

Rainbow Friendly Grocer IGA

Michael and Sharyn Gelligen, (pictured left), winner of the 2005 Victorian IGA Friendly Grocer Store of the Year award are justly proud of their achievement in Rainbow, a town situated where the Wimmera merges with the Mallee in north-western Victoria, 340 km from Melbourne.

Rainbow's population was 1,303 in 1911 and now is around half of its former glory, like similar towns across the wheat belt suffering dwindling population.

While that would be enough for many retailers to down size and retreat to the dusty store room and contemplate the good old days, this enterprising family moved to town four years ago and set about addressing the decline in trade.

Over this time Michael, former Coles Store Manager from South Australia, has invested heavily in refrigeration giving the business a huge range and also a whopping percentage of sales far and above the average small town store.

While the investment has been significant, including new scanning systems and back office technology, it's chain like standards that have been established in this store that make it a clean, well stocked and impressively friendly place to shop.

You will note by the picture left, the store even uses plastic pockets for all shelf talkers instead of sticky tape, just another professional standard that sets this store apart.

It is nice to see that you don't have to trade from the newest building to attract the judges eye for the awards, and yes the building is a little country with old corrugated iron ceiling, however this adds to the charm.

This couple show the opportunity that exists for young families wanting to make a start in their own retailing career in small towns across the country. With sales climbing three fold since taking over the store things are certainly looking up for this little township, as long as we have some more rain to grow a good crop of wheat this year.

Well done to the Gelligen family on their work so far and on achieving this award.

John Markham

Store Feature

European Deli's

During May I traveled in France and Holland. This photograph indicates the popularity of the local food supplier in Europe. There is a strong reliance on the local deli, cheese merchant, baker, cake shop, small supermarket, and butcher. Although larger supermarkets exist, and increasingly Aldi sites exist, (particularly in the city areas) the locals still support the smaller vendor in the cities, and even more so in the countryside. I made a point of shopping in these stores, and found that the owners showed a great pride in the products they had for sale. It was not just a case of salesmanship, it was a genuine attitude of 'these items are the ones I have personally selected to offer to my customers'.



Personal attitude is also very important in French retailing, with a strong obligation on the customer to address the shop keeper on entering the shop, and to say goodbye and thank you on leaving. This attitude of politeness carries over to how each customer is served. In this area in particular I really noticed a difference on returning home. Jennifer Flanagan

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