



# COMMON GROUND

Burra Foods Community Report



## A PASSION FOR COWS AND QUALITY KEY TO A LONG DAIRY CAREER



### FROM STEWART'S DESK

Welcome to the Winter 2020 Community Report, and my first as Burra's CEO. Despite bushfires, drought and coronavirus providing a challenging first half of the year, we have had some great successes during my first six months.

Coronavirus is significantly changing both our personal and business landscapes. As Victorians have gone back into lockdown and been ordered to wear face masks, I cannot help but reflect on how proud I am of the response of Burra Foods' team so far. During the early stages of international spread in February, we quickly identified our three objectives: Protecting our People,

continued page 2

Improving their herd's genetic base and producing award-winning quality milk are just some of the highlights from a nearly 40-year dairy farming career for Stuart and Jenny Bland.

The couple milks 160 Holsteins at Alberton near Yarram and is reducing their herd size as they slowly move to retire from dairy farming.

"We've been here 38 years but I have milked here much longer, my parents bought the farm when I was nine years old," Jenny told us.

Stuart, a qualified panel beater, was introduced to dairying by Jenny and they both enjoyed the lifestyle the industry offered.

"The days were our own and we could be our own boss," Jenny fondly recalled. "It was a lifestyle in a way. Although it was constant and seven days a week, you are outside, and I love being outdoors. That was a big factor and I guess because I had grown up around cows, I am pretty passionate about them. I will miss them terribly."

Stuart and Jenny are proud of the development of their herd and made production improvements through the use of proven artificial insemination sires.

"We built up a really good herd and it allowed us to increase equity in the business," Jenny said.

Producing top quality milk is an ongoing goal. The Blands have three industry gold diamonds on their front gate – demonstrating they have produced some of the best milk in the country – as well as numerous Burra Foods quality awards.

These are the result of attention to detail, including a strong focus on hygiene, ensuring cow comfort and a consistent emphasis on cow health.

"I'm the cow person, Stuart is the mechanical person," Jenny remarked. "So, I know them, all my cows have names. If they are a bit off-colour or they have a hard quarter or are a bit snappier, or if there's one that's stamping for some reason, we go looking."

"We like to think we are producing something that everyone would like to eat or drink and we can stand back and say we worked our hardest to get the best quality product to your table."

The Blands have supplied Burra Foods for the past 12 years.

Stuart commented that, "They are the only company that will talk to you by your first name - and you can talk to them by their first name."

continued page 2



## FROM STEWART'S DESK CONTINUED

Protecting our Factory and Protecting our Financial Stability.

By the first week of March, we had stopped visitors coming on site and ensured only essential workers remained. By the third week of March, there were onsite temperature checks prior to entry, face masks became mandatory and everyone completed a health questionnaire on arrival. We have continued to increase controls, managing the risk to our organisation and achieving our objectives.

Compliance has been fantastic and the genuine care for each other has exceeded my expectations. Family care packs were distributed to all staff - at essential sites or at home - containing toilet paper, hand sanitiser, ethanol and face masks. Our IT team fast-tracked the implementation of technology to enable all those who could work at home to do so. The daily lunchroom quiz has gone virtual; Microsoft Teams meetings enable collaboration and communication while virtual drinks on a Friday night provide an opportunity to keep a social connection and have some fun while we are all apart. Regular communication has been important – both internally and externally. I acknowledge the support and compliance of our milk supply partners and essential contractors in milk collection, transport warehouses and on-site service providers for working with us to minimise risk and ensure we can collectively deliver on our objectives.

## GLOBAL MARKET UPDATE

We are lucky to be working in agriculture, specifically dairy. In many Western and some Eastern countries, dairy is seen as a necessity for nutrition, particularly bone and brain health. There is no doubt that global demand has reduced due to COVID-19 with markets locked down and household spending tightened. One of



the timeliest examples is the delay of the Olympics in Japan, which was otherwise a market bracing for huge demand. However, some of our key markets, like Taiwan and Malaysia, appear to be managing COVID-19 well and it is times like these I am pleased that we have diversified our products, customers and markets, exporting to over 27 countries today.

Travel restrictions are impeding Burra's new product development by not allowing us to spend time with our customers to understand how we can better serve their dairy needs. While this liaison is continuing online and by phone, nothing beats spending time with customers and being on the ground in their premises to find mutual opportunities.

## DAIRY INDUSTRY CODE OF CONDUCT

This year marked a new start of milk-buying transparency with all processors required to have milk pricing and supply agreements published on their websites by 2pm on June 1. Burra published its own milk pricing and supply agreements by mid-morning before any of the large processors. As discussed at online supplier meetings, we required very minor changes to ensure our agreements complied with the code. The code is largely about transparency and trust and Burra has always been open and honest with milk supply partners, providing timely and accurate information whenever possible and this will not change.

## SUPPLY UPDATE

Milk collection has increased by 25 per cent from January to June this season due to improved climate conditions. Drought-breaking rains in East Gippsland early in the year and a wet winter across all of Gippsland has renewed confidence for milk supply partners. Knowing cows are back eating grass and stocks of fodder have been replenished is encouraging for the season ahead. It is amazing the difference a change in the season can make!

## BRANDING UPDATE

Last month, Burra Foods proudly launched a refreshed brand and a new website and announced our first ever brand ambassador – Eleanor Patterson. Burra has a very strong and iconic logo that is known for quality and consistency with our stakeholders and the tweaks we've made bring it into the 21st Century. This update starts on page four – we hope you like it! Stay safe, keep well and thank you for your ongoing support of Burra Foods – we all appreciate it.

**Stewart Carson**  
Chief Executive Officer  
stewartc@burrafoods.com.au

## A PASSION FOR COWS AND QUALITY KEY TO A LONG DAIRY CAREER CONTINUED

“Our experience has been very good, they are proactive with all the information they give out to suppliers and are easily contactable,” Jenny agreed. “They have been on the front foot with all their discussion groups and information about changes to prices and price structure. They strive to keep us updated and it helps us manage our business better.” Farming in

“marginal dairy country”, the couple has endured their fair share of dry seasons. It was during the drought of 1982 that they sought the advice of a farm consultant who emphasised the role of feeding in profitable dairy farming.

Jenny recalled, “The first year we were feeding, someone told us ‘hold your nerve’ because there just seemed to be more and more money going out, but at the end of the year, we had money to play with in a really tough year. It came down to feeding

cows and having cows in good condition coming into autumn and the same when they went to calve, it is all about cow condition.”

These past six months have been “sensational” for the Blands and they have used the improved conditions to stock-up their fodder reserves.

“Historically, when we have good seasons, we generally have low prices so this one is a good one to go out on,” Jenny said.



# THE POWDER TO HELP THOSE IN NEED

**When supermarket shelves were stripped at the height of panic-buying earlier this year, charities were forced to look at other ways to source vital products.**

The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) Community Food Program Donations Coordinator, Karen Quist, turned to the internet for help.

“We put a call out on social media for anybody who could supply UHT milk or milk powder,” she said. “Then Burra Foods came to the rescue with 1,000 kilograms of milk powder.”

The ASRC Foodbank Program regularly supports about 700 individuals a week, with nearly half of them children. Recently, an additional 20 to 30 new people are seeking help from the ASRC Foodbank every day.

Based in Melbourne, the Foodbank supports families from as far away as Ballarat and Geelong.

At the onset of COVID-19, the traditional supermarket shopping experience at the ASRC Foodbank was temporarily replaced by prepacked bags, including pantry staples such as UHT milk, tinned tuna, tinned beans and rice.

“Usually we offer a combination of UHT and fresh milk but doing the prepacked food bags we couldn’t include fresh milk and we were not confident at that stage of keeping-up the supply of UHT,” Karen said.

At least 70 percent of ASRC groceries are donated by the public and the remainder is bought by the ASRC – including milk.

Burra Foods’ milk powder donation not only provided a source of nutritional food, it also meant money earmarked to buy milk could be redirected to other essential foods.

Karen said about 80 per cent of the people who shop at the ASRC Foodbank have no income.

“Our members didn’t have the option of stockpiling or going to the expensive corner store to buy something from there. They are 100 per cent reliant on us for food every week and were very fearful of being forgotten. They said ‘thank you for still being here and not forgetting us.’”

Burra Foods and its founder Grant Crothers jointly donated the tonne of Burra Foods fortified Instant Full Cream Milk Powder.

To help with the ASRC’s handling and distribution of the milk powder, Burra Foods customer, Dairy Pac International,



packaged the 25kg bags of milk powder into 1kg sachets under its export brand, Oceania Gold.

Burra Foods Sales Manager - Ingredients, Des Reilly, said the company was happy to provide support when the call for help came.

“At the moment, there are so many issues caused by coronavirus, I think it’s a little bit special to help out, particularly for people who do such great community work.”

Des, who helped coordinate the donation, said 1kg of milk powder would make 7 litres of milk – so the donation total was the equivalent of 7000L.

“It’s a drop in the ocean for us, a company that takes in as much milk as we do and makes thousands of tonnes of milk powder a year. It is one tonne less for us but I’m sure it means a lot to the people receiving it.”

# TAIWAN TAKES TO PURE FRESH MILK

**Fresh Burra Foods milk has landed on retail shelves in Taiwan, where dairy demand has remained strong despite the COVID-19 pandemic.**

The rebranded Pure Source milk was launched in Taiwan on June 2nd and it will be sold in 700 7-Eleven stores.

Initial orders are for 36,000 1-litre cartons of Pure Source milk each month.

Burra Foods Business Manager Commercial, Paul Bills, said the fresh, white, new-look cartons were a selling point in the local market.

“In Taiwan, white is pure,” he said. “That’s why we have redesigned our packaging to have a very clean look and design which is in line with consumer preferences for white milk packaging.”

Paul said the new approach was a team effort, highlighting the research and input from Burra Foods Marketing and Communication Lead, Yuko Granger, to ensure the branding was aligned with Burra and consumers.

Pure Source was first launched into the Taiwanese market more than two years ago and was popular with the expat community and health conscious families.

Paul is confident the rebrand will further develop the product’s profile and enable additional product and market development.

He said launching a new-look brand during a global pandemic had some hurdles.

“Due to its shorter shelf life, one of the key challenges for the product was container and vessel availability for initial shipments.

“I could not be as close to the process as I usually would be due to the pandemic. I couldn’t be onsite for the first production run or as involved in the product launch in Taiwan.

“Demand has still been strong and, because Taiwan was very quick to react to COVID-19, the dairy market was less impacted by the virus than other markets. This meant we did not have to delay the launch which was great news.”





# FRESH NEW LOOK FOR BURRA BRAND

**The Burra Foods brand has had a refresh! While the much-loved and recognisable kookaburra still has pride of place; the logo now has a slightly more modern look.**

The culmination of an 18-month project, Burra's refreshed brand and communication strategies tell the company's story as a Gippsland milk processor which values sustainability, ingenuity and community.

Burra Foods Marketing and Communication Lead, Yuko Granger, managed the project and said Burra had streamlined its branding to improve communication with its customers, milk supply partners and all stakeholders.

"Burra is in its 30th year of operation and we are proud of its heritage in Korumburra and

the support we receive from the community," she said.

"Our history is a rich part of our story and we wanted to make sure our brand highlighted this while also recognising that we are reaching out to new markets and new consumers in numerous cultures around the world.

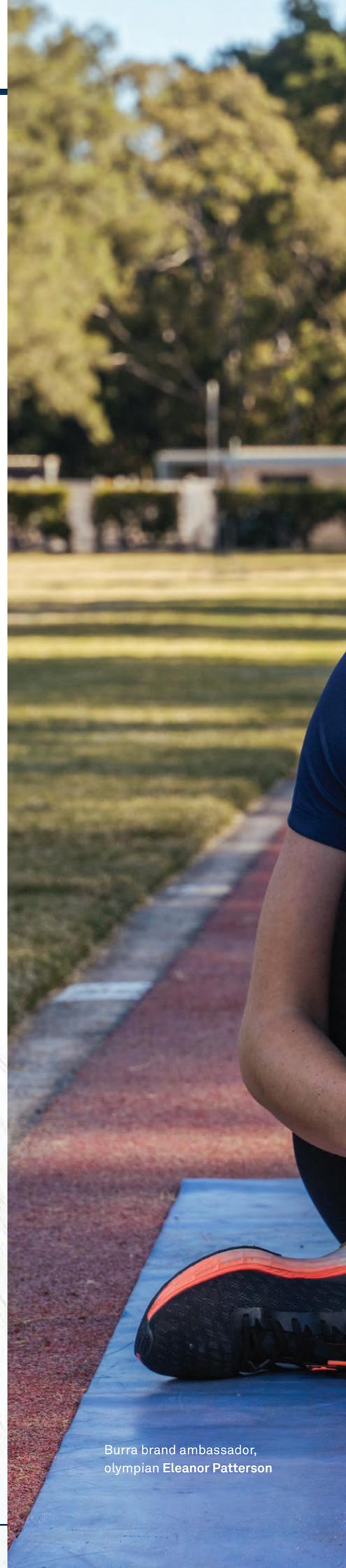
"The pillars of Burra are sustainability, community and ingenuity and these are the same values that have shaped Burra since the business was founded in 1991."

Burra's new brand will be rolled out across the business over the next two years – from product packaging to signage on dairy farm gates and milk tankers. The new website is live at [www.burrafoods.com.au](http://www.burrafoods.com.au)



# BURRA

FOODS AUSTRALIA



Burra brand ambassador, olympian Eleanor Patterson

## LOCALS SUPPORTING LOCALS: BURRA FOODS PARTNERS WITH OLYMPIAN ELEANOR PATTERSON

Leongatha-born, Commonwealth Games high jump gold medallist Eleanor Patterson, is Burra Foods' first brand ambassador, promoting the milk processor, Gippsland and Australian dairy.

The partnership comes as Eleanor prepares to represent Australia at the Tokyo Olympics next year. "Thrilled" to work with Burra, the 24 year old said she and the milk processor had a lot in common.

"We both deliver high quality on a world stage," Eleanor said. "For me, for the last year, it has all been about Tokyo, Tokyo, Tokyo and getting to that Olympics while, for Burra, Japan is a major customer.

**"Burra Foods creates high value products and South Gippsland is such an amazing place with the green rolling hills and farms, it is just such luscious land and it's able to produce some pretty amazing things. Obviously, milk products but I would also like to think we have a fair few athletes from South Gippsland.**

"Everyone always says to me 'what's in the water?', but maybe it is just in the milk."

CEO Stewart Carson said everyone at Burra Foods – and in Gippsland – had followed Eleanor's rise.

"In trying to decide who would take the title of Burra Foods' first brand ambassador, we were seeking an individual where our support would be really appreciated but most importantly, where there would be an alignment between them and all that they stand for and the brand essence and values of our company.

"Eleanor is the perfect person to promote Burra Foods. We are honoured to partner with a Gippsland local who is at the top of her profession."





## NEW EXECUTIVE BRINGS INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE AND FRESH PERSPECTIVE



Quality underpins the reputation of Burra Foods as well as the Australian dairy industry, according to Dan Cullen, the Burra Foods team member charged with the task of ensuring quality in all aspects of the company's activity.

Dan joined Burra Foods in December as General Manager - Quality and is part of the new-look executive team. It is the first time a member of the Burra executive has represented the quality area of the business.

Dan works within the quality team and right across the business including production, milk supply, commercial and logistics. Fortnightly calls and updates to key Burra customers about long-term projects are also part of Dan's role.

His grandparents were dairyfarmers at Te Kawa in the rolling hills of New Zealand's Waikato dairy region. He spent weekends and summers helping on the farm and while studying at university used these skills to secure a job at a research farm. Part of this role included milking cloned cows.

Having an appreciation of the entire dairy supply chain helps Dan better understand and solve complex problems. He said producing quality dairy products hinges on consistency.

"It doesn't matter if you meet the standard nine days out of 10, the 10th day is letting you down," he said. "It is about being consistent in everything, over and over again. Quality to me is consistency, not taking shortcuts."



Helping hand: Neil Cope (left) from the Stony Creek Football and Netball Club says money from the Burra Foundation has helped fund upgrades to the canteen and grandstand areas. Neil is pictured with Grahame Jackson, who is a Burra Foods milk supply partner.

## CLUB IMPROVEMENTS POSSIBLE THANKS TO BURRA SUPPORT

The players, supporters and visitors to Stony Creek Football Netball Club are enjoying new and safer facility access, thanks to sponsorship this year from Burra Foods.

The club – best known as the Lions or Maroons – has received about \$8000 in support through the Burra Foundation in the past three years. In 2019-20, the foundation provided more than \$50,000 to a variety of sporting clubs, the dairy expo, dairy breeds clubs, youth organisations, primary schools, an agricultural show and even an orchestra!

The Burra Foundation provides up to \$500 for every milk supply partner per year to go towards their chosen community organisation, event or project.

Stony Creek club committee member and sponsorship coordinator, Neil Cope, described the support as "fantastic".

"Funds have been used for general upkeep around the ground," he said. "This year we put in a retaining wall and pathway behind the grandstand to make it a bit safer. We've also extended a ramp out of the canteen area, so it is more user friendly for the elderly and put a pathway behind the bar area."

Neil said support from local businesses was crucial and had played a role in the longevity of the club, which celebrated 125 years last season.

"It's vital, especially because it is a meeting place for people to go throughout the season, they can catch up for a drink and it is somewhere they can go and talk to people while having a meal on a Thursday or Saturday night. It is a social outing," he said.

"You don't have to be a supreme athlete to get enjoyment out of it. You can be a supporter too, or a volunteer, there are plenty of jobs to be done. "Most dairy farmer supporters are local to the area and have had kids that play or they play themselves or have played. There's always a link somewhere that ties them to the club in some fashion."

Burra Foods Milk Supply Manager, Peter Fort, said prosperous communities are vital for regional businesses.

"We are proud to be able to support our dairy communities via the many community organisations and clubs throughout Gippsland," said Peter.

**"These community organisations and groups are important to our milk supply partners and Burra staff and we want to give back to the communities that support us."**

"Providing support to dairy communities as directed by our milk supply partners ensures that the support is going to where it is needed."



**Bryce Templeton may not have had a lot of dairy experience when he started milking cows back in March but the Trafalgar farmer had plenty of runs on the board when it came to working with animals.**

For him, dairy farming was an obvious choice when he and his family were able to lease 40 hectares next door to their existing farm.

“It is a beautiful property and it grows a ridiculous amount of grass and everything is there to utilise towards a dairy farm,” said Bryce.

“After working away shoeing horses all day, every day, and not being home all that much, it’s great to just be able to work from home and spend more time with the kids.

“Being young, willing to learn and wanting to take on a bit of a challenge, dairy is probably the most beneficial financially with cashflow, if you do it properly.”

Bryce, his partner Gill Massey and children Klancy, 8, and Noah, 2, started supplying Burra Foods in March.

They added to their Jersey, Holstein and crossbred herd in May – pushing numbers to 100 – and have plans to milk up to 110 cows in a split calving system.

Bryce will continue to work full time as a farrier. His parents, Paul and Tracey, will help on the farm while continuing to train racehorses.

Working together, they manage to fit everything in. Bryce and Gill milk in the morning; Bryce leaves at 9am to shoe half a dozen horses and trim the hooves of another 10 before coming home to complete farm jobs. Paul and Tracey train horses in the morning and then Bryce and Gill employ Paul to milk in the afternoon. Gill finishes milking in the evening and feeds the calves.

**“It has worked out pretty well, some say the hours are treacherous but I’ve grown-up that way, that’s just been our life,” Bryce said. “Working seven days a week, morning and night to look after your animals has been part of our life from the day dot, so dairy farming really is no different.**

“We had a decent idea about the dairy industry, but it is the same with any animal industry. I trained greyhounds for a bit and we’ve always grown up with horses and training them at a professional level; the basis is the same for all those industries. If you look after your animals and do your best to treat them well, usually they will produce for you.”

They also had a mentor who Bryce credits with providing them with the confidence to step into the dairy industry.

**Above: Bryce Templeton, his partner, Gill Massey, and children, Klancy and Noah, started supplying Burra Foods in March.**

“Over the back fence we’ve got Kev Matheson. He was mates with my dad growing up and I’ve known him since I was a kid. He’s been an awesome mentor. If anything ever seems to go wrong, I usually jump the back fence and ask Kev what to do,” Bryce said.

“I don’t think we would have been able to do it if we had just bitten it off straight on our own. Having him over the back fence has been a massive factor in moving forward.”

Burra Foods Milk Supply Officer, Jamie Serong, has also supported the establishment of the dairy, according to Bryce.

“He’s been really understanding about the position we are in,” Bryce said. “Any advice we have needed, he’s only a phone call away and he’s been very helpful.”

As for the hoof trimming work, the skills are not necessarily transferrable between horses and cows.

“Cows have two toes, horses only have one,” Bryce said. “People have called me and I have done cows; it has been done but it’s a whole different ball game.”



## EDUCATION HELPS DRIVE STAFF DEVELOPMENT



It was an opportunity “too good to refuse” and now Scott Hopwood has a qualification to help further his career.

The Burra Foods nutritional wet mix operator and relief supervisor recently completed a Diploma of Food Science and Technology with the support of the company.

The diploma course is a recognised qualification where employees gain the skills to assess the physical, biological and chemical makeup of food and how this relates to dairy products.

“Burra offered me the opportunity to complete the diploma and supported me to study and complete the practical course work,” Scott said.

“I’m very appreciative of what Burra Foods has done. The business has really gone out of its way to help me out and I really appreciate that. I encourage anyone else to take up an opportunity like this.”

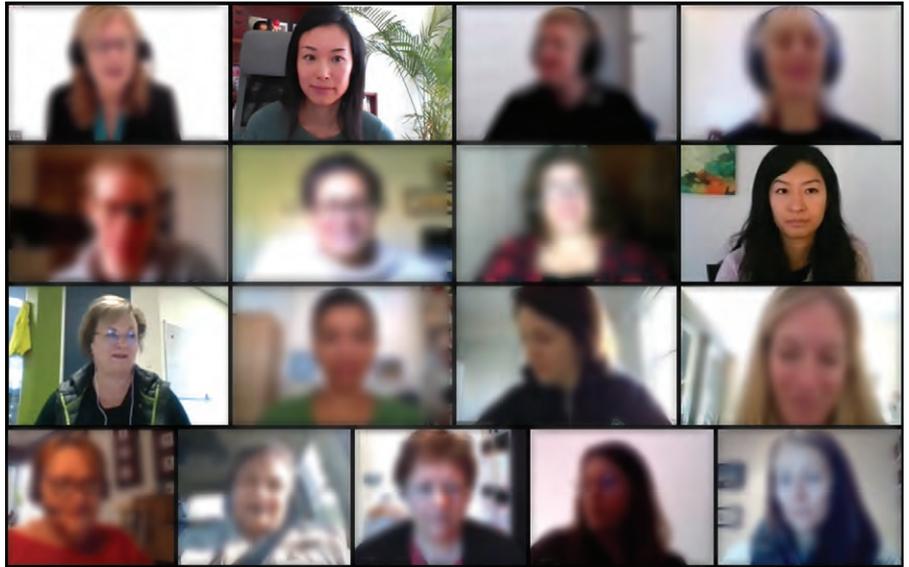
Scott’s role in the Nutritionals department of Burra Foods includes making infant formula. Thanks to the GOTAFE qualification, Scott’s day-to-day awareness of the production process has improved and it has provided him with additional skills.

“I have a much better understanding of what is happening on a chemical level with our products which will help with fault finding and troubleshooting,” said Scott.

Part of the course included developing laboratory skills, which Scott said could help him further his career in other areas of Burra Foods.

Having worked at Burra Foods for a decade, Scott said he would consider further study to increase his knowledge of food production and manufacturing.

“The diploma gave me a wider view of Burra Foods and the dairy industry from milk from the farm through to quality, processing and lab testing,” said Scott.



## NEW TRAINING PROGRAM FOR WOMEN TO BOOST BURRA LEADERSHIP SKILLS

**Burra Foods is investing in its female employees to develop a larger pool of leaders within the company.**

Ten women from different areas of the business have started an online women’s leadership program which will grow their communication skills and confidence while assisting them to identify their own leadership styles.

Burra Foods Logistics Manager, Lynn Behmer, “grabbed the opportunity” to expand her education after working at the business for nearly 10 years.

“In logistics, a lot of what I do is building relationships with people across the business, within my team, our Melbourne warehouses, our freight broker and transport partners,” she said.

“They are all different people with different operating styles so I’m hoping the course will help me understand my management style and not only how to better deal with people, but all the different personalities I’m working with.”

For Lynn, the program has provided a structure for professional development. She has overseen many changes within the logistics department and wants the program to equip her with the skills to initiate further effective change.

“To me, a leader is someone who can motivate their team and our external

partners as well as find more effective ways for processes and improvements,” she said. “Rather than being a manager who looks at the task at hand and just deals with what’s on their plate, a leader’s role is encompassing.”

Burra Foods was able to secure a government grant which helped fund the program and enabled a greater number of participants.

Burra Foods Learning and Development Coordinator, Melissa Nichol, is supporting the women throughout the program.

Melissa said the company wanted to invest in female staff at different stages of their careers to encourage personal and professional development and to grow the pool of future company leaders.

She said the program involved studying different leadership styles as well as introspection and a strong focus on everyday management skills such as adaption and agility.

“They will discuss the ways in which leaders can engage, how to use problem solving skills as well as understanding company values,” Melissa said.

“They will reflect on who they are as a person, be pushed out of their comfort zone, develop communication skills and identify what type of leader they want to be.”

This newsletter is produced on 100% recycled stock  
Please recycle

✉ sales@burrafoods.com.au  
milksupply@burrafoods.com.au  
📱 @BurraMilk  
🌐 www.burrafoods.com.au

