

Talking Business

December 2022



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Paul's Corner

The holiday season is nearly upon us and this means it's a busy time in our business community with everyone shopping for groceries, festive decorations and exchanging gifts. Council continues to encourage everyone to shop local and support one another throughout this summer season.

In this edition of *Talking Business*, we say farewell to our longstanding CEO, John Bennie and welcome a new CEO, Jacqui Weatherill who commences on 19 December. We also welcome a few new businesses into Greater Dandenong including Remedy and Afghan Kitchen.

We explore the exciting plans for Noble Park in 2023 (page 6), discuss the pros and cons of a pet friendly workplace (page 9) and look at how your business can create inclusive communication (page 10). On page 15, you can read all about how the Greater Dandenong Chamber of Commerce welcomed the return of its annual South East Business Awards night.

It's a jam packed edition full of great success stories – and that's only on these 16 pages. There are so many more businesses out there in our community and we look forward to sharing more of these in 2023.

Lastly, please remember Council's business team are here to support your business goals. You can contact them via business@cgd.vic.gov.au or 8571 1550.

Paul Kearsley
Director Business, Engineering and Major Projects

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Raining with Talent: South East Business Awards

Cover: Afghan Kitchen Business Owners, Maryam and Fazlul Hadi Akhoni.

Information was correct at time of publishing. Please check our website for up to date information.

A note from former CEO, John Bennie

It is time for me to pass the baton onto a new leader after 16 wonderful years at Greater Dandenong Council as Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

I leave with a sense of pride and satisfaction and am privileged to have been part of this diverse community for so many years. I have observed with great admiration, the courage, strength, and resilience of Greater Dandenong's business community and commend all businesses and their staff for the contributions they have made to the local economy, Gross Regional Product, and employment in the south-east of Melbourne.

When I reflect on the period since joining Council in 2006, I am reminded of what this Council and its community has achieved. Numerous major capital projects have been implemented including the ongoing revitalisation of central Dandenong, the Dandenong Market Redevelopment, Dandenong Civic Centre, Noble Park Aquatic Centre, Springvale Community Hub, various improvements in both the Springvale and Noble Park activity centres and the Tatterson Park Pavilion – to name a few. State Government improvements to critical infrastructure have also been welcomed and have rarely been delivered without Council advocacy or Council collaboration and support.



I am grateful to have been involved in the creation of the Committee for Dandenong, Greater South East Melbourne (GSEM) and the early facilitation of Team 11. I've also performed non-executive roles with various peak bodies including the Dandenong Development Board, Southern Melbourne Regional Development Australia Committee and Chisholm TAFE and appreciate the significant inputs to these groups from so many people.

I am proud to have had connections to Greater Dandenong's strong and highly regarded business community and was pleased to 'champion' the establishment of the "Greater Dandenong Business" group within Council. This dedicated team of Council Officers exists to serve our business community and among many achievements, has assisted in the investment attraction and

facilitation of some major businesses setting up in our backyard including distribution centres for Amazon, Aldi, Woolworths, and Bunnings.

Who would ever have imagined what we have all been through with the global pandemic? - but in playing my own constructive part, I have watched in awe how our strong and resilient business community has dealt with the many challenges that the pandemic has presented.

Jacqui Weatherill has been appointed as Council's new CEO and will commence on 19 December. Ms Weatherill brings with her over 10 years of experience as a CEO. She is currently CEO at Stonnington City Council and prior to that was CEO at the Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust. Jacqui's outstanding career to date in local government has also included working in senior roles at the City of Boroondara and Benalla Rural City Council. In the next edition of Talking Business (March) we will introduce Jacqui Weatherill in greater detail.

I will forever appreciate the friendships I have formed, the professional acquaintances established and the committed businesspeople that I have been privileged to have connected with and wish you all the very best for the future.

John Bennie

Safer Streets Program aims to improve community safety

Council has partnered with Victoria Police to improve perceptions and actual levels of community safety in Greater Dandenong.

Committed to creating a safe, inclusive and more welcoming city, Council is working strategically with Victoria Police and other local and regional stakeholders via Council's Community Safety Advisory Committee to achieve this vision. Council values its partnership with Victoria Police, local stakeholders and businesses who are all working proactively to enhance safety in Greater Dandenong.

The new Safer Streets Program has been launched to highlight community safety as a priority for Council and Victoria Police. There will be an increase in Police presence, more CCTV cameras, support for businesses, temporary public art installations, place activations and a collaborative commitment to improving community safety. Parking meters along Lonsdale Street, Dandenong have been turned back on to support local businesses in the area, with income going towards the Safer Streets Program.

A new public art exhibition, Safer Directions, will take place at the Walker Street car park. The community activation project invited members of the public to submit their artwork in October for display across the parking complex to capture the minds of visitors in engaging and creative ways. Safer Directions will redefine the current space and improve perceptions of safety. Safer Directions is funded by the Victorian Government's Community Safety Infrastructure Grant Program.

Learn more:
greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au

A snapshot of our Greater Dandenong tourism sector

Tourism offerings continue to strengthen across the City of Greater Dandenong, and we are pleased to share these great stories through this magazine.

If you're a local tourism operator and have a story you'd like to share, we'd love to hear from you, or if you have a tourism question, send an email to our Food Enterprise and Tourism Officer, Helen Beekmans via helen.beekmans@cgd.vic.gov.au

Self-taught cook's restaurant journey from 'zero to hero'



Business owners, Maryam and Fazlul Hadi Akhoni.

Maryam Akhoni may be new to the restaurant business, but years of cooking traditional Afghan recipes, rich and complex in flavours, has made her a connoisseur of the cuisine.

Her first restaurant, Afghan Kitchen, on Thomas Steet, has quickly grown a fan following since its opening in September, making it a popular lunch spot for office and retail workers nearby.

Ms Akhoni has spent most of her life in Dandenong since leaving Afghanistan 22 years ago. When the time came to open her own restaurant (after years of persuasion from her husband, Fazlul Hadi Akhoni, friends and family), there was no better place than Dandenong's very own Afghan cultural precinct.

Afghan Kitchen has been such a hit that Ms Akhoni has received requests from customers to franchise the restaurant. One patron enjoyed his meal so much he offered to pay \$3000.

"It feels very special seeing customers returning three or four times a week," Ms Akhoni said.

She and her husband also provide for their community through food drives and her local mosque, further evidence cooking has always been

her passion. The restaurant's most popular dishes include the spiced chapli kabab and fragrant lamb and rice dish, Uzbek pulao.

Ms and Mr Akhoni cook all the food and a small team of helpers assist with preparation and cleaning up.

"My passion for cooking made the challenges of starting a food business more fulfilling. But without the support of my family, friends and the Council, it would have been next to impossible," Ms Akhoni said.

"Anyone can achieve anything they set their mind to. You can go from zero to hero like us."

► **Afghan Kitchen**
Location: 247 Thomas St,
 Dandenong
Phone: 9867 1794

Nessy's Café



Business owner Nesreen Fam (centre) and her employees Alison (left) and Elham (right).

There was a time when the world had no mobile phones, computers, internet connections or e-mail facilities. During those times, letters were the most popular modes of communication. People would throng the post offices to send letters to their loved ones. With the advancement of technology, the reliance on post offices has changed but they remain a constant in many people's lives.

Nessy's Café and Post Office is situated on the corner of Dunearn and Heatherton Roads in Dandenong North - providing a perfect opportunity for locals to collect and post their mail, pay their bills and get their coffee hit and a bite to eat all under one roof.

The owners behind this local meeting place is wife and husband duo, Nesreen (Nessy) and Wassim Fam who opened the doors in 2020. Ms Fam had dreamed of running her own café, after cooking for friends and family for many years, encouraged by her husband she finally made the leap of faith and opened Nessy's café.

Ms Fam makes all of the food herself onsite with an emphasis on Italian, Greek and Middle Eastern influences. They also offer catering services.

The idea to join a café with the Post Office is clever since post offices play a key social role in society – ranking as the third most trusted institution, after the doctors and the police. Despite recent extended lockdowns, post office visitation remained largely constant over the COVID-19 pandemic. In a recent survey conducted by Deloitte across Australia, they found 82 per cent of businesses confirmed post offices positively impacted their business.

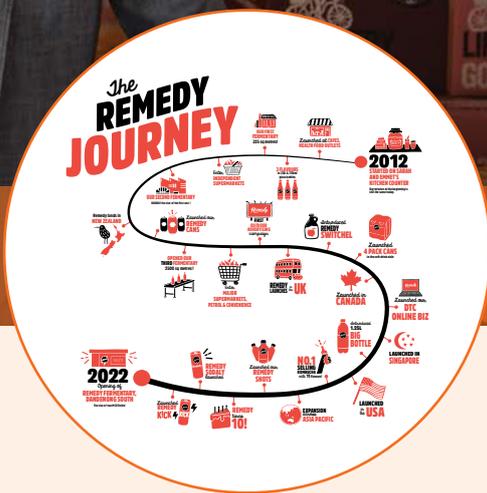
Mrs Fam said, "...we have some wonderfully loyal customers who come and do their banking in the post office and then they will have a coffee and a chat with us before heading home. We really love the sense of community we have created here."

► **Nessy's Café and post office**
Location: 1 Dunearn Road,
 Dandenong North
Open: Monday – Saturday



Remedy founders Sarah and Emmet

World's third largest fermentary calls Dandenong South home



 There is growing popularity of the fizzy, fermented beverage, kombucha, which has led to a Victorian company expanding and building a fermentary site in Dandenong South.

An idea that started at their kitchen bench, founders Sarah and Emmet Condon created Remedy Drinks, a business now successfully running for over ten years. Remedy is already a market leader in Australia and New Zealand and has its eyes set on expanding into the USA, UK, Canada and Asian markets.

Managing Director Chris Gillard said, "We are incredibly proud of how far Remedy has come from its kitchen bench origins, showing people that healthy drinks can also be tasty," says Chris. "But we're even more optimistic about the future – our big ambition is to continue converting more people into the joy of having a Remedy".

There is a growing demand for healthier drink options as consumers look to reduce their sugar intake. This positive forecast has seen the business make a huge investment

into Dandenong South, with the construction of the new Remedy Fermentary. The \$25 million dollar investment will provide the business with the ability for innovation, both within the Kombucha range and by creating new products.

"We're leading the way in making the best tasting, healthiest drinks going around, and the new Remedy Fermentary will allow us to deliver on the significant increases in demand forecast for the coming years as more and more consumers look to reduce their sugar intake and seek out healthier options" said Mr Gillard.

"We are particularly excited about the opportunities the new Remedy Fermentary will provide for innovation, both within our kombucha range and in creating new products,"

"R&D is one of Remedy's priorities, and this facility will allow us to continue to deliver top-notch drinks and take all our new ideas for healthy, tasty drinks to the next level. Our latest innovation, Remedy Sodaly, is a 100% natural, no-sugar, prebiotic soft drink that was developed to deliver

a better take on the classic soft drink experience, without compromise. While some say you can't have it all, we're proving that wrong when it comes to Remedy Sodaly."

The facility is an impressive 18,268 square metres, the size of the MCG oval. The move enables Remedy to consolidate production under one roof and streamline its supply chain, without compromising on quality or its traditional small batch brewing process.

Impressively, the facility has been designed to target a 5 Green Star Australian Excellence rating. It has a 1.1 MW solar power system to reduce energy usage from the grid, rainwater harvesting for appropriate grey water use, and water-saving features.

Learn more: remedydrinks.com

► Address: 33 Endeavour Court, Dandenong South



There are so many adventures to be explored in **Greater Dandenong**



Above: Douglas Street traders standing in front of Street mural by Sasha Heath. Top right: Noble Park Youth Committee. Bottom right: Phuong, Noble Park Dry Cleaners -Douglas Street trader



Noble Park is a hive of activity

Council's place-making team have been working hard on developing a strong suite of projects for Noble Park. As a result, there are some great things happening in Noble Park over the next 12 months and we've listed a small snapshot of some of these Council led projects. The Noble Park Revitalisation Board (NPRB) is supporting the activations contributing approximately 85 per cent of funding to each project listed below.

Noble Park bag giveaway

Recently, Melbourne Based Artist and Illustrator Sasha Heath painted a colorful mural on the public toilet block in Noble Park Activity Centre. Titled *The Noble Community*, the artwork features much loved local landmarks and aims to express the heart and soul of Noble Park.

To celebrate the new mural and to support traders in Noble Park, Council produced a one-of-a-kind re-usable tote bag, postcard and keep cup based on this mural. The re-usable tote bags and postcards were given to businesses as giveaways to their customers. They were also given temporary store signage to promote this special offer, alongside a social media campaign. The bag giveaway and Instagram competition aimed to promote the unique retail and business mix of Noble Park and remind residents to shop locally whenever possible.

Link Road renamed to Muderra Way

Link Road in Noble Park has been newly named Muderra Way, the first indigenously named road in Greater Dandenong. Muderra, translates to torrential rain in the language of the Bunurong people. Muderra Way will feature an extensive indigenous artwork (using asphalt art) to reflect this meaning.

Peace and Harmony for Ukraine – artwork on Frank Street carpark

An engaging mural has been created titled *Peace and Harmony for Ukraine*. A memorable asphalt artwork which celebrates Noble Park's Ukrainian connection and the 60 years plus presence of the Ukrainian Association in Noble Park. The artwork has been co-designed with the Ukrainian Association in Noble Park. The timely mural is inspired by street art found in Ukraine and draws focus on the current plight of the People of Ukraine.

Noble Park Community Fun Day 2023

The Noble Park Community Fun Day is an all-ages community festival held in the surrounds of the Noble Park Skate Park precinct. The event will offer something for everyone to enjoy. Activities will include live and cultural entertainment, kite flying, circus acts, rocking climbing, and free

workshops including arts and crafts and 'come and try' sports activities.

The event is a celebration of Noble Park's rich diversity, and will feature an array of cultural foods and entertainment – highlighting all the amazing things that Noble Park has to offer.

- ▶ **Date:** Saturday 4 March, 2023
- ▶ **Time:** 11am - 3pm
- ▶ **Location:** Noble Park Skate Park and surrounds (Memorial Drive, Noble Park)
- ▶ **Cost:** Free event. No registration required

What is place-making?

Place-making inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community.

By definition, place-making is a 'multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces. Placemaking considers local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, with the intention of creating public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and well-being.'

With the communities participation at its core, an effective Place-making process leverages a communities assets, history and potential.

Global Guidelines on Mental Health at work



The World Health Organisation (WHO) has released its first ever global guidelines on mental health at work. The guidelines were launched on September 28, providing evidence-based recommendations to improve mental health at work by supporting those with mental health conditions, those workers at-risk of mental health conditions and any worker regardless of their mental health status to participate and thrive at work.

WHO is the United Nations agency that connects nations, partners and people to promote health, keep the world safe and serve the vulnerable – so everyone, everywhere can attain the highest level of health.

The guidelines have a practical application and focus on organisational level interventions, manager training and worker/employee training, individual interventions, return to work

programs and vocational support programs.

An estimated 15 per cent of working-age adults have a mental disorder at any point in time. Depression and anxiety are estimated to cost the global economy US \$1 trillion each year, driven predominantly by lost productivity. People living with severe mental health conditions are largely excluded from work despite participation in economic activities being an important aspect for recovery.

The ambition is to create a significant change in how mental health is viewed in the work setting, to reduce the stigma associated with mental health conditions and to prevent, protect and promote, and support effective action for mental health at work.

You can read the WHO Guidelines on Mental Health online via:
bit.ly/3TDRZjl

Plastic Bag ban comes into effect 1 February 2023

To reduce plastic pollution, Victoria is banning problematic single-use plastics from sale or supply from 1 February 2023. Victorian businesses are encouraged to start preparing for the ban now to help ease the transition.

What will be banned?

The ban includes single-use plastic:

- drinking straws
- cutlery (knives, forks, spoons, chopsticks, splades, food picks and sporks)
- plates
- drink-stirrers and sticks
- cotton bud sticks
- expanded polystyrene food and drink containers, including plates, cups, bowls, clam shells, covers and lids.

The ban proposes that conventional, degradable and compostable plastics (including bioplastic and oxo-degradable materials) will be banned. Compostable plastics can still harm wildlife if they are littered and often require processing at a specialised compost facility to break down.

Businesses can start preparing for the ban now by:

- running down stocks of items to be banned
- avoiding single-use plastic items
- choosing reusable alternatives such as metal, wood, bamboo or paper.

Sustainability Victoria has resources and advice on alternatives to plastic for businesses.

Council's Sustainability team are also running the annual Sustainability Festival on the 26 February which you can read more about on this page.

Learn more:

vic.gov.au/single-use-plastics
sustainability.vic.gov.au

Sustainability Festival returns to Dandenong Market in 2023

The Dandenong Market will once again play host to the annual Greater Dandenong Sustainability Festival on the 26 February. The event will run between 10am to 3pm in the Market's southern carpark, which will transform into a sustainability haven filled with stalls covering a wide range of themes.

Whether it's pot planting seasonal veggies in 'The Garden' or learning how to save energy and access government rebates at 'Power Place', the festival will be jam-packed with tonnes of exciting, environmentally friendly activities. Entry to the festival is free, and with plenty of giveaways and live music, it's going to be a fun and worthwhile day out for all ages.



Learn more: greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au/sustainability-festival

AAPS welcomes corporate partnerships with furry benefits



It's been a little over 18 months since the Australian Animal Protection Society (AAPS) moved into its new premise in Keysborough and tails are quite literally wagging. AAPS is a community-based, not for profit registered charity which was founded in 1971. The organisation relies upon volunteers and community support to operate.

The brand new building is situated on Aegean Court (off Naxos Way)

and has been custom built to include an onsite vet clinic, groomer and opportunity shop.

AAPS General Manager Megan Seccull said, "this facility is not only a shelter for animals that have been surrendered or abandoned but it also plays a vital role in educating pet owners in what's involved in owning a pet."

AAPS takes a holistic view to the care it provides. Ms Seccull adding, "a pet is for life and you need to be ready to

take on this responsibility. Our facility incorporates a training space for new owners as well as an onsite vet so we can take immediate care of our incoming animals."

Most animals in AAPS care are dogs, cats and rabbits, but they accept all animals in need often receiving native animals, farm animals, birds, ferrets and other domesticated animals needing a new home.

AAPS welcomes any support it can receive from business partners and sponsors as it enables them to continue to provide protection, assistance and welfare for all animals.

Currently, there are too many animals in Victorian shelters, all who deserve loving homes, but the shelters are reaching breaking point as a result of the recent COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, dog surrenders have increased over the past financial year due to homelessness, lack of suitable accommodation and the inability to care or feed animals with rising living costs.

"We welcome discussions with the business community on supporting a cause like ours whether it be via sponsorship, donations, or adopting an office pet. We've received great support from local businesses including Bettapak and ASAP Printing. We certainly welcome other opportunities to help our furry best friends," said Ms Seccull.

Learn more: aaps.org.au

▶ **Location:** 26 Aegean Court, Keysborough



Entertaining your employees – Fringe benefits tax

With summer just around the corner, you may be planning a party or a day on the green with your employees. Before you fire up the barbeque, make sure you consider the fringe benefits tax (FBT) implications of your celebration.

These will depend on:

- the amount you spend on each employee
- when and where your party is held
- who attends - is it just employees or are partners, clients or suppliers also invited?
- the value and type of gifts you provide.

Remember to keep all records relating to the fringe benefits you provide, including how you calculated the taxable value of benefits.

Learn more: ato.gov.au/FBTentertainment

The pros and cons of a pet friendly office



As the world slowly begins to emerge from its various stages of lockdown restrictions, our furry best friends were suddenly left at home alone once more.

Mars Petcare Australia, a well-known pet food brand, released research last year which revealed 35 per cent of Australian pet owners surveyed were concerned about their physical return to the office and its impact on their pet (post COVID-19 lockdowns). The top three concerns shared included pet loneliness (50 per cent), personal guilt for being away (20 per cent) and financial concerns around having to pay for a pet sitter or walking service (19 per cent).

As a result, there is a growing trend of both humans and pets experiencing separation anxiety. Should businesses consider creating workplace pet policies?

Pet-friendly workplaces can take various forms such as allowing

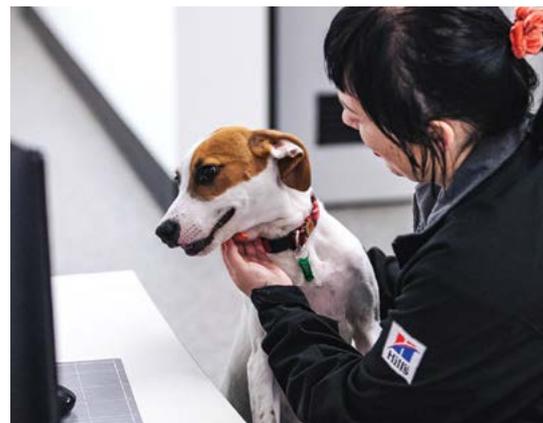
employees to bring their pets in to work with them, having an office pet or organising for animals to visit the workplace (eg some animal welfare organisations offer programs where they bring animals up for adoption to visit a workplace).

Interestingly, 51 per cent of the nation say they are more likely to take on a new job with an employer who supports pets in the workplace. For 'generation Z' this number jumps to a staggering 70 per cent.

So what are the ramifications of creating such a policy?

There are certainly positive aspects to having animals in the workplace with reports indicating it can reduce stress and improve social interaction and job satisfaction. However, there are also other factors to consider such as potential hazards and other concerns such as people's allergies and phobias of certain animals.

There are many organisations out there who have already successfully



implemented a pet friendly policy. Look at what the risks were, how they handled them and how this could be applied to your own business situation.

A useful document to help work through all the issues is the Pets at Work Toolkit (funded by pet food maker Mars Petcare).

Learn more:
bettercitiesforpets.com/resource/petsworkatwork

Human resources' crucial role in the tight labour market



We've all read stories about the deepening skills shortages, but business leaders are experiencing its effects first-hand.

The Save Group founder and director, Jane Save, said staff retention, recruitment and human resources (HR) management should be top-of-mind for business leaders as they navigate the post-COVID labour market.

Armed with more than 15 years of HR experience working within the manufacturing industry, Ms Save opened The Save Group's first office in 2021 in Dandenong South, the heart of Victoria's manufacturing hub.

The Save Group offers a range of HR services and products for more than 30 small to medium businesses on an 'as you need' basis, with no lock-in retainers and fees. The company supports businesses through the entire employment cycle, from onboarding, contracts and policies,



compliance, training and development, performance management to restructures and terminations.

With the Australian unemployment rate remaining close to its lowest since 1974 and a transformation of the way we work, what can businesses do to keep valuable staff and find the right people for future roles?

Here are Jane Save's top tips for staff retention:

1. Measure what you have as the first step. Whenever we start with a new business, we run a culture survey to

ascertain the mood of the workplace. You don't know what you have or how you can improve unless you measure it.

2. Create a nurturing, healthy work culture. Look after your workers' mental, financial and physical wellbeing. The best way to do this is from the top. Leaders of organisations need to talk about this and create an open dialogue where employees feel they can voice their feelings.

3. Lead by example and showcase a work-life balance for your staff. After COVID, this is what people want. Consider policies that enable workers to have a greater sense of control on balancing their work and life.

Ms Save said businesses benefit from having a confidential and trusted business partner to talk through their HR pain points. "I believe our team brings a fresh perspective to our clients and simplifies HR for SME businesses," she says. Ms Save's aspirations for the coming year include servicing more clients and becoming the local HR business partner of choice for the south-eastern region.

Learn more: thesavegroup.com



Creating inclusive written communications

The language we use and how we present it speaks volumes. Ensuring all communications are accessible and inclusive ensures your business is known as both a great place to work and a great organisation to work with.

Without accessible measures in place, a business creates barriers to both its workplace culture of inclusion as well as to its external stakeholders.

Accessible and inclusive communication meets the communication needs of everyone within the community. Put simply, everyone should be able to access, understand and engage with the information shared.

People with physical, sensory or intellectual disabilities may use a range of technologies to access communication for example:

- People who are blind or with low vision may use screen-reader software which verbally reads out what is on the computer screen.
- People who are unable to type may use voice-activated dictation software or other assistive technologies to enter information on the computer.

There are many tools to assist businesses create accessible communication.

Did you know written communications such as letters, emails and even chat forums can be inaccessible to people with low vision, blindness, Dyslexia and people with low literacy levels?

Below are a few more tips to help make your communications more accessible:

Create 'Easy Read' format communication

The aim of Easy Read (also known as Easy English or Simple English) is to give more people access to information. 'Easy Read' is beneficial for many different disabilities as well as those from a non-English speaking background. In its simplest form, it uses images to support text, large font sizes and plenty of white space.

If this type of communication isn't something you're familiar with, there are communication professionals who are able to support you in creating communication in this format.

Create documents in more than one format

The Microsoft Office 365 suite provides a range of features that support the development of accessible documents and is compatible with screen-reading programs

Using inbuilt accessibility features can help you ensure your documents are ready for distribution.

Tip: In Microsoft Word, you can use the "Check Accessibility" feature under the "Review" tab to automatically assess the accessibility of the document.

Consider your layout and heading types and fonts

Some people may use screen readers which rely on page elements

like headers to determine the informational hierarchy. This is how users then scan and navigate your content to access what's most important to them.

Try to create clear rules so there is consistency in your publications.

Tip: Use an easy to read font such as Sans serif fonts or Arial, Avenir or Calibri.

Use a contrast checker

Using effective colour contrast in your designs (such as an e-newsletter) is especially important for people with colour blindness. This doesn't mean your design needs to be black and white, but it's a good idea to stick to one text colour and one contrasting background colour. Your colour-blind subscribers might not see the exact colours you pick, but they won't miss the content of your message.

Tip: You can Google 'contrast checker' online and you'll find free options to help you decide if your colour contrast selection is accessible.

Further resources

There are a wide range of resources available to help you create change in your workplace. Check out the Australian Network on Disability (AND) to see a list of resources at your disposal.

[and.org.au/resources/making-accessibility-a-core-principle](https://www.and.org.au/resources/making-accessibility-a-core-principle)



Corex Group (Australia) CEO and Managing Director Simon Whiteley

Corex expands into plastics & recycling

Dandenong South manufacturer Corex Australia has commenced its merger with Megara Australia, allowing the design, manufacture, and recycling of plastic products under one roof. Corex is known as the exclusive manufacturer of Corflute®, twin wall polypropylene sheet used broadly across the retail display and signage, packaging, material handling and building industries.

With both manufacturers being privately run and owned Australian businesses, the acquisition supports local jobs and communities by both designing and producing goods locally.

Corex Marketing Manager, Zita Watkin said, "When Corex and Megara joined forces, our aim was to deliver local customers with an Australian plastic manufacturing and recycling one-stop-shop with increased capabilities. Although the two companies remain separate, we have already found that the ability to share knowledge and services is resulting in a more diverse and improved offering to both business's customers across many of the industries we service."

Corex Managing Director, Simon Whiteley said, "Merging Corex and Megara extends our offering in the plastic sheet manufacturing and recycling industry in Australia. Together, we'll be able to deliver a unique set of capabilities to the market and service a more diverse range of customers and industries."

The acquisition allows Corex to expand its plastic manufacturing capabilities while reusing all waste products across a range of products. Like Corex, Megara developed their own polypropylene sheet, PROMEG® with carbon neutral certifications.

Previously, Corex only specialised in larger display materials and packaging, now they can offer more varied goods via Megara in stationary, horticultural, and custom seasonal items for Christmas, Easter and Mother's Day.

The move also continues Corex's long standing focus on environmentally friendly solutions. Corex Recycling, which is also based at their Dandenong South premises, recycles all Corex products and most other plastics which makes them the market leaders in plastic recycling within Australia and globally.

"All plastic that Corex makes is 100% recyclable, so everything we make is reusable and 100 per cent recyclable at the end of its useful life," said Ms Watkin.

In recent months, the Corex team have commenced moving machinery and Megara team members across to the Dandenong South site. The move will be complete in early 2023.

This article was written and supplied by the South East Melbourne Manufacturing Alliance (SEMMA). SEMMA is the peak industry association representing over 200 leading manufacturing companies located in South East Melbourne - Australia's most dynamic manufacturing region.

Learn more: semma.com.au



Celebrating 2022 and what's ahead for 2023

This time last year I think most of us were looking forward to a 'more normal' 2022 and whilst we didn't have the devastation of the previous two years, 2022 still managed to deliver challenges and uncertainties. Despite this, as you will see from the article on page 13, SEBN has managed to deliver some significant network sessions and events – and have some fun along the way.

It was great to re-engage face-to-face for many network sessions and hold some site visits for the first time in nearly three years. Network topics varied from new tools and technologies to strengthening our mental wellness and understanding global issues and trends, with people issues and process improvement again topping the list.

Highlights started in February with SEBN hosting its 13th Take a Swing for Charity Golf Day – raising more than \$45,000 for Wellsprings for

Women. The year concluded with a Mock Court and our annual Christmas Industry Breakfast in November. In between, we held a packed International Women's Day at The Drum with the fabulous Felicity Furey, were engagingly informed by Keith Suter as he once again brought the global and economic convergence to the audience, and held our 2023 Economic Update with Gerard Burg from the NAB. Finally, we hosted a Waste Delegation from the Netherlands in October – with the promise of further collaboration next year.

Aimed at highlighting careers in manufacturing and beyond, the popular schools–industry 'Lunch with the Winners' in partnership with SELLEN was held in September. We had Sonny Tilders from Creature Technology Company captivating the year 10-12 students as he demonstrated the connection between

manufacturing and the theatre.

Although 2023 promises to be just as challenging with resource costs and general cost-of-living increases as well as continuing labour shortages and supply chain issues. However, on a more positive note, being 'adaptive' is now the way of doing business – not just reserved for manufacturing parlance - but for life in general.

SEBN will continue to serve the region's manufacturing community and women in business with relevant collaborative network groups and activities on issues of impact. We have some new 'communities of interest' being developed, particularly around manufacturing processes and Work Health Safety (WHS).. We are also exploring further waste and Circular Economy opportunities with the Netherlands and others. If you're not already involved with the SEBN suite of networks and activities, then we encourage you to participate in 2023!

On behalf of all at SEBN, we wish you and your loved ones a bright and happy Christmas and festive season, creating lots of memories - and may 2023 bring peace, contentment, and success.

Warmest regards
Sandra



Community Revitalisation

The first stage of the State Government-funded Community Revitalisation (CR #1) program was concluded last December following a successful 4 years of 'Try Test & Learn' prototypes and projects. A recent Retrospective study highlighted the significant impacts CR#1 has had – not just locally, but across the state of Victoria.

CR#2 – GameChange – will continue to build on the initial work and continue the 'Try Test & Learn' process over the next two years and importantly, it will also facilitate a community-led approach towards changing the local employment system. GameChange recently established five Priority Action Groups comprising stakeholder groups across



employment and education service providers, employers, jobseekers and community organisations.

Email gamechange@cgd.vic.gov.au if you would like to be involved.



**TOGETHER
we connect
engage
and grow**

Why not join one of the SEBN Network Groups or round tables including:

- Manufacturing Leadership
- Workplace Health & Safety
- South East Quality Network
- Manufacturing Xcellence
- Developing Leaders
- Waste | Sustainability
- CEO Mentoring Program
- Women In Business Network

Groups meet monthly and are open to all manufacturers across the region.



2023 Take a Swing for Charity Golf Day – mark your diaries now.

Planning is well underway for next year's golf day scheduled for Wednesday, 22 February at the number 5 golf course in Australia – Victoria Golf Club. Followed by dinner and an auction for a local charity, this will be the 14th Take a Swing which has raised approximately \$550,000 for those in our community most in need.

Further information email sandra.george@cgd.vic.gov.au – players, auction items and new sponsors most welcome.



“ Key takeaway was the focus on people and the importance of maintaining a learning, respecting environment for our People and need to regularly communicate ”

“ The message that had the most impact was that failing is valuable and should be discussed openly in the workplace as an evaluative tool ”

“ Loved the focus on change, progression, mentoring young people, coming up through the ranks ”

This is IT Schools

This is IT Schools (TIIS) continues to grow in the number of schools it is supporting, together with the number of companies supporting with laptop donations increasing. Last financial year, 595 laptops were donated to more than 19 local government schools across the region, with a further 62 desktop computers being donated to local community organisations for access hubs.

As the demand continues to grow, the group recognises that the journey has just begun. If you're replacing computers in your business, please donate to TIIS to enable this work to have a lasting impact and investment in the community.

Learn more:
info@thisisitschools.com.au
thisisitschools.com.au



“ Key takeaway was to change your failure mind set from blame to opportunity and responsibility ”



Dandenong Market improving the success of small business

Every big business started small. Some may have started in garages, kitchens or even around the dinner table. Every new idea needs to be nurtured so it can reach its full potential. A start-up program or co-working space is a great way to 'dip your toe in the water' and test your product or service. Entrepreneurship inspires and facilitates more entrepreneurship, paving the way for more small brands and bringing products to new audiences.

Dandenong Market is one place where a business idea can grow. The Dandy Makers Market offers a great incubator space to test your products to a receptive audience.

Abyssinia Coffeeland providing the right buzz to the daily grind



Abyssinia Coffeeland run by Alem Hailemariam sells a range of the finest

Ethiopian organic coffee beans. These range from ground coffee to the exotic Yirgacheffe and Sidano. Ms Hailemariam completed a hospitality course at Chisholm Institute in Dandenong and started working at the department's café where her dream was fuelled to sell her own coffee beans.

Alem was one of the success stories which came out of the Dandy Maker's Market, a joint initiative of Dandenong Market and the Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre. This initiative aimed to build stronger communities through micro business mentoring and empowerment. Ms Hailemariam started off running a coffee stall at the Dandy Makers' Market in 2018. After seeing success she took the next step and opened

an outlet at the Market.

Ms Hailemariam travels to Ethiopia yearly to collect her organic coffee beans, which she then packs and roasts in Australia. Unsurprisingly given Melbourne's deep coffee cult, she's quickly attracting loyal customers. "After you give them a taste, they always seem to buy it," she said.

"The relationships I have built with people – both customers and traders of the Market encourages me to keep doing what I love. Abyssinia Coffeeland has a range of the finest Ethiopian organic coffee beans" said Ms Hailemariam.

Her fantastic blends are much-loved by many customers. The Market's support for Abyssinia Coffeeland has meant that Alem has become a destination in the Market. "Everyone appreciates the authenticity of my



Abyssinia Coffeeland business owner Alem Hailemariam

brand. Dandenong Market has allowed me to tell my story and share my passion with a loyal and loving community."

The refugee and single mum has dreams of owning her own cafe and restaurant, with her stellar coffee roasted out the back.

Venus Jewellery becoming a treasure in Dandenong



Another thriving Market entrepreneur is Mahdi Vahedi from Venus Jewellery.

Mr Vahedi opened his jewellery stall in the heart of the Market in 2016 after immigrating from Iran with his family. His business is now flourishing.

"I have built a strong loyal clientele of customers here in the Market. We have recently opened a second stall to cater for the growing demand from our regular customers," said Mr Vahedi.

The humble jeweller loves the Market community and the positive



Venus Jewellery business owner Mahdi Vahedi

feedback he consistently receives from customers. Just four years after opening at Dandenong Market,

Mr Vahedi has built his business and expanded another franchise in Dandenong.

"Dandenong Market has allowed Venus Jewellery to grow into one of the most well-known jewellery destinations in Dandenong. The community the Market attracts has helped with this," said Mr Vahedi.

If you have a business idea you'd like to test at the Dandenong Makers Market, you can phone 9701 3850 or email info@dandenongmarket.com.au or submit an application online via dandenongmarket.com.au/applications

Raining with Talent: South East Business Awards



The 2022 South East Business Awards quite literally bucketed with rain.

Business owners and leaders poured in with excited faces, wet shoulders, and umbrellas aplenty to the awards night presented by the Greater Dandenong Chamber of Commerce.

With over 160 people representing businesses from across Greater Dandenong, Casey, Kingston, Mornington Peninsula, Frankston, Whitehorse, and Bayside councils, the inaugural South East Business Awards were held to acknowledge, celebrate and promote business excellence. The night was buzzing. There was much laughter thanks to candid business owners' answers during the Q&A, plus a lot of heartfelt, authentic, and humility led speeches from unsuspecting and inspired business winners.

"We want to support businesses to be able to do both; to articulate and promote their wins and to gain greater coverage across the South East and beyond."

The big winner of the night was Cranbourne based business ASM Chilltech, who won both the Building & Construction Award, and the Overall Business Excellence Award of the year. ASM Chilltech provides HVAC and Mechanical Services for existing facilities in the commercial, industrial and manufacturing sectors. They are also proudly 100 per cent Australian owned, committed to developing career paths and specialised training for apprentices and technicians within their industry.

This year, the awards program opened up to businesses within and beyond the boundary of Greater

Dandenong, covering all of the south east of Melbourne. With more award categories than previous years, the calibre of local business that entered was higher than ever.

The South East Business Awards offer connection to new networks, recognition of their wins through different promotion channels and an opportunity for businesses to see their hard work come to fruition. Entering the awards support business owners to get their products and services to broader markets and new customers. On the night of the awards, many business leaders used networking time to generate referrals to their business.

CEO of the Chamber, Lisa Moore said, "...the awards are all about raising awareness for our businesses across the south east of Melbourne. It is important to note, business excellence and a well written award application are two different skillsets. We want to support businesses to be able to do both; to articulate and promote their wins and to gain greater coverage across the south east and beyond."

greaterdandenongchamber.com.au/awards

Business Innovation

Infinite Automation

Environmental & Sustainability

Brick Lane Brewing Co.

Community Impact

Personalised Support Services

Business Citizen

After-Care Australasia

Employer Engagement

iEnergi

Micro Business

Big Little Brush

Leisure, Tourism & Wellbeing

Brick Lane Brewing Co.

Retail/Wholesale

Wagalot

Professional Services

Ultra Health Medical & Medical Edge Australia

Building & Construction

ASM Chilltech

Advanced Manufacturing

Roofing & Sheetmetal Centre

Overall Business Excellence

ASM Chilltech



ASM Chilltech winners (Paul Culverwell and Jeremy Cayford).

GREATER DANDENONG FOOD AND CULTURAL TOURS



BOOK YOUR SEAT AT THE TABLE TODAY



Want a chance to experience delicious food, while learning about the culture behind the food? We offer an authentic food and cultural experience in either Dandenong or Springvale.



TOUR TYPES:

- Afghan bazaar
- Little India
- Springvale Fresh
- Off the Menu



DID YOU KNOW ?

we can organise group bookings for 8–16 people available upon request.

For more information and bookings visit greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au/tours or phone 8571 1550

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