

The festive season has commenced with Christmas and New Year almost upon us. Whilst on the subject of the festive season it is important to remind all staff of your polices concerning appropriate behaviours in the workplace place, which include workplace Christmas parties. As the owner of your business, Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) is a priority for you in your workplace. It is your responsibility to ensure all staff are aware of the OH&S policies in your store, particularly at this time of the year. See article on page 14. Should you have any workplace relations and compliance queries whatsoever during the festive period, do not hesitate to call MGA. We are here to help you!

In my recent travels, many independent supermarket owners from around Australia have commented on the deterioration of the Australian financial markets caused by the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) and how this has occurred in such a short period of time. Consumer confidence has been reduced, for good reason. Government is strongly recommending that every precaution must be taken by business owners to implement measures that will assist in recession proofing their businesses.

The strength of independent supermarkets is their special relationship with their local communities. These relationships must continue to be nurtured and strengthened during these more difficult times.

Changes and amendments to Tobacco Legislation in NSW, ACT and Victoria have kept MGA very busy this year. MGA has been engaging with Government Health Ministers and Departments in all three states and is currently busy ensuring independent supermarket needs are fully understood by each government, and that these stores should not be disadvantaged. Removal of tobacco from display and introducing licenses to sell tobacco are the two key changes in these states that could affect MGA members. New ACT Tobacco Laws, incorporating both measures, will be effective from 1st January 2010. NSW Government has passed the "Protect Children from Tobacco" Bill in the Lower House and it will soon be introduced into the Upper House. The Victorian Government called for submissions in October from industry associations and stakeholders in response to a discussion paper seeking to address the sale of tobacco products. We will keep members posted on any developments.

Master Grocers Australia welcomed members to an Industry Breakfast held in Kooyong, Victoria on Tuesday 18th November 2008.

The Federal Shadow Cabinet Minister for Small Business, Mr. Steven Ciobo M.P was welcomed by the President of MGA, Rod Allen and the CEO of MGA, Jos de Bruin. Mr. Ciobo gave the keynote speech, where he discussed the role of small business in the Australian economy.



*Fred Harrison and Mark Laidlaw at the Melbourne Industry Breakfast*

He addressed a number of issues facing small businesses at the present time. These issues included compliance problems associated with "red tape," dealing with proposed new industrial laws and the importance of small business in a competitive market. Mr. Ciobo said that small business relied on consumer confidence and that people in small business who were prepared to take risks, are the lifeblood of the nation.

Mr. Ciobo also launched the MGA Retail Security booklet at the Breakfast. The booklet which is independent supermarket specific was greeted enthusiastically by members. It is designed to assist retailers to deal with problems associated with increasing retail shrinkage in the current economic climate. We are confident that MGA members will find it a vital resource and guide in their businesses.

Members travelled to this breakfast industry event from all over Victoria and it was an invaluable opportunity for them to interact and network with industry colleagues and staff from MGA. Further industry functions are being planned for 2009 and MGA looks forward to welcoming members to these future events.

Following the breakfast meeting, the majority of members stayed for the MGA AGM. Three crucial resolutions to amend the MGA constitution were voted upon and unanimously passed by an historical number of retailers attending the AGM. The three resolutions were:

- A change to the Eligibility Rules allowing MGA to widen its scope of members.
- Changes and amendments to the Rules of the Constitution, including allowing independent directors to be appointed to the MGA Board
- A change of the Association's name to Master Grocers Australia.

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