

April 2009

MEAT INDUSTRY NEWS



Victoria Retail Council Report

By Brendon Watts

The Victorian Retail Council met in early March to progress the workplan which it has set for 2009.

The Council meeting opened with a condolences motion for those who have lost their lives in the February bushfires. Many of the AMIC members were affected directly by this tragedy and, on behalf of all member, Council wishes them well for their future.

The Chairman reported on the Domestic Marketing Plan for the year 2009 – 2010 from the meeting he attended in Sydney. The Plan has been released by Meat and Livestock Australia. With an increase in the available funding from \$23m in 2008 – 2009 to \$25.5m in 2009 – 2010 MLA has increased the Beef Marketing expenditure to allow for three promotions in place of two in the current year. Council supported the increased expenditure and the contracting of Laurie Lawrence as the “face of beef” for the MLA promotional activity. Council resolved to support the increase in funding and the additional promotion, It further resolved to approach MLA to review its decision not to have a goal for an increase in the beef sales in the current budget.

Council discussed a report on the developments in the science behind listeria and the possible effects on mandatory testing. An industry meeting in February addressed formulation changes to products with the possible outcome that listeria growth rates can be reduced or stopped in a wider range of products. This has an important long term outcome for listeria testing and product recalls. While much work is required, Council supported the developments and will continue to work with the wider industry on this matter. It was recognised that this will be a medium term plan, not a “quick fix”.

The AMIC Retail Strategic Plan was approved by Council and this will be a part of the Meat Industry Strategic Plan for the 2010 – 2015 years. This is the first major revision of the Meat Industry Strategic Plan and your Council is well represented in this process. This Plan will set the future direction for the meat industry and the retail sector.

If you are would like to have input into these or other issues addressed by your Council we would welcome you at the next meeting in May. Please contact the AMIC office for details.



Councillor Profile Frank Russo

Frank took over his family business and built it up to become an extraordinary success through sheer hard work. He has been a councillor for 10 years.

Why do you sit on the Retail & General Council?

To help my peers in the industry, to share information and advice, and to develop improved services for the industry. This includes advising on Quality Assurance, food safety training and new opportunities for industry members.

As a Councillor, what will you contribute to benefit members and the industry?

My knowledge, especially on process and procedure to further develop industry services.

Tell us about one of the issues you faced during your first year as a Councillor and what the outcome was.

I helped develop the Q butcher program and I felt it wasn't the right direction for our butchers. We were trying to sell a side-product to customers, when our real focus should have, and continues to be, selling quality meat. The companies who manufacture the other products are the experts for their own products. We need to stick with what we know best.

What are your goals for this year as a Councillor?

I want to work on developing a professional member's manual which includes step-by-step information on QA. This will help butchers maintain their QA and overall process and procedures, training, wages, how to make savings in their business, OH&S etc. I think this is crucial for our industry to maintain consistency in product and service and to help make their business profitable. We can talk and do training, but at the end of the day the members need something which they can refer to and action the training and

knowledge they have been shown. With a manual on hand, they can implement their new knowledge in the workplace.

I want to help people with the actual structure of all aspects of their business so they can move forward in a changing customer and business environment. It will also help with succession planning and insurance.

What direction do you see AMIC heading?

If we all work as a team and focus on the issues we need to focus on – including making sure the members are satisfied in our role, then we are heading in the right direction. We are all experienced operators, and it is our duty to help our members grow their retail businesses.

What is the most important lesson you have learned since you have been a Councillor?

Working as a group can bring real benefits. There is power in a group of experienced people - you can brainstorm ideas and you are able to work as a team to come up with the best ideas and then pass them on to members.

What has been the most valuable advice given to you and who gave it to you?

The most valuable advice has come from my property manager and it's about setting up my business, especially the leasing and contractual arrangements. Getting this right is crucial to the success and longevity of the business. If it is set up correctly, you have power of negotiation and you have strength to manage your business when you have to. This in turn helps you manage costs and profits.

What is your favourite pastime when not working?

Spending time with family, and also going on the national Ferrari rallies around the country.

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