



SURVEYS SHOW SUPPORT FOR COBDEN BUSINESSES

Results of a customer survey coordinated by the Cobden Business Network were generally very supportive of the town's retailers and tradespeople, with 286 responses received from Cobden and district residents.

"It came through loud and clear that people want to shop in Cobden," CBN convenor Trevor Clarke said yesterday. "But they explained specific situations why they couldn't and they provided constructive suggestions about how businesses can improve their service."

Significantly, more than 50% of the surveys were completed by people in the 60+ age bracket.

"That probably reflects our age demographic but it would have been great to receive more responses from our younger people," Mr Clarke said.

"At our September meeting, we decided to read through the responses and return in November with recommendations to address the constructive comments," he said.

"We don't want all the good work to be filed away without positive actions coming out of it all."

Copies of all survey comments have been distributed to CBN members.

SURVEY - IN SUMMARY

- 286 survey responses
- More than 50% in 60+ age-group
- Less than 15% in the under 40 age-group
- More than 33% in the 40-60 age-group
- 75% respondents female
- 65% were Cobden residents
- 32% lived within 20km of Cobden
- 3% lived more than 20km from Cobden

Greatest local market coverage: Newsagent, Post Office, Bakery, Trade, Groceries, Hardware . . .

Smallest local market coverage: Clothing, Accounting, Petrol, Vehicle Maintenance, Gifts, Legal . . .

Buying Online: Clothing 18, Electronic/Computer 13 . . .

Why Online? Cheaper, Quality, Availability, Wider range . . .

Undoubtedly, a preference to shop in Cobden because . . .

- Very friendly, helpful town
- Kids' need work
- Prices can be cheaper than bigger centres
- If we don't, the town will die
- Great service and ease of parking

Undoubtedly, a preference to shop in Cobden but . . .

- Working elsewhere is an influence on where you shop
- Old relationships with retailers and professional people determines where you do business
- Poor service and attitude are detractors
- We need a quality fruit and vegetable shop
- Unavailability of products or sizes or . . .

- Can't purchase at a closed shop (or bank)
- Prices too high – be as competitive as possible
- Availability of white goods/electronics an issue
- Sometimes feel judged

Constructive suggestions:

- Greet us with a smile
- Be more proactive and creative
- Shopping should be an experience – learn from other places
- Better facilities for kids
- Be flexible with open times
- Work together to provide goods and services
- Family footwear shop would be an asset
- More seniors' card friendly businesses or senior discounts
- Clothes shop for older people

Weekends and public holidays:

- While it would be good to have more businesses open, we would need to support them
- Businesses need a break too
- High cost of employees makes it difficult
- Work together to ensure something is open – good for tourism and visitors
- Provide deals on these days
- We have to send visitors out of town
- Availability of fuel has made many people happy

Trading hours: General satisfaction but perhaps . . .

- More hardware hours on weekends
- Butcher hours extend for 9-5 workers

Where we shop . . .

	Cam	Col	Wb	Other	Cob	Total	Cob %
Groceries	15	5	6	1	253	280	90
Fruit/Veg	19	11	8	2	234	274	85
Meat	14	8	21	12	224	279	80
Clothing	9	12	121	47	64	253	25
Hardware	3	5	14	13	232	267	87
Petrol	95	6	24	26	115	266	43
Vehicle Maint	28	24	46	45	118	261	45
Hair/Beauty	29	9	24	23	172	257	67
Chemist	16	4	6	9	241	276	87
Newsagent	7		3	1	267	278	96
Meals/Snacks	22	3	13	21	158	217	73
Post Office	6	1		3	264	274	96
Veterinary	20	5		14	149	188	79
Gifts	13	4	61	19	125	222	56
Alcohol	8	5	7	5	152	177	86
Accountant	23	22	34	47	70	196	36
Trade	7	1	3	8	214	233	92
Legal	22	15	32	24	118	211	56
Farming	5	2	3	10	77	97	79
Bakery	6	6	3	5	245	265	92
Banking	8		1	3	38	50	76
Real Estate	1	1	1	2	18	23	78

KEY: Cam = Camperdown Col = Colac
Wb = Warrnambool Cob = Cobden
Other = Other towns or online
Cob % = Percentage of total consumers

COBDEN CALENDAR	
October 5th:	1.30pm Hoy afternoon. Senior Citizens' Centre, \$2 and small gift.
October 7th:	7.30pm Progressing Cobden meeting, Heytesbury Room.
October 14th:	1.30pm Senior Citizens' Birthday.
October 18th-20th:	CopRice Cobden Spring Festival.
October 29th:	6.30pm WEL Group "T @ Thommo's".



Peter Rhodes (above) checks out the shirts and Andrea Wright (below) of Simpson shops for new summer gear at Reicha's Drapery where there is a 50% off sale on all winter fashion this week.



Business of the Month



CBN convenor Trevor Clarke presents the September Business of the Month award to the proprietors of Magnum Welders Graeme and Helen McLaren

Magnum Welders

Magnum Welders was established in February 2007 as a home-based eBay business by Graeme and Helen McLaren. They started selling on eBay as Ghan Global Imports, GHAN being the first initials of family members Graeme, Helen, Andrew and Nicole.

After attending a professional eBay sellers conference in Sydney it was advised to have your eBay name reflect the products that you sell. That was when Graeme came up with the name and logo for Magnum Welders. It wasn't long before they were platinum-level power-sellers, the highest ranking seller on eBay.

At this time, Graeme was a self-employed welding contractor at Fonterra Cobden and Helen an office manager at Cobden Milking Machines. They were soon selling Magnum Welders inverter MIG, TIG and arc welders and air plasma cutters Australia-wide and, in 2010, they built their warehouse in the industrial estate in Cobden.

Four years after working at two businesses, Graeme left Fonterra and he and Helen took Magnum Welders on the road attending agricultural field days and swap meets throughout Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and New South Wales. Now in their third year, they have many customers who report that their welder or plasma cutter is still going strong.

Both Graeme and Helen believe in good old-fashioned service. They believe you should receive a good quality machine, for a good price and be reliable and repairable. They both dislike the disposable society where manufacturers encourage you to 'throw it away and buy a new one.'

This year Magnum Welders is fitting out the office at their warehouse in Station Street, Cobden. Graeme and Helen have used as many Cobden businesses in the building process as possible - electrician, plumber, painter, plasterer, cabinet-maker and carpet-layer. Helen hopes to move her home office to the warehouse in October.

Ten things you may not have known about this business:

1. Graeme couldn't use a computer when they started their computer-based eBay business.
2. Helen didn't know a thing about welders (except that their overalls were smelly to wash).
3. Magnum Welders is their own brand.
4. They import direct from the manufacturer and sell direct to the public at wholesale prices.
5. Son Andrew worked in the office during 2011.
6. All repairs and service are performed onsite by Graeme.
7. Magnum Welders attend more than 20 field days a year.
8. Helen set up the eBay website, Magnum Welders website and prints all advertising brochures herself.
9. Before the warehouse was built, they nearly had to move the kids out of their bedrooms every time they received a shipment of welders.
10. Graeme can now use a computer and Helen knows all about welders but has never used one.