

COBDEN WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Agriculture: Rhonda Howard



Current position? Manager, Cobden Artificial Breeders Co-op.

Schooling? Milford Primary School in South Gippsland, then Timboon High School in 1967.

Career? Left school at 16 when I failed form 5. I felt school interfered with my social life. Worked at a dry cleaners in Colac for three months before two years at Parlours' Hardware in Cobden. Married Bob (dec) and worked on the farm. Returned to Parlours in the late 80s and started with Cobden AB in 1994.

Best thing about work? The people - both staff and farmers.

Hobbies and interests? The farm and cattle, roses, cats, Cobden, Simpson and Melbourne football clubs.

Funny story? A farmer rang to say he was having trouble paying his account. I said: "Don't worry, just give me a bit every month." He said he hadn't had an offer like that in ages!

One frustration? Not as fit as I'd like to be.

One proud achievement? My family and my relationship with farmers. I love Cobden and I am proud to be a part of it.

Growing up? Family consisted of parents Ian and Audrey Paterson and siblings Ross, Stuart and Trish.

We moved to Cooriemungle on the Heytesbury settlement in 1967.

Family? Two sons - Paul works in Melbourne and Luke works out of Mt Gambier.

In ten years? Who knows? Depends whether I'm fit and healthy.

Cobden women are certainly setting the pace when it comes to heading up the town's businesses and organisations. The four ladies featured on this page represent all the professional women who carry out their tasks so well in our community. They are profiled to acknowledge their work . . . and to make us smile!

Education: Clare Monk

Current position? Acting principal, Cobden Primary School.

Teaching Career: Ensay PS (1986), Laang PS head teacher (1987), Cobden PS - years 5/6 (1988-89), Pirron Yallock PS head teacher (1990-93), Cobden PS (1999-current).

Trained where? Deakin Uni, Warrnambool.

Favourite year level? Each one has something special about them. Preps are extremely rewarding as they enter school barely able to write their names and, at the end of the year, they leave, writing at least a page and reading short stories. At the opposite end, the years 5 and 6 students are so much more independent, and they have a great sense of humour. You build relationships at this level that can make a difference in a child's life.

One funny story? Every day when you walk through the school door, you know your day will be different from yesterday and that is why I love what I do. Children bring enthusiasm and excitement each day.

A couple of years ago we were on Melbourne camp, dining out in Lygon Street. As we walked down Lygon Street, we were greeted by a well-known underworld figure outside his restaurant. I moved the students into the pizza house next door. As the staff sat down at their table at the front, I noticed one staff member at the back of the restaurant. When asked why he did not eat at our table at the front of the restaurant, he quickly replied, "Someone had to look after the kids if there was a drive-by. You adults at the front were goners for sure."

One proud achievement? The opening of our new learning centre in 2011. This building has allowed our years 3-6 students to learn in modern classrooms, it has given staff the flexibility to open up the classrooms and team teach and allowed our students to learn from each other. Our years 5/6 students have greater independence to access hot lunches in our kitchen area and generally have greater responsibility for their own learning. The active learning centre has given us a space where we can conduct whole school assemblies, performances etc which is vastly different from the Monday morning assemblies we used to hold outside, in the hot sun or wild winter weather.

Growing up? I grew up on a dairy farm at Cooriemungle. I was one of 14 children, ten brothers and three sisters. With so many of us, Christmas was always a huge event. Nana and Pa always made their way from Melbourne and we would all sit around the Christmas tree and eagerly await for the presents to be given out. After that, we would all sit around several tables to a hot lunch always prepared by Mum.

Family? I have four children - Rebecca has four children and lives in Glen Waverley, Jacob is a physiotherapist at Physio Freedom, Sam runs his own business - Monk Ag Services - and Nathan is studying at Federation University, Ballarat.

Football team? Western Bulldogs.

In ten years, seriously? I am sure I will still be in education somewhere. Eventually, I would like to become involved with tutoring student teachers.

In ten years, not so seriously? It would be nice to think that I would be retired, travelling the world.



Clare with Year 6 students Mia Laurie (left) and Amie Smith

Health: Jeannine Creely



Current position: Chief executive officer, Cobden District Health Services.

Career so far? After acquiring an accounting degree in San Diego, California, United States, my first position was auditing public hospitals in Los Angeles. Then, financial management roles in Los Angeles County's property tax department, alcohol and drugs programs and finally the probation department until I moved to Australia in 1999.

Now, I have worked in every southwest community ie Warrnambool, Terang, Timboon, Camperdown and finally Cobden!

Growing up? I grew up in San Diego, California, USA, which was no different to a Melbourne suburb. We were a small family - one older brother. I moved from Los Angeles to Timboon in 1999 - a big difference.

Hobbies and interests? My 10 year-old daughter is my focus outside of work. Our family likes to camp when time permits. I also enjoy craftwork of many varieties when I have some spare time. My daughter and I also share an interest in playing musical instruments (piano, violin and cello).

One funny story? At the age of 33, I learned to drive on a different side of the car and the left side of the road! Early in my time here, when I was a bit distracted, I might accidentally pull out onto the wrong (right) side! I am pretty good now!

One frustration? Not enough time in the day to achieve all I would like to achieve in my job.

One proud achievement? Personal - moving to Australia and establishing a life here.

Family? I am married to Joseph Creely and we have a daughter, Jessica. Joseph works in agriculture contracting.

Favourite TV show? Downton Abbey. Otherwise, I like to watch movies.

In ten years, seriously? Hopefully, I'll be alive and well and supporting my daughter through university.

In ten years, not so seriously? Anything that does not involve politics!

Retail: Karen McConachy



Current position? With husband Andrew, proprietor of Cobden Authorised Newsagency.

Career so far? Worked at ANZ Bank Colac 1985-1997. Andrew and I purchased and operated the Maffra Motor Inn 2001-2004. In 2005, we purchased the Cobden Newsagency.

Schooling? Colac South West Primary followed by Colac Technical School. My mother was horrified that I wanted to go to what, in her day, used to be a "boys' school". Even worse, to follow a music program that I was hoping would lead to a career in music.

Hobbies and interests? Haven't had time for such frivolities for a long time. However, would hopefully in the future, have time to return to my music, golf and catch-up on some serious reading.

One funny/embarrassing story about Karen McConachy? What happens away, stays away.

Best thing about working at the newsagency? The customers. Our aim is to make sure that a visit to our shop is an enjoyable experience and that most people walk out of the shop laughing - not always possible but that is our aim.

One proud achievement? My two sons. They have become terrific young gentlemen with very strong values and wicked senses of humour - not sure where they got that from?

One thing you're working on? In this job, you learn on a daily basis. There is always something I can improve on or change. On a personal level, I am trying to tick as many items off my bucket list as possible, preferably before it's too late!

Growing up? Started life in rural Birregurra then moved to the thriving metropolis of Colac. I have one sister and one brother. I am the oldest.

Family? My parents have become grey nomads, traipsing around Australia at any given opportunity, spending my inheritance willy-nilly! My two boys are both at Mercy Regional College in years 9 and 10.

In ten years, seriously? I don't make plans. They always get ruined!

In ten years, not so seriously? Working four days a week, playing golf one day a week and going away every other weekend to see and do something new.

COBDEN CALENDAR

Friday 29th August:
6pm Combined Services Club Dinner, Cobden Golf Club.

Monday 1st September:
7.30pm Progressing Cobden meeting, Heytesbury Room. All welcome.

Monday 15th September:
7.30pm CopRice Cobden Spring Festival meeting, Heytesbury Room. All welcome.

Senior Citizens' Hall:
Bowls 1pm Mondays. **Cards** 1pm Mondays, Thursdays, Saturdays. **Hoy** 1.30pm first Saturday of the month.