



THE RIGHT PLACE FOR BUSINESS

WHITTLESEABUSINESS

Corporate and Economic Development Directorate

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Bassim Wakim, Managing Director, Heather Brae Shortbreads

A recipe for sweet success

Heather Brae Shortbreads, a local food manufacturer based in Thomastown, has been baking traditional family favourite treats since 1941. Bassam Wakim, Managing Director since 1989, tells a story of growth, determination and success.

Bassam attributes his success to hard work and determination, something he learnt from his family. "My family migrated here in 1965 and worked hard to make a life in a country full of opportunities. As a teenager I sold newspapers and did various part time work to make some extra money and become financially independent" he said. Bassam was also a three times Australian team representative in the sport of Canoeing. "Working as a team, training three times per day taught me that desired results can only be achieved by defining goals, working hard, being dedicated and committed" said Bassam.

Today Bassam states the success of his business and its growth is a result of his loyal staff. The majority of Heather Brae Shortbreads' employees have been working

with the company for ten or more years, over 90% of which are local residents. "We encourage our staff to refer their friends or family to any position openings which helps expand our business. Every three or so weeks we put on a special staff lunch as a thank you to our staff for their hard work. It's an ever expanding family" he said.

While the media is printing stories of economic downturn, recession and business closures, Heather Brae Shortbreads has increased its sales and recorded the highest turnover during the past few months. In 2008 the business moved into a larger, purpose built facility and invested greatly in state of the art new bakery equipment to achieve its growth potential. "Our business is not slowing down. It has doubled in size in the past two years and we forecast further substantial increases in the next two years" said Bassam. It has been a long and rewarding journey since it's humble beginnings as a supplier of shortbreads to local milk bars. Today the customer base

for the business is broadly diversified so when one industry may be reducing orders, another is increasing. Major supermarket chains including Aldi, Woolworths and Coles, major cafe chains and private contract manufacturing customers are all increasing their orders.

Heather Brae Shortbreads is a member of the Plenty Food Group and has participated in a number of government hosted and funded programs including Business Planning and Exporting. The business has benefited by reducing cleaning chemical costs as a result of a group purchasing scheme organised by the Plenty Food Group. Plenty Food Group Co-ordinator, Marshall Dwyer, will be looking into a similar scheme involving refrigerated transport. Local food manufacturers interested in reducing their transport freight costs should call Marshall Dwyer, Plenty Food Group Co-ordinator on 9217 2148.

Visit heatherbraeshortbreads.com.au for further information.



Epping Medical and Specialist Centre

Local developments

Epping Medical and Specialist Centre: The Centre, located on Cooper Street, Epping is on schedule and due to open in late June 2009. The builder's site labour force is running at between 100 to 120 workmen per day over a six day working week. Visit emsc.com.au for further information.

Meridian Business Park: The 23.27 hectare Business Park in Thomastown nears completion and will be open for business early this year. Land Stages 1 and 2 will be released for owner/occupiers, builders and developers to commence their own construction. Visit mabcorp.com.au

Retail Hub for Laurimar: Laurimar will soon have a new \$35 million town centre. More than 240 jobs for the Laurimar community will be created by the retail site. The retail hub will include a supermarket and over 20 specialty stores to meet the needs of the Laurimar community, set to increase from 2,000 to 9,000 residents. Construction projects beginning this year include a day spa, tavern, sales and information centre and waterfront cafe. The retail precinct is set to open by mid-2009. Visit delfinlaurimar.com.au

Honda Dealership at University Hill: Northway Honda Dealership will soon be joining BMW at University Hill in Bundoora. The \$10 million development will be set on 23 hectares of the business park. The facility will bring over 30 employees to the municipality. Visit honda.com.au



Meridian Business Park, Thomastown

Chinese herbs successfully grown locally – emerging new industry

Over the past decade, there has been a worldwide boom in the consumption of natural foods and herbal remedies. In Australia, over 13% of the population used herbal medicines in 2000 and spent a total of \$1.6 billion on alternative medicines – an increase of 120% over the 1993 figure.

Since 2003 the City of Whittlesea has undertaken an economic development project which aims to evaluate the viability of producing Chinese herbs as new crops for local farmers. The project is exploring the feasibility of growing herbs within the City of Whittlesea to provide new opportunities for local farmers to develop herbal medicine products for the domestic and international markets.

Considerable research and development work has been undertaken on a wide range of species. Research results have shown that it is feasible to grow numerous Chinese herbal crops in this region and produce a good quality product. As a result of this work, a short list of candidates for commercialisation in Victoria has been produced.

Whilst further work is needed on these species before they can be recommended to growers for larger scale production, the project team has begun planting larger crops to determine their commercial potential by investigating yields, processing, marketing and value adding.

It is expected that the results of this stage of the project will be available in two years.

Funded by a range of grants from the Commonwealth (DOTARS), RMIT University and the Victorian Government (DIIRD) as well as partnerships with RMIT University and NMIT, and with invaluable contributions from local farmers, the Chinese Herbal Farming Project has now progressed to the commercialisation phase.

Stay tuned for an update in the next issue. Or, if you would like to join the mailing list to receive the Herbal Medicine Project newsletter please email info@whittleseabusiness.vic.gov.au



Brian May, Project Manager in Salvia plantation

Industry support

Tax Support for Small Business: The Australian Tax Office Small Business Support Program is offering free practical tax support online, over the phone and face-to-face. The program covers:

- registering for an ABN and GST;
- understanding employer obligations; pay-as-you-go (PAYG) withholding; and
- making the most of online services including the Business Portal, record keeping software and other free tools.

Visit ato.gov.au/businesses or call 13 29 66 for further information. If you are interested in taxation and record-keeping workshops hosted by the City of Whittlesea, see page 4 in the What's On section.

Skills for Growth Workforce Development Program: Businesses can now register their interest to participate in a new Victorian Government initiative to develop the skills of their workforce. The program will provide a team of independent workforce planning and training specialists to deliver free assistance to businesses.

Call 13 22 15 to find out if your business qualifies for the program and/or to register your interest.

Clean Business Australia initiative: The Australian Government is investing \$240 million in the Clean Business Australia initiative. The three programs include Climate Ready, Re-tooling for Climate Change and the Green Building Fund. The programs are designed to assist small and medium-sized businesses with projects to improve energy and/or water efficiency, and to make cost-savings to existing commercial buildings.

Visit ausindustry.gov.au or call 13 28 46 for further information.

If you are interested in learning more about running a clean and green business and attending local business presentations, join the northern Business Efficiency Network. This network is supported by the Victorian Government and the Cities of Hume and Whittlesea. Email your details to info@whittleseabusiness.com.au



New economic development initiatives

Business visitations: The City of Whittlesea's Visitation Program provides businesses with the opportunity to meet with staff from the Economic Development Unit to discuss issues affecting business and hear about Council's programs. Meetings are held at the place of business, are informal and confidential.

Visitations also assist Council to become more proactive in its approach and planning for future business support services. Common concerns provide a catalyst for implementing relevant training programs and other initiatives to address the real issues affecting the local business community.

To further promote the local business community, case studies and profiles of the businesses will be developed as a result of each face-to-face meeting. These profiles will be added to the new Whittlesea Business Website, currently under construction.

If you would like an Economic Development staff member to visit you, email info@whittleseabusiness.com.au or call 9217 2278.

Direct to public campaign: The City of Whittlesea comprises over 9,000 businesses and often potential customers do not know what is available in their local area. As such, Council's Economic Development Unit is currently preparing a 'Direct to Public' campaign to promote local manufacturers including food, arts, and furniture suppliers who are open to the public. Staff are currently investigating a number of publications and communication methods to generate maximum benefits.

If you are a local manufacturer and have direct sales to the public via a showroom or store on your site, please email info@whittleseabusiness.com.au or call 9217 2278.

Promoting your business events: The Economic Development Unit currently utilises the Victorian Government Events Management System (EMS) to promote its business events on business.vic.gov.au and whittleseabusiness.com.au. Local training organisations running business events can

register the event to be published on EMS. Once your event is approved and it is listed within the "City of Whittlesea" region, Council is able to link your event to our website adding further promotion.

Business Efficiency Network: The Victorian Government has provided financial support to establish a northern network to increase the awareness of opportunities for businesses to increase efficiency by implementing sustainable business practice such as reducing waste and carbon emissions, marketing green products and more. The City of Whittlesea is currently working with the City of Hume to develop a specific business events calendar for 2009. If you would like to be kept up to date with events coming up, please email info@whittleseabusiness.com.au

Free business mentoring: The Box Hill TAFE Business Enterprise Centre (BEC) has been successful in obtaining funding from the Victorian Government to provide business operators with support and mentoring services. The Cities of Whittlesea, Banyule and Manningham will be supporting the program by providing some funds and meeting room facilities. The consultant will be available for three working days per month – one day in each municipality. If you would like to express an interest in this free service, please email info@whittlesea.business.com.au

New website: The new website whittleseabusiness.com.au is currently being developed. Some of the new features will include: local business case studies; local business events (not limited to Council hosted events); direct to public business listing; and a business news section updated weekly.

Other new projects include:

- Development and implementation of the Plenty Food Group Business Plan
- Development of an eNewsletter
- City of Whittlesea retail review
- Local industry Skills Audit to be undertaken
- Development of a B4B Connect website (developed in conjunction with industry partners)



Westfield addressing retail skills shortages

To ensure that Australian workers develop the skills they need, the Commonwealth has funded the Productivity Places Program which will deliver 701,000 training places over five years in areas of skills shortage. These training places will be delivered in an industry-driven system, ensuring that training is more responsive to the needs of businesses and participants.

Westfield and the Australian Retailers Association (ARA) recently took advantage of the Productivity Places program by obtaining funding to train local retailers. ARA conducted a training needs analysis of Westfield Shopping Centres to determine the gap between required and existing skills levels and found there was a shortage of skills in retail management.

As a result, the new retail training program, 'Seed' was launched. The new initiative offered retailers a comprehensive suite of retail training programs to reflect the real needs of retailers in the current environment. The workshops, diploma and professional development courses provide a foundation base to the retailers wishing to obtain formal qualifications in retail and cement a retail career. Visit retailseed.com.au.

Businesses wishing to find out more about how they can upskill their staff can visit the Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations website deewr.gov.au or call 1300 363 079.

Helping the community reduce waste

Established in November 2007, Lopees is a family business based in South Morang doing their bit to reduce waste. Lopees is supplying the local community, schools and businesses with environmentally-friendly reusable envelopes made from organic cotton manufactured under a Fair Trade system in India.

KOPE (Keep Our Planet Earth) was chosen as the preferred supplier as they only use organic cotton grown free from chemicals and pesticides. The partnership is founded on the common goal of making the world a better place. Nicole Golland, designer of the original product idea, says, "It gives us pride and joy to know that what we

sell is reducing waste and that even in a small way we are all making a difference to protect our environment." Everyone shares equally in the proceeds, from each worker making the products through to the exporter who markets it. "Not only are we doing our little bit to save the environment, but we are also helping the workers who make our products enjoy a better standard of living," said Nicole.

The City of Whittlesea is doing its bit by using the envelopes for internal mail and reducing the use of paper envelopes. If you would like to find out how to reduce waste by using Lopees envelopes, visit lopees.com.au



Samkit and Kowshik of KOPE and Peter (centre) Lopees director.

What's on



How to Sell to Different Personality Styles

– B4B Connect networking event

Learn how to quickly assess how your customer likes to buy and transfer that knowledge into the delivery of the sales presentation. Learn how our own personality style can affect the outcome of a sale and why flexibility is the key to selling.

WHEN: Monday 23 February, 6.00pm

WHERE: Plenty Ranges Arts and Convention Centre, South Morang

COST: Free

Understanding Each Other

– women in business breakfast

This presentation provides participants with the necessary knowledge, tools and skills to assist participants in identifying and understanding the different personality types and how to use these to build stronger team cultures.

WHEN: Friday 6 March, 8.00am to 10.00am

WHERE: Plenty Ranges Arts and Convention Centre, South Morang

COST: Free

Growing the Green Collar Economy

– workshop

Dr Graham Turner, Senior Research Scientist from CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems will discuss the implications for employment and sustainability for the green collar economy.

WHEN: Tuesday 24 March, 6.00pm to 8.15pm

WHERE: Hume Global Learning Centre, Broadmeadows

COST: Free

Northern Business Achievement Awards

– business breakfast

Formula for Success – Hear guest speaker Paul Stoddart, international businessman and ex-Formula One Minardi Team owner, discuss how his career has grown since he began his auto-electrician's apprenticeship at aged 14.

WHEN: Friday 27 March, 7.00am to 9.00am

WHERE: Rydges, Bell Street, Preston

COST: \$44 (incl. GST) per person

Tax Basics

– workshop

This workshop is designed to give participants a basic understanding of small business tax issues. It includes business structures, claiming business deductions, GST, Capital Gains Tax and more. This workshop is delivered by the Australian Taxation Office.

WHEN: Wednesday 29 April, 9.00am to 12.00pm

WHERE: Fountain View Room, Council Offices, South Morang

COST: Free

Business Planning

– workshop

Is your small business on the right track? Being part of this hands-on workshop will give participants the tools to assess their business' current position, develop targets for future growth and learn how to check their progress along the way.

WHEN: Tuesday 12 May, 5.30pm to 9.00pm

WHERE: Plenty Ranges Arts and Convention Centre, South Morang

COST: \$30 (incl. GST) per person

Each year the City of Whittlesea offers a wide range of events to meet your professional development needs.

For further information relating to these and other events throughout 2009, visit the What's On section at whittleseabusiness.com.au

Multilingual Telephone Service

(This is a free service)

خدمة الهاتف 9679 9871

电话服务 (广东人) 9679 9876

Telefonska služba 9679 9872

Τηλεφωνική Υπηρεσία 9679 9873

Servizio telefonico 9679 9874

Телефонска служба 9679 9875

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