

Talking Business

June 2020

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Paul's Corner

When we published our March edition of Talking Business our nation was ablaze with the tough Australian bushfire season. A few months later, we have found ourselves writing this next edition still with heavy hearts as we continue to battle another crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic. This outbreak is far reaching, affecting communities around the world.

In this edition, we have made a conscientious decision to focus on the positive stories we have seen in the past few months. We respect there are many heartbreaking stories which have affected our businesses and their families but thought it appropriate to focus on hope. As Nelson Mandela once said, 'Make your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears.'

In this issue, we celebrate the immense effort our coordinated Material Aid Program has achieved delivering food and supplies to residents that are most in need and without other support. This would not be possible without the help of some big-hearted organisations in our municipality. You can read the story on page five.

Also on page five, we are invited into Kez's Kitchen to hear about their staff immunisation program, a story even more relevant in the middle of this pandemic. Our business workshop program has been put on-hold for the foreseeable future. We explore other avenues available on page 15 highlighting some of the fantastic webinars and podcasts on offer.

Finally, a reminder if you're seeking business support to contact our Greater Dandenong Business team. You can phone, email or visit our website for information regarding your business.

We hope you find some comfort in these stories in our June edition of Talking Business.

Paul Kearsley
Director of Business, Engineering
and Major Projects

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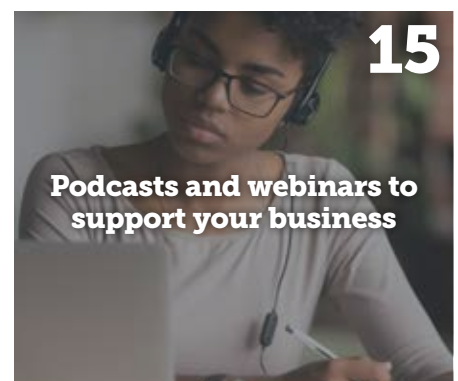
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Cover: Latest public art program work by Hayden Dewar titled 'Roots' is situated at Ian Street and Mons Parade, Noble Park. Photograph by Hilton Stone.



Great Bites Open for Business

COVID-19 has required food businesses to adapt their food offerings to meet guidelines whilst ensuring locals can continue to enjoy their Great Bites. As a result, the Business Development Unit has modified the Great Bites publication and created an online platform.

We've compiled a list of businesses which are still offering Great Bites via takeaway services.

If you're a Great Bites supporter, share the love and tag the business using the appropriate hashtag to spread the word to others in our community.

#greatbitesopenforbusiness
 #greatbitesdandenong
 #greatbitesspringvale
 #greatbitesnoblepark
 #greatbiteskeysborough

If you are a local business that's still operating in some way, please fill out the contact form on the website and your business will be added to the list.

greaterdandenong.com/greatbitesopenforbusiness

Have a question? Contact the Economic Development Unit on 8571 1550 or email business@cgd.vic.gov.au

Regional Business Survey

A Regional Business Survey was recently distributed by the South East Melbourne (SEM) group of Councils. The aim of the survey was to better understand the impacts COVID-19 has had on the business community. The survey was distributed electronically and closed on Sunday 17 May.

Thank you to the businesses who completed the survey. The responses are now being analysed as a collective region and by each individual Council. The Greater Dandenong Business team will be using this information

to help guide future decision-making as we navigate through this crisis. Further updates will be shared in the September issue of *Talking Business*.

The Councils that make up the SEM group are:

- Cardinia Shire
- Greater Dandenong City Council
- Kingston City Council
- Frankston City Council
- Knox City Council
- Monash City Council
- Mornington Peninsula Shire

If you missed out on sharing your experience and wish to do so, please email business@cgd.vic.gov.au and a member of the Greater Dandenong Business team will get back to you.

Make sure you sign up to our electronic newsletter, *e-Talking Business* which is where we distribute all surveys, business news and opportunities.

greaterdandenong.com/talkingbusiness



Public art program sees Ian Street painted with colour

“These temporary art works in our activity centres assist us in creating friendly pedestrian environments and add colour and vibrancy to our streetscapes.”

As part of Council’s Transformed temporary public art program, a new work *Roots* by established mural artist Hayden Dewar was commissioned at a prominent site on the corner of Ian Street and Mons Parade in Noble Park.

After learning about Noble Park’s “Tree under which the community grew” and the changing population that has settled in the much-loved area, Dewar was inspired to reflect the strength and spirit of the community through the sprawling strong roots of a mighty river red gum tree.

Located on a high-profile wall, the work is highly visible to Noble Park’s commuters and shoppers as they enter Ian Street and approach the new train station.

The installation consists of a large tree trunk with exposed roots in Hayden’s signature style that incorporates surreal, mythological imagery as well as native Australian flora and fauna associated with river red gums.

The Transformed program first began in Greater Dandenong in 2006. Since then more than

30 temporary art installations have helped transform public spaces in Greater Dandenong’s activity centres.

Mayor Cr Jim Memeti said Transformed was a fantastic program that brought art to the people.

“These temporary art works in our activity centres assist us in creating friendly pedestrian environments and add colour and vibrancy to our streetscapes,” Mayor Memeti said.

The mural was completed in the first week of March.

Big hearts in business support vulnerable communities

The Material Aid Program in Greater Dandenong is helping deliver food and supplies to residents that are most in need and without other support.

This combined relief effort has supported approximately 2,200 individuals each week.

A special thanks to the organisations aiding this coordination effort;

- Asylum Seeker Resource Centre
- Red Cross
- Cornerstone
- Springvale Benevolent Society
- Communities Creating Opportunities (CoCOs)
- Wellsprings for Women
- Friends of Refugees
- Enjoy Church
- We Care
- Salvation Army

Food and material relief donations have been delivered to 492 families.

This includes many who are people seeking asylum, international students, homeless and the unemployed.

At the time of writing this article, agencies anecdotally reported a 20 to 30 per cent increase over the last two weeks in the number of people seeking material aid. This shows we are far from through this crisis.

The material aid would not be possible without the support of our big hearted business community who have donated goods and services including:

- Australian Natural Soap
- Amazon
- Dandenong Market
- Chobani
- Granny Foods
- Honbach

If you would like to contribute to the material aid program please email materialaidenquiries@cgd.vic.gov.au



Council Officer Mahamed Ahmed and CoCO's volunteer, Paroa Andrew unloading donated goods from Chobani.

Staff are top priority in Kez's Kitchen



Locally owned family business, Kez's Kitchen opened its doors in 1991.

Over the years you can say the business has grown, from what began as the matriarch baking for the family, to become a reputable business producing many varieties of baked delicious goodies, to now employing 90 staff. Anyone in business today, knows that looking after staff is tantamount to having a healthy team, so when

this pandemic struck our nation, management realised they were going to have to do things differently.

Kez's Kitchen have been providing free flu vaccinations to all of its staff for the past 24 years and this year, despite strict social distancing requirements, was going to be no different.

Their great minds came together to ensure the wellbeing of their staff continued and they baked a plan to immunise their staff outside in a tent in the car park. They were lucky to have an undercover space and a large enough area, allowing staff to line up and remain 1.5m apart at all times. The weather Gods were on their side which helped.

In addition to this one-off staff support, Kez's Kitchen also holds regular meditation sessions and encourages staff to get away from their work environment at lunch breaks, as well as empowering staff to hold outside walk and talk meetings, especially in the current climate.

Michael Carp, owner and CEO said, "This is a fantastic opportunity for fresh air and to remove staff from their usual work space which can provide a more relaxed environment. Our staff are part of our family and the health and wellbeing of our family is very important so we are continuing to develop programs and events that support our team."

Thank you to Kez's Kitchen for sharing this story with Council's Economic Development Team. It's a great way to share learned experiences and we hope other business leaders may have benefited from this story.

Has your own business implemented a new program, policy, style of doing business or new wellbeing program which might inspire our readership? Council encourage local business leaders to be champions of our business community and share your stories with the Economic Development Unit via business@cgd.vic.gov.au. Let's celebrate these moments together.

Communication in a crisis

Managers are being asked to make life changing decisions without any guide in these extraordinary times of a global pandemic. Just what is the right balance between keeping the doors open and doing the right thing by your staff? The following is a simple strategy to maximise your business's chances of surviving COVID-19.

Without your people, your business is merely four walls, equipment, stock and a client base. Remember it's your people who make the brand experience and ensure service delivery to your standards. Your people represent you every day honouring their contract with this commitment to your business. They walk and talk your organisation's values and you remunerate them accordingly.

Businesses risk abandoning these same values and causing irreparable damage to relationships in this time of crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic is a first for all of us. As a former manager of critical incident and emergency responses I have seen the supposedly hardest people crack when tested under this type of responsibility.

The best thing a business can do at this point in time is to prioritise staff in their planning. A demonstration of the organisation's values in the tough times will repay itself when you need your people most. As we emerge from this crisis you will be looking to those same people for even more commitment. Put yourself in their shoes. Your staff have no control over their ability to earn income to feed and shelter their families. You do.

Were you surprised by the stampede for toilet paper then minced meat? This reaction was basic human behaviour driven by fear and ignorance. You have a responsibility as manager to look after your people. Here is how you can affect the lives of the people most important to your business by reducing their fears and giving them hope.



Reinforce the bond.

You should try to mitigate the effects of isolation. The workplace is often an important source of social interaction. This is an opportunity for businesses to show they care for their people. Social distancing is going to impact each individual differently. Do you know your people and how it will affect them? If not, you need to!

Are they married or living alone? Are they worrying about kids or caring for elderly family members? Have they just taken out a big mortgage? Do any of your staff have ongoing health issues which make them vulnerable to the virus? Armed with this background knowledge of each staff member you can tailor your communication content, method and regularity.

Some people will appreciate being left alone while others will expect ongoing

welfare checks and updates on the timeline for a return to work. Consider creating a social media group for you to provide updates and people to ask questions. As work drops away you have more time to devote to your staff no matter how many your business employees. A quick phone call is often more personal. A simple "Are you OK?" may be the tonic.

Reduce the fear.

The fear of what you haven't told your staff may be greater than the reality of what management is discussing behind closed doors. Does the business have capital reserve for a fighting fund? What steps were taken before standing down workers? Are the managers still drawing a wage? Are care packages an option if the business can't offer cash. Small things can make a big statement.

Reduce anxiety with open and honest communication before



“Without your people, your business is merely four walls, equipment, stock and a client base. It’s your people who make the brand experience.”

rumour fills the gap. There are so many unknowns for your staff. You have the answers to some of these.

Can you give your people hope about their future employment?

The fact you are discussing various scenarios and timelines for a return to normality shows staff that management are doing something and considering them. Even if the timelines or outlook are bleak.

Who are your people listening to if not you?

Help decipher the confused messaging and filter out the misleading. You should be a trusted source of information for your people. Creating a site with links to

relevant policies, Covid 19 updates and new legislation is another way of demonstrating leadership and concern for staff. Assist your panicked staff by de-coding the Centrelink bureaucracy and potential benefits on offer.

There is more pain ahead for all of us. Share the burden through increased honest communication and you will protect your investment in your people. Prioritise your people where you can to give your business its best chance of surviving the Covid 19 pandemic. These are the same people you will need back soon working for you.

Author: This article was first published on LinkedIn by Communication and Conflict Resolution Specialists, SM2 Solutions.

NBN offers relief to businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic

On Friday 17 April, NBN announced a \$150 million COVID-19 relief and assistance package to help internet providers support customers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The relief fund aims to help internet providers:

- connect low-income households with home schooling needs
- support emergency and essential services
- assist small and medium-sized businesses and residential customers facing financial hardship

For more information on NBN’s response to COVID-19 you can visit the NBN blog which is regularly updated with all of the latest news and information as well as helpful tips. [NBNco.com.au/workingfromhome](https://nbnco.com.au/workingfromhome)

Optimising your internet experience in the home and office

NBN would like to share a resource that is readily available on their website regarding the optimisations of your in-home / business setup. Given there’s so many people working and studying from home, it’s important to ensure that the setup is optimised for best possible user experience online.

Additionally, understanding WiFi technology and ensuring that you are on the right plan for your needs, are two elements that should also be considered for ensuring you are getting the most out of your internet experience.

More information on these factors as well as tips for optimisation can be found on NBN’s website. [NBNco.com.au/learn/optimisation](https://nbnco.com.au/learn/optimisation)

Local business contributes to the fight against COVID-19 on contact surfaces

Australian company and more importantly, local company, SPEE3D have successfully developed and tested a fast and affordable way to 3D print anti-microbial copper onto metal surfaces.

What have SPEE3D done exactly? Put simply, SPEE3D have run laboratory tests which have shown that touch surfaces (such as door handles) when modified with anti-microbial copper has been shown to 'contact kill' 96 per cent of SARS CoV-2 which is the virus that causes COVID-19.

However, copper parts are difficult to produce using traditional methods. This is where SPEE3D stepped up to the challenge. They used their world-leading 3D printing technology to modify their algorithms for controlling metal printers to allow existing metal parts to be coated with copper. This discovery means we are able to rapidly deploy copper in a more affordable way. Australian NATA accredited clinical trial speciality laboratory, 360 Biolabs, tested the effect of ACTIVAT3D copper on live SARS-CoV-2 in their Physical Containment 3 (PC3) laboratory. The results showed that 96 per cent of the virus was killed in two hours and 99.2 per cent of the virus killed in five hours.

Meanwhile, stainless steel showed no reduction within the same time frame. Stainless steel is currently the material typically used in hygiene environments.

It is hoped the Australian-developed break through can be applied to common touch items like door handles, rails and touch plates across hospitals, schools and other public places. The SPEE3D team developed a process to coat a stainless steel door touch plate and other handles in just five minutes. The digital print files were then sent to participating partners around the globe, allowing the simultaneous installation of newly-coated parts in buildings in the USA, Asia and Australia. In a matter of days, copper fixtures were installed in buildings at Charles Darwin University



(CDU) in Darwin, Swinburne University in Melbourne, the University of Delaware in the USA and in Japan.

SPEE3D CEO, Byron Kennedy said the company has focused on developing a solution which can be rapidly deployed and is more efficient than printing solid copper parts from scratch.

“The lab results show ACTIVAT3D copper surfaces behave much better than traditional stainless, which may offer a promising solution to a global problem. The technology can be used globally addressing local requirements, be they in hospitals, schools, on ships or shopping centres.”

Why should we make this drastic change?

Stainless steel and plastic surfaces can be disinfected, however, the problem with these surfaces is that, even with rigorous protocols, it is impossible to clean them constantly. It is a practical solution to a complicated situation. When surfaces become contaminated between cleans, touching them may contribute to super spreading events. Touching contaminated objects, known as fomite transmission, was suspected during the 2003 SARS-CoV-1 epidemic and a post-analysis research concluded touching contaminated objects (fomites) played a significant role.

SPEE3D has worked in close collaboration with the Advanced Manufacturing Alliance (AMA) at CDU. The initial testing of ACTIVAT3D copper and future studies have been funded and supported by the National Energy Resources Australia (NERA). NERA CEO Miranda Taylor said SPEE3D's ability to successfully adapt their technology and pivot their business model demonstrated the resilience of Australian businesses and their potential to help the world combat COVID-19.

Taylor said, “NERA has supported SPEE3D to develop market-leading technologies to help our national energy sector, and we're committed to assisting them leverage their skills and expertise into this important new paradigm to help our country and many others curtail the devastating impact of this global pandemic.”

In 2016, SPEE3D was a recipient of the City of Greater Dandenong Small Business Grant program and it is exciting to see the company continue to grow from strength to strength many years on. A big congratulations to Bryan and his team on behalf of the Greater Dandenong Business. We look forward to celebrating further innovative developments such as this one.

For more information on ACTIVAT3D copper visit spee3d.com



After the now. Forward thinking for your business

If someone could offer you a glimpse into your future but at a cost, what would you be willing to spend?

It's a serious question to ask yourself. What or how much would you be willing to spend to get a clearer understanding of both your near and longer-term future?

What figure or item did you come up with?

Whatever your figure or item, here's what you require instead: time. Your ONLY cost right now is the time required to fully answer six questions listed below. Can you do this?

Your future is in the questions

1. Do you believe this pandemic (COVID-19) was a surprise?
2. Do you understand what percentage of your income is derived from each of your major clients?
3. Do you understand what percentage of your income is derived from each of your major products or processes?

Why ask these questions?

Organisations that truly believe this pandemic was a surprise will take longer to recover effectively. The suddenness of the shock will NOT let them trigger a 'fight or flight' response; instead they'll be experiencing the other major physiological response – freeze.

These questions will unlock that 'freeze' moment for you. The harsh truth - it's not about the pandemic as much as it is about disruption. Those who have considered possible responses to disruption will already be moving to maximise the potential which exists right now.

For those who have considered the idea of disruption they are aware that 'clients 1, 2 and 3' give them most of their income and have already considered and are enacting things to replace any lost income. Others know that they rely on 'process W' (let's call it 'selling coffee') and have already thought about HOW to reinvigorate said process or how to replace said process (or product) with alternatives.

Have you seen the way many local gin makers switched immediately to creating hand sanitisers?

So let's go back to the questions.

4. What business processes worked the best for you prior to this crisis? Will it still be valid?
5. What business processes were least effective? Would you do them again or change?
6. In 18 months from now, what would you like your business to look like? What barriers exist to prevent your desired outcome?

Before you go back to 'normal' assess whether your 'normal' approaches will work. Don't restart an approach if it's no longer valid. If old methods were less helpful (perhaps habitual) can you cull them or replace them?

By thinking about the kind of future you want to create whilst also considering the barriers, opportunities and challenges this ideal brings, you'll start to formulate your path forward.

Author: This article was written by City of Greater Dandenong consultant, Marcus Barber.

SEBN Network Meetings

It's been business as usual 'with a twist' for SEBN network activities, with our various face to face network groups meeting online. Our focus immediately following the onset of COVID-19 was to utilise our knowledge and vast contacts to assist business in any way possible to survive and thrive in these turbulent times – and this support continues.

Little did we know when we announced at the SEBN Christmas Industry Breakfast that our theme for 2020 would be 'managing in the new normal' – how rapidly and deeply the world could change. Will there ever be a 'normal'?

As all businesses have been facing a multitude of issues and challenges - there are opportunities for new

products and services and new ways of working. It is also exciting to see that the importance of maintaining Australian manufacturing has been elevated and is now high on the agenda for all.

Over the past few weeks SEBN has focused our online network sessions on issues that have had the most impact – working from home; managing health and wellbeing remotely; maintaining manufacturing output, etc.

As we now begin to explore returning to work and opportunities post-COVID, SEBN will continue to address issues of impact and relevance online (recommencing face to face as soon as possible) and we'll be encouraging companies to share



what and how they are addressing their 'return to normal' with others in the networks. We also invite you to share your successes making new products or delivering new services.

Sandra George | Manager

Community Revitalisation

There is no denying that the employment landscape is a challenging one as Victoria takes tentative steps towards opening up the economy after an almost two-month lockdown.

The Community Revitalisation project is continuing to work on capacity building for jobseekers and supporting community organisations to take a similar approach as we work towards a common understanding of 'work readiness'. Through the Community Revitalisation project, the Employment Readiness Scale™ tool is now being implemented by three organisations to support jobseekers in gaining sustainable employment, as well as provide a pool of job-ready applicants for local business.

Are you looking for jobseekers with specific skills? We may be able to assist with sourcing talent through our various networks or support advocacy efforts where there is a lack of training for a particular skill need. If you are looking for staff, consider participating in a Jobs Campaign – a streamlined approach to recruitment which benefits both jobseekers and employers.

To explore any of these options further contact SEBN via sebn@cgd.vic.gov.au

How to launch a successful product in two weeks

In these turbulent times, Dandenong South's Courtney Colour has managed to not only create a successful new product line, but assist other businesses in the process.

After projecting a severe downturn in business due to COVID-19 in March, the company established Courtney Signs, built a new e-commerce website and created 'social-distancing signage packs' – all in the space of two weeks.

"In mid-March our management group sat down and we were anticipating a 50 per cent drop in sales," said Sales Manager Andrew Gregory.

"Being nimble gave us the advantage to quickly adapt our business and we had the new products ready to ship by last week of April."

Courtney Colour is a leader in the printing space. In the past 10 years the company has grown to three times the size, now employing 45 staff.

Mr Gregory said the holistic safety signage packs offer a point of difference. "We've designed tailored packs for various industries including health, retail and takeaway that have niche applications. We also have

major franchises seeking our products and we can brand the safety signage when it's a large order."

Courtney Signs has used a combination of electronic direct mail, social media marketing and ad word searches to launch its new product line. The results have been outstanding, Mr Gregory reported.

"We also offer generic products within the site including hand sanitiser stations and Perspex hygiene screens – we've sourced the substrate from local suppliers.

"We believe the packs and sanitiser stations are really helping businesses to open, be safer and compliant."

SEBN would love to hear from other businesses in the region that have found a way to triumph during this challenging period – email sebn@cgd.vic.gov.au to share your story.

To read the extended version of this story contact sebn@cgd.vic.gov.au

To learn more about local business Courtney Signs visit courtneysigns.com.au

Working with COVID-19 - Have you considered compliance?

Determining when to reopen your business or modify your current operations is an important decision. Understanding your eligibility to reopen is a critical first step that should be informed by credible resources from federal, state and local entities.

Employees are a critical part of your organisation's success. Keeping them safe and ensuring their wellbeing is key throughout any transition back into the workplace. Once you have established a timeframe for re-occupying your facility (or facilities), employee-specific policies, procedures and controls need to be implemented to ensure the safety of your people.

Once you have decided to reopen, physical facility and equipment preparation will need to begin. It's important to follow current and future local, state and federal guidelines as outlined by the Chief Medical Officer and the relevant OHS guidelines for the state that you are working in. Documentation of the steps you are taking to prepare your facilities and communication to employees continues to be a critical part of the process. Facility design may require adjustments as well as occupancy limitations to maintain compliance with guidelines and best practices.

Customers, clients and the public should be aware of the safeguards you have put in place to ensure their safety. Actively monitoring feedback

from these stakeholders will help validate the safety measures put in place. A regular review of the changing safety recommendations from the relevant regulator (e.g. WorkSafe Victoria), state and federal authorities, and other governing bodies within your jurisdiction will help ensure your organisation's compliance with health and safety mandates and requirements. Now is the time to evaluate your communications channels with your customers and the public. Designate a point of contact or team that can facilitate responses to questions, concerns or responses in a timely way.

For your business to function properly, new considerations must be made for the globally impacted supply chain. The marketplace has changed and may necessitate partnering with new or additional vendors, and implementing contingency plans should a vendor be impacted during recovery. Continue to communicate with your supply chain partners to ensure you have a back-up plan should there be a break down along the line. This may involve increasing inventory levels of high volume products/ services. This also includes making sure your supply chain and vendors are in compliance with protocols and provide proper documentation to indicate ongoing safety checks and operational continuity.

**Article courtesy of
Paul Marsh | Workplace Risk
www.workplacerrisk.com.au**

This is IT Schools - donate your 'pre-loved' laptops

The This is IT initiative aims to equalise education through repurposed laptops provided as student scholarships. Co-founder Simon Whiteley, Managing Director of Corex Plastics (Australia), says the business community should get behind This is IT as its benefits are far reaching. "Secondary-school students are our future employees and not just for manufacturing

businesses," said Mr Whiteley. This is IT Schools was launched in early February and the onset of COVID-19 has significantly increased the need for young people to have access to appropriate technology to continue their education at home.

**To read the extended version of this story contact sebn@cgd.vic.gov.au
thisisitschools.com.au/**



Outstanding result benefits local community

Timing is everything. After the bushfires and just squeezing in before COVID, the 11th CGD-Industry Take a Swing for Charity Golf Day, held at Commonwealth Golf Club on 26 February was a resounding success.

Magnificent venue and great weather, together with a passion for golf and giving back to the community, all contributed to this year's event being one of the most enjoyable and successful to date, with a smidgen over \$50,000 raised. Funds will be donated to our major recipient, Taskforce Community Agency taskforce.org.au, for a coffee van to be located outside the Dandenong Court and used to train jobseekers as baristas and support them into employment. Cornerstone will also be assisted with a kitchen fit-out at their new premises and \$1,000 from the proceeds of a dedicated hole game will go to the Bush Fire appeal.

Our thanks go to all who so generously sponsored, supported and played – without whom, this would not have been possible.

greaterdandenong.com/SEBN

Contact: sebn@cgd.vic.gov.au

Major Sponsors





Local businesses successfully secure grants in the Manufacturing Modernisation Fund

A few of our local businesses were recently awarded grants from the Federal Government's Manufacturing Modernisation Fund. The fund supports manufacturers by co-funding capital investments and associated reskilling to, modernise, adopt new technologies, become more productive and to create more jobs.

The program aims to support businesses through investment in efficient and transformative manufacturing processes as well as jobs growth and developing a more highly skilled workforce in the manufacturing sector.

A big congratulations to our successful local businesses:

- Boron Molecular, Noble Park
- Nissan Casting, Dandenong South
- Pharmaoil, Dandenong
- Stealth Special Vehicles, Springvale
- U-Neek Bending Co, Dandenong South.

Visit the Federal Government and the Victorian Government websites for further details on grants that may be available to your business.

business.gov.au/Grants-and-Programs

business.vic.gov.au/support-for-your-business

Sustainable Australia Fund launch special terms to support the industry

Sustainable Australia Fund (SAF) works in collaboration with local councils, installers and businesses, and has seen the immediate impact COVID-19 has had on the solar industry over the past month.

SAF Chief Executive Officer Scott Bocskay, wants the solar industry to know that SAF are here to support them through this by helping to unlock immediate cash savings.

SAF's form of finance, known as environmental upgrade finance or building upgrade finance, can help business start saving today. Businesses can access up to 100 per cent funding for works that improve the energy, water, environmental efficiency, or sustainability of existing buildings. Fixed interest, quarterly repayments are then made to local councils over periods of up to 20 years, meaning most projects can be cashflow positive from day one.

Bocskay said, "While we understand that environmental upgrade projects may not be front of mind right now, when financed with SAF they can help businesses significantly reduce their operating costs and put more money in their pocket today when it's needed most.

"We've launched these special terms to put immediate savings into the pockets of businesses."

To learn more about Sustainable Australia Fund visit sustainableaustraliafund.com.au

About Environmental Upgrade Finance

Environmental upgrade finance, also known as building upgrade finance, is a government-enabled funding mechanism for upgrading existing building stock to be more environmentally friendly. Business owners can take out a long-term, fixed-rate loan for the total cost of the works, which is then repaid through their local council's rates system.

Examples of projects that could qualify for this type of finance include lighting, heating, ventilation and air-conditioning upgrades, solar installations, and water and waste minimisation.

To be eligible for the finance, building owners must pay Council rates, ensure the planned works are improvements to non-residential buildings, and deliver environmental benefits, such as energy, water and waste savings.

Free business mentoring for local businesses

Are you looking for business advice from a professional but don't know where to start?

Council are offering businesses the chance to receive three mentoring sessions with a business professional. Each session cost is covered by Council.

Each session runs for 45 minutes and can be facilitated either:

- Face-to-face
- Over the phone
- Via video chat.

There are a wide range of reasons why you might consider mentoring including:

- To seek marketing and promotional advice
- To review your business plan
- To seek cash flow guidance
- To sound out a new business idea

This program is facilitated by the Victorian Small Business Mentoring Services (SBMS).

To receive your voucher code email business@cgd.vic.gov.au or phone 8571 1550 with your business name and contact details.

Do you have a COVID-19 business story to share?

There have been many wonderful stories circulating of businesses doing some wonderful acts of kindness throughout the COVID-19 crisis that has gripped the world.

We often don't think to document significant events in our history in a story format. It is more commonly noted in a dry factual form. However, people's lived experiences form a vital part of the historic narrative. It creates an emotional link to the past.

The Greater Dandenong Business team wish to capture these stories from our business community so we too can play our part in recording these moments.

We need your help to do this. If you have a COVID-19 business story, please let the Economic Development Team know.

To date, we've heard stories of businesses transforming their business model to remain relevant such as AquaRush (see story on page 14) and Chobani donating to the Material Aid Program (see story on page 5). We want to be able to record and celebrate more of these moments.

Send your stories with your contact details via email or phone and an Economic Development Unit Officer will get back to you.

**Email: business@cgd.vic.gov.au
Phone: 8571 1550**

Tax tips to help small business

Tax time is just around the corner. To help you when it's time to lodge your tax return the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) has provided some tips for you to consider.

Three top tips

- Report all income, including cash, coupons and online payments

- Keep track of your expenses – you can only claim the business portion of expenses as business deductions
- Keep records and make a backup. If you're a sole trader, you can use the myDeductions tool on the ATO app.

Concessions at a glance

Visit the ATO website to review what tax concessions you may be applicable for such as immediate deductions for prepaid

expenses, the instant asset write-off, accelerated depreciation for primary producers or simplified rules for trading stock.

ato.gov.au/concessionsataglance

Other ATO tools and services

Visit the ATO website for a range of ATO tools and services which can help you with your tax and super. Alternatively, you can consult with a registered tax professional.

ato.gov.au/SBsupport

A quick pivot ensures local manufacturer survives and thrives



“This move ensured we remained afloat and could keep our staff in a job. We’ve also been able to employ an additional 35 people as a result of the high demand for this new product line.”

What do you do when your core business has been threatened by a worldwide health crisis?

Pivot and pivot fast.

AquaRush is a local beverage manufacturer which burst onto the scene in 2014. The business offers various types of water – ranging from spring, sparkling, mineral, demineralised and mixed beverages. Their clientele includes leading supermarkets, hardware stores, gyms, retail and pharmacy outlets

However, AquaRush’s clients like many across Australia, were forced to slow down as the nation was forced into lockdown to contain the spread of the deadly COVID-19 virus.

AquaRush Director, Roshan Chelvaratnam and his team invested over \$180,000 to upgrade their manufacturing equipment earlier this year. This big investment enabled the business to produce hospital-grade hand sanitiser, plus a hands-free dispenser which can accommodate both foam or gel sanitiser. Both items are sought after globally.

Chelvaratnam said, “We needed to pivot and pivot fast.”

“This move ensured we remained afloat and could keep our staff in a job. We’ve also been able to employ an additional 35 people as a result of the high demand for this new product line.”

“We are currently stepping up to the next level with GMP certifications and TGA approval in the pipeline which will enable us to supply hospitals.”

AquaRush have always strived to be at the forefront of innovation in the beverage industry. Now having expanded into the health sector, they have applied this same principle.

The team have created a scented hand-sanitiser using essential oils for those who have sensitive skin such as children and the elderly.

“We are going to be washing our hands more thoroughly, more often going forward so we thought we should create a product which is a little kinder to our hands whilst still doing its job and killing 99.9 per cent of the germs.” said General Sales Manager, Marko Powell.

To meet the high demand, AquaRush have relied on their strong local networks within the Dandenong South manufacturing hub including Caps and Closures, Visy, Quality Blow Moulding, AUSPLAS and Abbe Corrugated. This decision has also meant they avoid overseas shipping delays for product parts which often slow down the production line.

“This crisis has certainly ramped up the conversation on supporting the Australian manufacturing industry and we welcome it,” Mr Powell said.

Over the coming months, restrictions are set to ease and businesses will begin to re-open. AquaRush is unclear how many of their beverage clients will have survived but hope they too were able to pivot and remain afloat during this crisis.

To learn more about AquaRush visit aquarush.com.au

Business training via webinars and podcasts, the new normal

There are a wide range of online business webinars and podcasts to support your business and we've listed some of the options below for you to explore.

Whether it be a podcast for tradies by tradies, interviews with creative artists sharing their inspiration or mental health and well-being support, we have something for you. So, check out the list below and see what tickles your fancy.

Happy listening.

PODCASTS	WORKSHOPS & WEBINARS
Lady Start Up (download via Apple Podcasts)	South East Business Networks (SEBN) greaterdandenong.com/sebn
Tradies in Business tradiesinbusiness.com.au/	South East Melbourne Manufacturing Alliance (SEMMA) semma.com.au
Her Business herbusiness.com/podcast-series/content-sells/	Greater Dandenong Chamber of Commerce greaterdandenongchamber.com.au/
Wowee www.woweepodcast.com/	Small Business Victoria business.vic.gov.au/workshops
My Business Podcast mybusiness.com.au/podcasts	Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry victorianchamber.com.au/events
The Hospopreneurs Podcast hospo.libsyn.com/	Business Chicks businesschicks.com
Frankie Podcast frankie.com.au/podcasts	Eastern Innovation Business Centre (EIBC) eibc.net.au/
Mental Health Podcast blackdoginstitute.org.au/education-services/podcasts/	Mental Health Webinar blackdoginstitute.org.au/education-services/webinars/

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