came in and opened it up this morning I just thought 'what on earth is going on?'," Mick said.

Perceived as a high-cost luxury and one that is highly portable, Christmas meats are an obvious target for retail store raids.

Burglaries and basic shoplifting are a headache for Australian retailers who lost an estimated \$810 million per year, according to the Australian Institute of Criminology.

A 1993, a United Kingdom study found that 24 percent of retail establishments were burgled, compared with just four percent of residences.

So, how does the local butcher fight crime?



The anti-burglar toolkit could incorporate:

- Strengthening locks on doors and windows.
- Fit shutters or grilles in windows.
- Install a monitored alarm that's fully operational.
- Install 24-hour CCTV that provides facial recognition as well as good quality images and covers any vulnerable areas. Ensure it is operational.
- Security lighting at entry points.
- Use attack-resistant laminated glass in sturdy frames.
- Use a bolted-down safe with a time lock and anti-tamper sensors that trigger an alarm.
- Smoke-generating devices that activate on unauthorised entry creating a smokescreen designed not to damage stock.
- Signs prominently announcing that CCTV operates or security services are used.
- Installing concrete pillars or decorative planters to block access.
- Silent alarms (which alert the police when activated).
- Proximity alarms (loudly sound when premises are approached).
- Forensic traps (for example: chemically treated mats and dye bombs).
- Encouraging Neighbourhood Watch or alert neighbours.
- Security guards for risky times of the year.

Burglar-busting business practices include:

- Minimising in-store stock with just-in-time deliveries.
- Leaving internal lights on overnight.
- Using safes or secure cages for the most valuable items in stockrooms.
- Marking valuable goods with traceable, hard-to-remove identification numbers or dye bombs.
- Ensure keys are not left on a counter or desk and take them home at night.
- Bank cash each day.
- Leave empty cash registers open at night (to prevent their being broken into).
- Remove graffiti and rubbish, criminals target areas that look abandoned.
- Ensure service doors are locked and secure when not in use.
- On leaving, cut-off power to loading-bay doors.
- Remove wheelie bins which offer access through windows.
- Where the law permits, screen prospective employees for criminal records.
- Employ a night crew to handle clean-up, restocking and display dressing.
- Question people in restricted areas, stockrooms or stairways.
- Check tradespersons' IDs.
- Live above/behind the shop.
- Prune nearby overgrown bushes or trees.
- Thread cable ties through clusters of high-value items.
- Make sure no one is hiding in the store or store rooms at closing time.
- Keep surfaces clean to make it easier for police to take fingerprints.
- Join your local traders' group. Notify each other and the police if burglars are suspected in the area.

And if you have been burgled:

- Check CCTV.
- If you don't have CCTV, make notes/take photos as soon as possible, listing times and staff movements.
- List what was stolen and from where.

Know the Enemy

Burglaries typically occur at night and/or after regular business hours.

In most cases, burglars enter through doors or windows and leave before police or security are able to respond.

Although less common, ram raids and smash-and-grabs involve ramming a car or other objects into a retail building,

attempting to grab as many items as possible, and then making a quick escape.

Social scientists at the Urban Institute Justice Policy Center in the United States have studied retail thieves and say that, in general, burglars are motivated by economic gain, although some simply enjoy the excitement of stealing merchandise.



According to their research, while most burglars are opportunistic, a small share are skilled professionals, employing sophisticated planning and methods and, therefore, committing many successful burglaries.

Retail burglars are known to target shops in isolated areas, have obstructed rear access and easy access for vehicles.

They also seek out shops known to have poor security features, such as low lighting, insufficient locks, no window bars or lack of formal security systems.

Stand-alone stores located away from night-populated areas are particularly at risk.

Supermarkets open around the clock are protected from burglary and mall stores are considered at reduced risk because they tend to be protected by security guards after hours.

National victimisation surveys conducted in Australia found that smaller shops have lower burglary rates than larger ones and newer businesses are more at risk.

Stores that have been burgled once are at increased risk of repeat incidents, usually within a month. Stores often increase their security after being burgled. ■

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Putting the ‘mmmm’ into Mutton

By Susan Webster

Closing Australia’s live sheep trade will channel more older animals into the already-clogged domestic mutton supply chain. How can the retail industry cope?

Throughout 2023, the monthly mutton slaughter rate rose 17 percent on the five-year average and, with increased supply, prices plunged from 600c/kg to 102c/kg.

Although mutton exports finished 2023 on a 23-year high, the local demand continues to weaken.

Mutton mostly comes from cull ewes, aged from three to nine years.

“The trouble is you can’t sell it as mutton to Australians,” said sheep industry consultant, Mr David Marland.

“It’s only the older shoppers who know what mutton tastes like ... and it’s beautiful, the market has all been based on lamb, lamb, lamb,” he said.

A University of Melbourne team has been looking at value-adding mutton, specifically the possibility of wet and dry-ageing the meat to make it more tender.

Generally, as animals age, the meat becomes tougher and odour-active fatty acids increase.

The muscles of older animals also contain more myoglobin, which is associated with stronger taste/flavour and liver metallic tastes.

Using meat from 81 cull ewes aged from three to eight years and 540 testers, the researchers aimed to quantify the effects of ageing methods on eating quality and to investigate consumer willingness to pay.

The mutton was wet and dry-aged from 14 to 56 days and taste-tested for tenderness, juiciness, flavour and overall liking.

Lead researcher, Dr Melindee Hastie said that, overall, no difference was found between the two ageing techniques but ageing beyond 14 days improved tenderness.

Consumers described quality grades as “better than everyday” and “good everyday”.

For grilled mutton loin and topside their estimated willing-to-pay price ranged from \$18.80 to \$26.90/kg.

Further research by the same team, conducted in collaboration with the William Angliss Institute, also found that mutton can produce a premium dish when low-temperature long cooking times are employed, such as smoking or sous vide, which improved mutton tenderness even further.

The research was supported by WA’s Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Meat and Livestock Australia and the University of Melbourne.

Researchers involved in this study were Melindee Hastie, Minh Ha, Robin Henry Jacob, Graham Hepworth, Damir Dennis Torrico and Robyn Warner.

“What a butcher said...”

A butcher and a chef from William Angliss Institute working with the researchers delivered these insights:

The butcher found dry-aged ewe carcasses harder to work with than fresh lamb carcasses.

For example, while the scapula bone can be pulled by hand from the flesh of a lamb, it had to be cut out of the dry-aged mutton carcass.

The butcher also found the meat to have a more greasy/oily feel and, therefore, it was harder to handle, with knives and hands requiring more cleaning during carcass fabrication.



Lead researcher, Dr Melindee Hastie

The quality of the dry-aged carcasses used throughout this study was highly variable; carcasses with low levels of fat cover were harder to work with as their meat had dried out much more than fatter carcasses.

Carcass leanness also made it difficult to fabricate mince from the offcuts with adequate levels of fat. This was likely to be a challenge for dry-aged sheep meat producers as retail butchers and chefs who, typically, specify the need for consistent carcass quality.

“What a chef said...”

According to the chef, the best cuts were the secondary cuts or less tender cuts (forequarter and leg) as these provided the best flavour.

Slow cooking for a long time at lower temperatures achieved the best results for these cuts.

Salting and smoking also achieved good results.

The chef refined the cutlet cooking technique and shoulder braise method over the two sessions and used lower temperatures for the second session and, in his opinion, this improved eating quality.

The chef also investigated several lean-to-fat combinations for the mutton mince before settling on 20 percent fat content as optimal.

In his opinion, mutton mince had a fantastic flavour and texture.

He also commented that the topside is perfect for schnitzels. ■

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Totally Wild Comes of Age

The wild game industry has come of age over the last decade with domestic and export demand for the nation's open range meats growing substantially driven by 'on-trend' consumer movements.

Reflecting the expansion of its membership, which includes a broad range of wild game meats and skins – kangaroos, wild goats, deer and rabbit among them – the Kangaroo Industry Association of Australia (KIAA) has undergone a rebranding to the Australian Wild Game Industry Council (AWGIC).

Ray Borda has been a leader in the wild game meat industry for over 40 years, sitting as president of the KIAA for a decade, overseeing its transition to the AWGIC and heading up one of the two major industry players, South Australia-based Macro Group Australia, with the other being Queensland-based Game Meat Processing Pty Ltd.

Mr Borda spoke with *Australian Meat News* about the 'coming of age' of the wild game industry, the drivers for its growing domestic and export demand and the unique challenges faced by the industry in guaranteeing supply of its open range meats.

By Stephanie Flynn

According to Mr Borda, the transition from the KIAA which had been in existence for some 30 years to the AWGIC better reflects the fact that today, kangaroo meats only comprise 60 percent of its stock-in-trade with other open range proteins now making up 40 percent.



Mr Ray Borda, president, Australian Wild Game Industry Council

"When you are a shooter out in the bush you are coming across any of those animals, our shooters are licensed to take them and there is a niche market for all of these meats, as well, farmers have a need for these animals to be removed, so we provide a service," Mr Borda said.

"There is a domestic demand for all these meats both for human and pet consumption, export demand is also there and both are growing," he said.

"Consumer movements are driving growth..."

The consumer-driven movements toward sustainability, reducing food waste, and the developing trend among the health-conscious toward consumption of foods which have limited processing interventions, have been the catalysts for the growth in demand for wild game meats.

"Health and welfare are a major focus these days as people are looking more at what they are eating and where it comes from, all of these animals are non-farmed animals and people like the idea, psychologically, that they are free-living animals," Mr Borda said.

"These animals are leaner, they have less fat content, and feed on natural, wild-grown feeds," he said.

While recent detailed studies into the nutritional composition of kangaroo meat are scant, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), officially notes that it is high in energy, protein, iron, zinc, Omega-3 fatty acids and B vitamins.

"The fight against food waste is another big movement, it is about changing industry practices, what we would have done in the past is kill these wild animals during the culling processes and leave them on the ground, that is a big food waste, today we harvest them and utilise the meat either for humans or pets, that is why the wild game meat industry in Australia is on-trend," Mr Borda said.

These factors make Australia's kangaroo meat, as well as its wild boar, goats, deer and rabbits, noted globally for their unadulterated wild foraging nature.



Demand for kangaroo meat is on the rise in both domestic and export markets

They are fulfilling a niche but growing market in the food service and food retail sectors around the world, most notably in Japan and Korea as well as the US and in Europe.

There are, according to DFAT, some 60 overseas markets to which Australia's kangaroo meat exporters have access.

Official figures on the value of Australia's kangaroo meat exports are as scant as those on its nutritional composition, but the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry valued exports at \$12.8 million in 2019/20.

"Whereas once, Russia was the major market as a cheap meat for their sausage-making, they replaced that demand with buffalo meat and we have since had to decline Russian requests for supply because kangaroo is no longer a meat that can be supplied cheaply, we are far more sophisticated today than in those early days," Mr Borda said.

"A difficulty we have, is that if the market is down for the major proteins, we are in the same boat, currently the major proteins are not getting the high prices so we have to be market competitive, we cannot be dearer than beef or lamb," he said.

"It has been no easy feat to establish supply infrastructure..."

Mr Borda points out that while kangaroo has been sold to the world for some 30 years – beef, lamb and pork have been sold for hundreds of years – it is comparatively a relatively new niche market.

It has been no easy feat to establish the infrastructure required to bring Australia's wild game meats to both



By necessity, supply systems for wild game meats span some 4,000km

domestic and global markets with the industry beset by unique challenges, not faced by the more traditional protein supply channels, at every step of the process from the wild to processing.

"The nature and size of our country means that some of my trucks are travelling 4,000 km to pick up the kangaroos, venison or whatever else and when you have interruptions like severe droughts or floods, it means we have had to establish a broad supply structure to overcome interruptions to supply," Mr Borda said.

"We source from Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, at any one time we can probably get enough supply from two of those areas despite the climate impacts and the thought of climate change making it even more challenging is daunting," he said.

Transport in this industry is also challenging with the major operators having had to vertically integrate their operations, doing everything from the ground up through the entire supply chain.

This includes establishing their own transport fleets as external commercial transport companies will not travel the

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long distances along dirt and corrugated roads to collect the carcasses from their often-remote locations and each carcass needs to be loaded manually onto the transport.

There is also major infrastructure investment by the two major players with chiller boxes and cool rooms needed to be located on-site in the remote locations where the shooters are based.

“It is expensive but if there is to be a future for the sector the major players like ourselves at Macro Group Australia and Game Meat Processing need to make the investments for and support the whole industry,” Mr Borda said.

“There are a lot of difficulties but at the same time it is rewarding because we do feel like we are on trend,” he said.

In terms of processing, there are 60 to 70 wild game meat processors in Australia with the majority licensed for pet food.

“Science centre for food testing established in South Australia...”

Macro Group Australia and Game Meat Processing between them account for about 80 percent of the commercial industry for human consumption and are the nation’s only two exporters to global markets.

As with other protein industries, the wild game industry has also been the target of extreme activists receiving both death and bomb threats as well as sabotage of its product in chiller boxes but the industry has used these attacks to propel itself ahead of the issue establishing a stringent welfare policy and a food testing science laboratory under the operations of the Macro Group Australia.

“We have a responsibility as far as animal welfare goes, if we find any breaches of our animal welfare code in our chain, there is immediate suspension while an investigation is carried out because we cannot let that happen, it is an important issue for us,” Mr Borda said.

“In my company we have 18 scientists work for us including microbiologists, pathologists, food technicians and food scientists, we are very science-based, it is all about food safety,” he said.

Discovering that there was a major demand throughout the food industry for reliable scientific testing, Mr Borda is now building a two-million-dollar purpose-built premises for the South Australian Analytical Laboratory Services, encouraged by the 600 or so clients from a range of food industries for which the scientists now do testing. ■

Driving a High-Value Goat Supply Chain

By Susan Webster

What would it take to make Australians more committed goat meat consumers?

Two new reports have one possible answer: stop treating it like lamb.

A research review undertaken jointly by the University of Melbourne and the UK’s University of Leeds and a new Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) report are each making similar recommendations to boost Australia’s goat meat sector which is the world’s biggest exporter ... but one with negligible local consumption.

About 10 percent of goat meat produced is consumed in Australia, although one-third of Australian consumers in 2015 said they would consider eating it, so ... what’s stopping them?

The MLA-backed document *Developing a sustainable high-value market driven goat supply chain* noted that the greatest constraint to domestic demand is consumers’ unfamiliarity with preparing goat meat.

According to the MLA report, consumers in western countries are usually unfamiliar with the preparation of goat meat and tend to prepare and cook goat meat using methods similar to those used for lamb.

“Consumers tend to make an inappropriate selection of goat meat cuts in relation to the proposed cooking method ... there is no MSA cut/cook pathway (and) consumers generally seek a recipe that is quick and requires a few ingredients,” the MLA report concluded.

Meanwhile, the university report notes that there are no standards for presenting goat meat to consumers.

“The general trend ... is to use cuts similar to those used for lamb, which is debatable since the two species differ significantly in the inter- and intra-muscular subcutaneous fat content,” the report said.

“It is important to focus studies on goats to develop a standardisation/classification system,” it said.

The MLA report was compiled by Greenleaf Enterprises’ Janine Teese and Ken Bryan, in collaboration with Cedar Meats.

It noted that a lack of goat-dedicated processing technology, high processing costs per kilogram of meat sold, bandsaw WHS issues and limited market development means processors have maintained the status quo, selling frozen carcasses sliced six ways.

It recommended developing confined feeding/feedlot guidelines to help standardise carcass size, quality and supply.

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Australia is the world's biggest exporter of goat meat

The MLA report suggests developing automated goat processing equipment to make it feasible for processors to easily separate racks, ribs, legs and shanks while allowing the rest of the carcase to be cubed.

It also suggests a programme to develop branding such as Capra (kid), rangeland mild and strong varieties and grain-fed as well as value-add, retail-ready and diced product.

When it comes to pricing, the MLA report suggests matching lamb pricing for roast cuts and beef pricing for stew meats.

Volatile pricing is creating headwinds for the goat meat industry.

The average 2022 export price of \$12.28/kg plunged to \$7.38 in January to June 2023.

Most goat meat has traditionally been wild-harvested, with rangeland goats of different breed-hybrids grazing poor-quality grasslands.

Feedlot animals are being introduced into the supply chain by larger-scale operators.

There are about four to six million rangeland goats and around 200,000 farmed meat goats in Australia ranging from capretto (12-20 weeks old) to chevon (six to nine months) through to the gamey flavour of intact and adult goats (two plus years).

The major consumers of goat meat in Australia are from Hispanic, Muslim and Caribbean backgrounds.

Meanwhile, the University of Melbourne study makes several suggestions including standard grading of goat meat similar to MSA.

However, commercial exporters/processors might see less financial return from a fresh quality-grading programme than from live export, the report notes.

Processing goat meat requires specialisation, according to the researchers.

Ultimate pH values tend to be higher than for other species suggesting that goats are generally more susceptible to stress than are other species.

Goats have low subcutaneous fat cover and low carcass weight compared to sheep meat. Cooling/freezing being applied prior to rigor onset, leads to cold-shortening and toughened muscles, particularly for kid carcasses.

When exposed to typical chilling temperatures of 1–4°C, cold-shortening in rapidly chilled carcasses and toughening is a known problem, leading to a suggestion of delayed chilling (10–15°C for 6 h, 0–4°C until 24 hours).

Electrical stimulation and up to six days of ageing could help improve tenderness, the scientists said.

The university report recommended promoting slow and moist cooking (including sous vide) to enhance the eating experience, especially for non-ethnic consumers unfamiliar with goat meat.

Fast cooking methods such as grilling or pan-frying used for sheep or lamb meat would be inappropriate for goat meat according to this report. ■

Subdued Demand Expected but Outlook Improves for 2024

The global and domestic economic outlook for this year is more positive than last year but headwinds are likely to continue according to Rabobank's recently released *Australian Agribusiness Outlook 2024*.

The Outlook, comprising assessments by Rabobank's leading economic and protein research analysts, looks at both the domestic and export markets for Australia's agricultural sector as well as the issues that are likely to surround the production, processing and broader economic environment for each specific protein in the year ahead.

According to the Outlook, 2024 will see a continuation of subdued demand, both globally and domestically, as cost-of-living pressures weigh heavily on consumer discretionary spending.

Lead author of the Outlook, RaboResearch General Manager Australia and New Zealand Mr Stefan Vogel said that the global economic outlook, while better than in 2023, is still subdued for the year ahead and this will continue to create headwinds for Australia's agricultural exporters.

Rabobank expects that the value of the Australian dollar (AUD) against the US dollar is likely to rise by the end of 2024.

According to the Outlook, the AUD is likely bottom out at USc 65 before rallying up towards USc 70 on a 12-month view.

"China's economy is likely to remain slow, which isn't the best set-up for

our exports to the region, as Chinese consumer demand will need more time to gear-up into full swing," Mr Vogel said.

"The upward move (expected) in the currency would slightly contribute to relieving some of the cost pressure for imported inputs and goods used on-farm, although it would not be enough to notably hurt Australia's competitiveness when it comes to agricultural exports," he said.

Domestically, in what is good news for business borrowers, according to the Outlook, interest rates are expected to plateau for most of the next six months before the likelihood of rate cuts towards the last quarter of the year.



Mr Stefan Vogel: "global economic outlook is subdued for the year ahead"



Mr Edward McGeoch: "US demand will drive an improvement in lamb markets in 2H 2024"

The Outlook notes that geopolitics and shipping remain areas of concern and, if the Red Sea attacks continue to escalate, Australia may find itself struggling to easily find containers for export later in the year.

Mr Angus Gidley-Baird, Rabobank's senior protein analyst, has since clarified that while this issue may affect some individual players and specific trade routes such as those involved in expanding exports of lamb to the United Kingdom, it is not expected to have a significant impact on the majority of protein exporters.

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Outlook for Beef

According to Mr Gidley-Baird's analysis for the Outlook, while export markets are looking more positive for the year ahead, consumer spending remains under pressure with Asian markets expected to continue experiencing soft demand.

Mitigating this softer demand is a clearing of supply chains which will help improve currency of product and support prices.

Also supporting Australian beef exports is a contraction in production levels in the United States (US) leading to an expected increase in imports in the year ahead.

US beef production fell an estimated five percent in 2023 and is expected to fall further in 2024 according to the Outlook.

While Rabobank does not expect seasonal conditions in the US to have improved enough to initiate a restocking process as yet, the Outlook anticipates that when it does occur, this activity will drive cattle prices higher and act as a further upside support for Australian exports.

In terms of production, according to Mr Gidley-Baird's analysis, cattle slaughter is expected to lift 10 to 15 percent in 2024 with increasing cattle inventory and an increase in processing capacity being the two major factors driving the rise.

Outlook for Sheep Meat

According to the analysis for the 2024 Outlook by Rabobank's Associate Analyst for Agricultural Commodities Mr Edward McGeoch demand for lamb is showing signs of improvement in both domestic and export markets.

Local retail prices began to fall late last year with the resulting improvement in the price competitiveness of lamb against cheaper protein alternatives stimulating consumption, according to Mr McGeoch's analysis.

While on export markets concern remains on the Chinese economic slowdown and consumer demand, the Outlook expects improving Australian



Mr Angus Gidley-Baird: "Asian markets expected to continue experiencing soft demand"

seasonal conditions and US demand will drive an improvement in lamb markets in the second half 2024.

The first half of 2024 is expected to see strong lamb slaughter volumes as a large number of unsold spring lambs hit the market with processors expected to see lighter carcass weights.

Slaughter volumes are expected to fall in the second half of 2024 as a consequence elevated sheep slaughter numbers last year affecting breeding flock size and the new season lamb drop.

According to the Outlook, 2024 lamb slaughter numbers are expected to climb six percent in the year ahead with sheep slaughter numbers remaining stable year-on-year.

Outlook for Poultry

In the two years to the third quarter of last year, the retail price of poultry rose 14.7 percent which, according to the Outlook, assisted in covering increased production costs including grain feed.

While the ongoing tighter economic conditions are likely to support domestic consumption of poultry in the year ahead, the Outlook suggests that there will be limited room for further price increases.

The major constraint on further increases in the retail price for poultry is the comparative price of other proteins which are now declining.

Poultry producers, however, are likely

to benefit by a decline in feed grain costs which Rabobank foresees as easing in 2024 as a result of weaker global markets and improved seasonal conditions.

Outlook for Pork

According to the Outlook, 2023 saw a good year for pork producers with high volumes and good prices.

While Rabobank expects 2024 to unfold a similar story for pork producers, it cautions the impact of record production volumes.

Despite a 37 percent increase in pork exports and an estimated 22 percent decrease in pork imports in 2023, these factors combined with the record production still resulted in a decline in the per capita consumption of pork to 23.8kg from 26kg according to Rabobank's analysis.

Rabobank does expect 2024 will see production plateau and foresees a benefit to producer margins resulting from the anticipated easing in grain feed costs.

Outlook for Consumer Demand and Consumer Foods

Rabobank's Senior Analyst for Dairy and Consumer Foods Mr Michael Harvey provides the protein industry with a valuable insight into the hurdles facing the Australian consumer and the global market for food businesses in the Outlook for 2024.

According to Mr Harvey's analysis, there are risks to the global economy which will have a dampening effect on food demand generally in export markets in the year ahead.

In Australia, there are several key factors which are impacting discretionary spending by consumers, not the least of which is cost-of-living pressures.

According to the Outlook, household savings of Australian consumers are running at the lowest levels since the Global Financial Crisis of 2007/08 and consumer confidence is at pessimistic levels not seen since the 1990's. ■

New Board at AMPC

Australian Meat Processor Corporation (AMPC) kicks off the new year with a fresh look board of directors that comprises a heady combination of extensive experience and academic achievement.

The board, which will serve a three-year term, includes seven processor directors and two independent directors.

Ms Melissa Fletcher, chief executive officer of Fletcher International Exports, becomes the first female chairperson of AMPC replacing Mr John Berry who retired from the role after serving for six years.

Also retiring from the board at the November 2023 Annual General Meeting were Messrs Noel Kelson, Tom Maguire and Brad Teys.

The role of deputy chairperson has been taken-up by Dr John Langbridge, serving his first term on the AMPC board, who holds the position of manager for industry affairs at Teys Australia.

Also joining the board for their first term are Messrs Frank Herd, Trevor Moore, Sean Starling and Ms Stacey McKenna.

Second term members of the new board include independent directors Ms Saranne Cooke and Ms Allira Hudson-Gofers.

Serving for her third term, Ms Fletcher welcomed her appointment as chairperson.

"I am honoured to be elected as chair and thank the outgoing board for setting a solid foundation," Ms Fletcher said.

"I am committed to ensuring sound governance of AMPC to maximise value for the red meat industry," she said.

The longest serving director, entering his fourth term, is Mr Dean Goode.

Chief executive officer of AMPC, Mr



Ms Melissa Fletcher has become the first female chairperson at AMPC

Chris Taylor, said that the new board has a diverse set of skills and attributes.

"I am looking forward to working with them in delivering our strategic aspirations," Mr Taylor said.

"There is an exciting time ahead as we continue to invest in innovative solutions and drive support for the \$21 billion red meat processing industry that support 138,000 jobs in Australia," he said.

The breadth of experience and qualifications of the AMPC board members are borne out in their individual profiles.

Ms Melissa Fletcher Chairperson

Chief executive officer of Fletcher International Exports, one of Australia's largest processors and exporters of lamb and sheep meat products.

Ms Fletcher has 30 years' experience in the industry having been responsible for commissioning and managing the company's greenfield processing plant in WA's south west when she was just 22 years of age.

Dr John Langbridge Deputy Chairperson

Manager, industry affairs at Teys Australia, Mr Langbridge is a veterinarian and worked for the



Mr John Langbridge joins the AMPC board as deputy chairperson

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry for 27 years as well as the Australian Meat Industry Council for four years.

Dr Saranne Cooke Independent Director

A professional director and chairperson with experience on a variety of boards across a range of sectors.

Ms Cooke has been involved with research development corporations since 2018.

She is highly qualified having completed her doctorate by researching board governance across ASX 200 companies and also a Bachelor of Commerce as well as masters in both business and commercial law.

Dean Goode Processor Director

After working as chief executive officer for Kilcoy Pastoral Company since 2012, Mr Goode was appointed group chief executive officer of the rebranded group of companies, Kilcoy Global Foods, in 2017.

In this role he is responsible for the Group's business activities in Australia, United States and China.

Mr Goode holds a Master of Business Administration.

Frank Herd Processor Director

Mr Herd is managing director of MC Herd Pty Ltd a privately held company operating a dual species, both ovine and bovine, export abattoir in Victoria.

He is also a director of Challenge Foods Pty Ltd, an export registered company, also based in Geelong.

Mr Herd is a past director and chairman of Australian Meat Industry Council and a current member of the National Processing Council.

Allira Hudson-Gofers Independent Director

A registered trans-Tasman patent attorney and managing partner – Australia of a patent attorney practice.

Ms Hudson-Gofers has considerable board experience across a range of industry sectors in the roles of both chairperson and non-executive director.

She holds an extensive range of qualifications including masters in biomedical engineering, intellectual property, business and legal business.

Stacey McKenna Processor Director

Ms McKenna is manager of industry affairs at The Midfield Group, a family-owned and operated meat processor.

She has served as board director with PrimeSafe, Victoria's regulator of meat, poultry, seafood and pet food.

She is currently a director at Skills Base Australia, a training organisation dedicated to upskilling workers across the meat supply chain.

Ms McKenna has, this year, taken up the role as Australian chairperson for Meat Business Women.

She holds a Graduate Certificate in Agribusiness, a Diploma in Meat Technology and is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Trevor Moore Processor Director

Mr Moore has been involved in the Australian meat processing industry for over 34 years.

Currently a senior executive at The Casino Foods Co-op in Northern New South Wales, he is responsible for strategic direction and strategic services.

He holds a Bachelor Degree in the field of environmental science.

Mr Moore served with the Australian Beef Sustainability Framework from 2019 to 2023 and continues to serve on strategic Australian Meat Industry Council committees, roles he has undertaken since 2010.

Sean Starling Processor Director

Mr Starling is currently head of innovation and industrial engineering (southern) at JBS.

He has delivered industry innovation through heading-up research and development divisions at both MLA and AMPC over the course of his career.

In his role as Scott Technology Australia general manager, he was accountable for market development, commercialisation and adoption of innovation into the nation's processing companies.

Mr Starling holds Bachelor Degrees in Engineering (chemical) and Laws as well as a Diploma of Business Administration. ■

Glove Best for Meat Workers

An exoskeletal glove offers the best opportunity for meat processors looking to support workers undertaking challenging manual work, according to an Australian Meat Processor Corporation (AMPC) study.

The Ironhand glove was identified from eight short-listed innovations as the best new entrant in the field of human-assisted technology.

Fitted with pressure sensors and AI, the glove can strengthen the hand's grip and the holding forces of the thumb and fingers.

The AI enables the device to learn, adapt, anticipate and then activate grip movement patterns and required force levels.

The researchers reported: "Of the

eight short-listed devices, the Ironhand glove was identified as the device most likely to have the greatest impact across the broadest range and number of meat processing jobs when compared to the other devices.

"This powered glove reduces grip forces to grasp and manipulate tools, objects and parts of a carcass being processed.

Because of the high level of likely application within meat processing, the Ironhand glove was prioritised for processor-based testing."

The candidate devices were tested across a number of meat processing sites nationally, with the power glove trialled at the Brisbane plant of Australian Country Choice (ACC).

According to ACC WHS manager, Mr Joell Brown, the application of Ironhand also serves a substantial role in rehabilitating injured workers back into the workforce.

AMPC reported: "With appropriate safety precautions in place, the study concluded that exoskeletons and other human assistance technologies have great potential to be useful in reducing the physical demands of many manual tasks, improving operator efficiency, and accelerating the development of greater mechanisation and automation."

The report of the research was released recently and is available at www.ampc.com.au. ■

Study Shows Short-stay Profit Boost for Processors

By Susan Webster

Short duration lairage delivers benefits to meat processors, new Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) research reveals up to \$48/head more when animals are penned no more than four hours.

Lairage, the time between cattle arriving at an abattoir and slaughter, can range between two and 36 hours according to MLA.

The most common lairage is 12–24 hours, typically involving an overnight stay.

The study, led by feedlot research scientist Dr Melissa George, found lairage of between three to four hours resulted in higher hot standard carcass weight (HSCW), and more hydration and liver glycogen.

Increased liver glycogen indicates better stored energy in the animals.

The study also found no negative outcomes to meat quality and food safety with shorter lairage.

Additionally, shorter lairage can deliver environmental and sustainability benefits via reduced emissions intensity per



carcase (estimated as a 1.2 percent reduction in emission intensity equal to 0.34kg CO₂-e/kg).

The Queensland-based study compared 2,226 grain-fed export cattle in Queensland transported less than six hours to the abattoir and held for times ranging from four to 26.5 hours.

Lairage of four hours or less yielded up to 7.4kg more HSCW and increased revenue by \$40 to \$48 per head assuming a \$6.50/kg HSCW price.

MLA estimates short duration lairage was practiced on approximately 15 percent of the grain-fed beef turnoff during the 2023 financial year.

“Given this, there is a large opportunity for increased revenue by adopting the practice,” Dr George said. ■

First Buffalo Supply Chain Study

The Northern Territory’s wild-harvest buffalo supply chain is coming under scrutiny in a first-of-its-kind research project by AgriFutures Australia and the Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia (CRCNA).

According to researcher, Dr Kieren McCosker, no one has done a study like this before for the buffalo industry.

“We will map out the full supply chain, identify the pinch points, potential intervention points and provide some direction and areas of improvement,” Dr McCosker said.

“This research will help make rules and practices that ensure the highest level of animal wellbeing and make sure the buffalo are healthy throughout their supply chain journey, assisting requirements like the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock,” he said.

The project, led by The University of Queensland, will run until June 2026 and involves the NT Government, the NT



The NT’s buffalo supply chain is the subject of a research study
PHOTO: Jess Wright

Buffalo Industry Council, Central Queensland University and industry experts.

The CRCNA will support research on the impact and involvement of Arnhem Land Indigenous communities. ■

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Northern Livestock Industry a Focus for New Research Centre

By Stephanie Flynn

A new agricultural research facility has been established under the Charles Darwin University (CDU) banner with a remit to focus on the instigation and development of research programmes of interest to the northern livestock and other agricultural industries.

Established with an initial Commonwealth grant from the Department of Education of four million dollars, the Research Institute for Northern Agriculture and Drought Resilience (RINA) is in the process of consulting with northern livestock and agricultural industries to prioritise research needs and attract agricultural researchers and graduates to its Darwin base.

Director of the Research Institute for Environment and Livelihoods, under which RINA will operate, Professor Sam Banks, said that funding has allowed CDU to fill what was, until now, a gap in its capabilities and will, in the future, establish a pipeline of agricultural science graduates in the north of the country.

“From CDU’s perspective, we now have a new capability for research broadly in the agricultural space and our focus at the moment is on getting research partnerships with industry underway as well as attracting research students who wish to do a masters or PhD,” Professor Banks said.

“We are really interested in collaborating with industry and other researchers as well as government bodies to develop research projects and apply for joint funding for conducting those projects together.



Professor Sam Banks, director of CDU’s Research Institute for Environment and Livelihoods under which RINA will operate



Associate Professor Beth Penrose is heading-up research development for the livestock industries

“One of the key benefits of partnering for industry is that universities can have access to academic research funding opportunities not available outside the sector,” he said.

While RINA will conduct research across the broad spectrum of agricultural industries, it will have a major focus on the livestock and pastoral sector given it is a major industry across the Northern Territory and the north of Australia more generally.

Biosecurity is of particular importance to the northern livestock industry and RINA has already commenced a project looking into the potential harm of the biting midge to cattle and has other research projects in development including one centred on cattle skin lesions.

“At the moment, it is suspected that biting midges do spread diseases but there is not a lot of information on it, which is why we are focusing on this and also understanding how far they move and what the rates of disease spread would be,” Professor Banks said.

“It is not addressing what is, at this stage, an immediate risk but putting together fundamental information and knowledge,” he said.

Also in the biosecurity arena, RINA is developing a research project which, according to Professor Banks, could potentially use environmental DNA to detect pathogens, essentially detecting diseases in cattle drinking troughs through DNA found in the water.

Associate Professor Beth Penrose, the most recent addition to the RINA research team, is heading-up the research

development for the livestock and pastoral industries and is currently working throughout the Territory with cattle producers developing an understanding of where the research needs to be focused.

A pastoral scientist with a considerable expertise in the micronutrient content of animal proteins, Associate Professor Penrose is currently involved in developing a collaborative research project which looks at the reducing cattle skin lesions, which are causing problems with otherwise healthy cattle being rejected for live export.

Other areas of potential research in the development phase for RINA include projects which look at the creation of a circular economy for industrial waste generated in livestock production systems and projects concerning land use change and the effects of that change on carbon emissions and biodiversity.

“We are currently developing a PhD project with industrial waste expert, Dr Deepika Mathur who is based in Alice Springs, looking at hard to recycle materials from remote cattle stations such as tyres, engine oil and plastics,” Associate Professor Penrose said.

“We also need to understand if a producer diversifies their production system to add cotton, hay production or trees, how that diversification changes the carbon emissions and biodiversity outcomes, as well as economic gains for the producer,” she said.

The results of this research, according to Associate Professor Penrose, will allow producers to make more informed decisions about diversification, particularly if they want to access the cattle and cropping markets combined with a carbon credit or biodiversity market.

Members of the meat industry and its representative bodies are invited to contact Professor Banks on sam.banks@cdu.edu.au if there are research projects that they would like to pursue in collaboration with RINA.

CDU also has 12 PhD scholarships on offer for agricultural science graduates who would like to further their post graduate studies on research projects in the Northern Territory.

There are three opportunities on offer under Associate Professor Penrose who will assist by identifying projects within the northern beef industry that align with students' interests.

Associate Professor Penrose is a plant nutritionist whose particular field of interest is minerals, both beneficial minerals for human and animal health and contaminants, and she is keen to see more research in the north on nutritional composition and value.

Interested students can contact Associate Professor Penrose directly on beth.penrose@cdu.edu.au ■

New Australian Territory Partner for MBW

Meat Business Women (MBW), the pioneering membership community for women in the global meat industry, is stepping up its presence in Australia with a new three-year partnership with industry affairs specialist, Ms Stacey McKenna.

The partnership which commenced in January will see Ms McKenna, as Australian chairperson, deliver partnerships and events for MBW's Australian chapter for the next three years.

She will be taking over from the Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC), which has acted as the organisation's territory partner since 2019.

Ms McKenna brings a wealth of experience in the Australian red meat sector.

She is currently industry affairs manager for The Midfield Group and a director of Skills Base Australia, a registered training organisation.

Ms McKenna has recently also been appointed to the boards of both the AMIC and the Australian Meat Processor Corporation.

Ms Laura Ryan, global chairperson of MBW, said that Ms McKenna is the perfect partner for the organisation.

“She is passionate about the red meat sector, with deep knowledge of key industry matters, has great contacts across the sector and an impressive track record of industry advocacy,” Ms Ryan said.

“Stacey's close involvement with our previous territory partner, AMIC, also ensures there will be continuity for our Australian members and corporate partners.

“I would like to take this opportunity to thank AMIC for their outstanding work and support over the past four years.

“In her new, independent role with us, Stacey will have even more scope to partner with a larger range of businesses and build new programmes for our members, backed by dedicated time and investment to grow and deliver Meat Business Women ‘down under’,” she said.

On her appointment, Ms McKenna highlighted the value of the organisation to women in the industry.

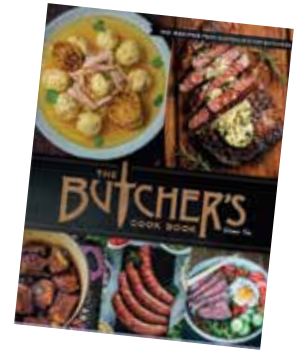
“As a woman in the meat industry, I know how important it is to have a forum to connect with other women in the sector and learn, share and support each other,” Ms McKenna said.

“I am excited to build on Meat Business Women's existing success in Australia by delivering great-value events for our members and forging even closer relationships with our partners and other industry stakeholders,” she said.

Since launching in Australia in 2019, MBW has grown rapidly ‘down under’ with Australian members and corporate partners including Coles, JBS, Australian Pork Limited and Sheep Producers Australia.

The first MBW event Ms McKenna will lead is the annual conference in Melbourne on 20 March 2024. ■

FIND A WORD



Enter the competition to win a copy of the *Butchers Cook Book Volume Two*.

The words in the list below are all hidden in the grid. They may be found in straight lines running horizontally, vertically or diagonally.

Some of the letters are shared by more than one word. When you have found all the words in the list, there will be 17 letters remaining, these form the answer to the competition.

When complete, send your copy by mail or email. Include your name, address and phone number to go in the draw.

Results will be published in the next issue of *Australian Meat News*.

Entries close 5 May 2024.

For last issue's winners, see opposite.

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The Butcher's Cook Book

Volume Two
Published by
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The concept of the *Butcher's Cook Book* is the brainchild of a collective of Australian meat industry notaries – Shannon Walker, Jay Beaumont, Deborah Andrich and Steve Foy – all of whom have a passion for the promotion of the centrality of the local butcher in the life of everyday Australians.



Following the publication of the highly successful first edition, *The Butcher's Cook Book Volume Two* presents 100 recipes from 50 butchers around the country.

This cookbook is one with a difference, it tells the story of each of the butchers who have contributed recipes and, through those tales and recipes, inherently tells the story of Australia itself as a multi-cultural nation.

The cuisines presented through the recipes hail from around the world including South East Asia, the Mediterranean, the Middle East, India, the Caribbean and Morocco.

The dishes cover a broad range of cooking styles from slow-cooker and smoking recipes to barbeque and roasting.

Quite naturally, meat – beef, lamb, pork, chicken, goat and kangaroo – is the hero (or heroine) of each dish.

The recipes each include spice mixes, marinades and serving suggestions as well as handy hints, cooking time and the number of people the dish will serve.

Beautifully presented, each recipe is accompanied by professional full-colour photographs of the ingredients and the completed dish.

The book is a story, first and foremost, about butchers and their passion for the industry to which they have dedicated their lives.

The Index at the back of the book is where you will find the recipes listed under the protein which each features.

It is not only a stylish full-colour cookbook but an enjoyable read, just don't get carried away with the stories and forget to cook.

The Butcher's Cook Book Volume Two is priced at \$35 and can be purchased by contacting the Butcher's Cook Book Facebook page. ■

Winners NOVEMBER 2023 Find a Word



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

Khabin 10-inch Cimetar Steak Knife and 12-inch Steel
Francheska Abrenica, Junee Prime Lamb, Junee, NSW

Khabin 6-inch Graton-edged Boning Knife
David Gooch, Market Meats, Shepparton Vic
Joan Frederici, Dardanup Butchering Company, Picton WA
Peter Bezant, Bully Butcher, Henley Brook WA
Ian De Villiers, Vacpac, Loganholme Qld
Wayne Barker, Barkers Butchery, Oberon NSW

Thank you BUNZL

A big thank you to BUNZL who have sponsored our Find a Word Competition for ages.

A special thanks to Steven Hawke who devised the prize structure to encourage contact between Bunzl reps and prospective clients.

BUNZL has decided to discontinue their sponsorship.

Australian Meat News is looking for a Find a Word sponsor – a business that is keen to maintain contact with meat industry participants.

Book Competition Winner

Congratulations to Alen Skaro, who won the copy of *Charcuterie* published by the Ferrandi School of Arts.

Alen works with the recruiting agency, Bayside Group.

Thanks for entering our competition, enjoy the book.



AUSTRALIAN meatnews

Publication Schedule 2024

Issue	Booking Deadline
June	15 May
August	18 July
November	17 October

Material Deadline: Plus 5 working days

Contact: Steven Coles M: 0477 275 878
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