

I think you will all agree that the grocery industry is alive and well! Time is flying and we are only a couple of weeks away from the end of the financial year.

A David and Goliath 5 year battle between Victorian independent retailer, Ingpen's Supa IGA, Mount Evelyn and Safeway (Woolworths) over a proposed Safeway Supermarket in Mount Evelyn has been won! The Ingpen family (pictured right) with local residents and supporters are to be congratulated for fighting this inappropriate development and can finally celebrate this momentous result with their local community. The situation at Mount Evelyn is similar to the township of Maleny in Queensland, where residents vigorously protested against a new Woolworths store, however, they lost that battle. Many residents now boycott the Woolworths Maleny store.

There has been quite a bit of activity around the nation with retailers coming together for their annual conferences and award nights. Tasmanian Independent Retailers recently held their well-attended Expo and conference at the Wrest Point Casino in Hobart. IGA Western Australia had their conference in Perth and IGA New South Wales had their conference in sunny Fiji. All conferences celebrated the fine efforts of store owners in who have been continually lifting their retailing and customer service standards. The proof is in the eating, as all retailers report solid sales and profit growth.

*Photos and further story pages 6-7*

The MGA team has been busy representing its members in many areas regarding the day to day operation of independent grocery and liquor stores. Activities of note include the ACCC Inquiry into Grocery Pricing, national and state retail packaged liquor code of conduct, proposed Tobacco Act amendments in NSW and ACT, award modernisation and national approaches to OH&S and weights and measures.

It is difficult to remember a time when there has been such a spotlight on our industry. As the discussions continue at federal and state government level, concerning many parts of your business, the day to day running of your businesses must go on.

The ACCC Inquiry into Grocery Pricing is currently generating the most media attention, with the ACCC engaging with and interviewing key industry stakeholders such as suppliers, retailers, farmers and industry groups. There are of course many points of view but it seems clear that the two chains, Woolworths and Coles, have a duopoly as they share 80 per cent of the market between them (not the 50% "share of stomach" that they continually push). This situation does not encourage a competitive market place nor cheaper grocery prices.

Professor Allan Fels, former head of the ACCC, has publicly spoken about the overhaul of planning laws. He says, "The current system is anti competitive."



*The Ingpen Family pictured in 2005 when Jim Ingpen was inducted into the Dr Thomas Haggai hall of fame.*

Professor Fels also states that there is a need for "streamlining state and local government planning laws and the relaxation of investment rules for foreign retailers".

"The planning system should be about protecting the community from congestion, noise and the loss of cultural and environmental assets," he said in a statement. "Instead, planning laws are protecting existing retail landlords from the threat of competition. New supermarkets and larger food stores are being denied the opportunity to compete with existing shopping centres." Less choice meant higher prices for groceries and everyday household goods," Prof Fels said. *(Australian Financial Review)*

MGA (and NARGA) has publicly stated that the Independent Supermarket Channel is capable of being the third force in grocery retailing, not overseas conglomerates as has been suggested. The independent supermarket sector plays a significant role in their respective communities and are the life blood of the economy. NARGA Chairman, John Cummings has been very active in representing independent supermarkets around Australia in the media, with frequent appearances on night time current affair shows. MGA is a board member of NARGA.

Amongst the many things a supermarket owner has to consider, the environment is fast becoming a hot topic. As an industry we must learn to be vigilant and begin to implement better practices to preserve our environment and assist in educating the consumer by providing ideas as to how they may also contribute toward achieving this goal. A simple suggestion may be to encourage customers to do away with plastic bags and to bring their own environmental bags. Please see inside this edition for more information about this very important topic.

Finally, I would like to remind members around Australia to take advantage of the wonderful workplace support services that MGA has available. If there is a workplace or compliance issue in your store please do not hesitate to call us. We are here to help!

We hope you enjoy reading this edition of your magazine. Until next edition – Good Trading. *Jos de Bruin*