

As we go to press the spring season is well under way and the summer festive season fast approaching. The Spring Horse Racing fraternity is facing its biggest challenge ever in managing the ongoing threat of equine flu. Many livelihoods have been affected around the nation as a consequence of this disastrous situation. This unforeseen threat is a wake up call to all business people to have prepared plans and maintain up to date training and instigate best practice policies with regard to all likely risks that their industry may face.

The weather is brightening up but we are still experiencing a concerning drought in most areas of Australia. The press is reporting that our farmers are facing some immense challenges to satisfy demand for their produce. This situation will no doubt have an upward affect on prices on our supermarket shelves for most food (and beverage) items.

With the Football finals over and the election date looming, we have been experiencing a very long lead up with many issues being publicly debated. We await the result of the elections to understand exactly what the direction will be on the much debated Workplace Relations issue. In the mean time it's business as usual for the MGA and our members.

The MGA is committed to assisting members with OH&S compliance in and around their retail business environments. It is the responsibility of the employer to provide customers and staff with a very safe working and shopping environment. There is no compromise. It is imperative all employers and owners of business are fully conversant with their obligations to ensure OH&S requirements are being met. The fines are very heavy but by far the biggest cost is the damage to member business names within the community and of course the brand they trade under.

OH&S One Day Courses

The MGA training team together with Roger Pallant, the MGA National OH&S training and support provider, have excellent, industry tailored one day courses scheduled in all states before Christmas. I would strongly encourage all members to attend these courses. Not only is it a legal requirement to be OH&S compliant but so too will your staff and customers see that they are being cared for in all aspects of safety. Please see inside this edition for when an OH&S one Day course is being held near you as well as our 'Do It Yourself' CD offer. Ask us about our OH&S store audits.

On the subject of training, our training team has been working feverishly to develop training courses that are relevant and easily accessed by members. Watch this space as there are many exciting initiatives looming. Our research has told us that we must use technology to our full advantage to deliver cost effective training outcomes. We have been partnering William Angliss Institute (WAI) with a CD Rom and Web based learning model to deliver such courses as the Responsible Service of Alcohol that we are planning to roll out to all applicable states. This initiative is in response to our members informing us that it is becoming more and more difficult to release staff from their stores to attend training courses.

Other partnering initiatives being discussed with WAI may include a nationally recognised Food Safety Supervisors and Handlers course that is also essential for our industry to embrace.

The Australian Fair Pay Commission

The Australian Fair Pay Commission (AFPC) has commenced a major National Review into Junior Wage Rates. This is a very serious review as far as our industry is concerned. The MGA will be making a comprehensive well researched submission, on behalf of all national independent grocery and liquor supermarkets in Australia, to the AFPC early in 2008. The MGA will strongly support the wonderful opportunities and benefits junior wage rates provide our youth in all areas of work experience and life skills development.

The MGA will be conducting industry research in October by way of a short concise questionnaire that will be sent out to all retailers so the MGA can gather some factual and poignant data to include in the submission. The MGA will be holding a series of retailer meetings in all member states in November – see inside this edition for dates and details. We welcome input from all retailers and stakeholders in our industry – please telephone, fax or email us at the MGA with your thoughts and suggestions.

Inside this edition our Workplace Relations Team included some additional interesting articles as well as a MGA Statement of Position in regard to Workchoices and Workplace Agreements. The MGA has been working closely with the Industrial Relations Victoria on an industry employee / employer Work Life Balance Project. Enclosed within this magazine is a comprehensive four page report, rich with information, written as a result of the research conducted. We wish to thank the team at the Champions Supermarket Group based in Bendigo, Victoria for the opportunity to work closely with their management team and staff.

The report looks at better ways store management can engage with staff when considering staff rostering. There are considerable benefits for both employers and employees as well as the community that can be derived by a 'thought leadership' approach to staff rostering in our members stores. Consider the six step process for developing a flexible rostering solution as shown in the report as this approach is capable of delivering some very positive outcomes. We thank Industrial Relations Victoria for this opportunity and Jenny Flanagan for her energy and passion to initiate and drive this project from start to finish.

The MGA team have a busy schedule ahead with visits to most states in the form of regional meetings, training courses and seminars. We look forward to meeting with you and hearing how we are able to assist. – We are here to help!

Until the next edition - Good Trading!

Jos de Bruin