

The last straw for waste

A MELBOURNE business community is leading the way in a program of environmentally conscious initiatives by banning thousands of single-use straws each day.

Sunshine Business Association launched the Straws Suck campaign last night, with an aim to educate shoppers and the 420 businesses in the area to move away from single-use items. It is working with Brimbank council and The Friends of Kororoit Creek to change patterns of use.

BUSINESS OWNER
CLAIRE HEANEY



Association president Carson Luk said the move was partly in response to feedback from customers that they would like to see less single-use items in the precinct.

"Customers want to be more environmentally con-

scious and we want more customers," Mr Luk said.

"We are starting the focus small on single-use plastic straws, eventually branching out to single-use plastic bags, single-use take away containers and single-use drink containers."

Mr Luk said a 12-month educational campaign would kick off this week.

The association has bought 80,000 paper straws and dispensers for use by 80 cafes and restaurants in Sunshine's cen-

tral business area as an interim measure. The association surveyed businesses and the number of straws that each said they used a day varied from 200 to 500.

It said if those were multiplied over a week, anything from 16,000 to 40,000 straws were used weekly in Sunshine.

"We believe that through ongoing education around sustainability to traders and subsequently our customers, there is an opportunity to enhance the attractiveness of our

Sunshine, become sustainable while also positively affecting business profits," Mr Luk said.

At last night's launch, Friends of Kororoit members spoke of the effect of rubbish on wildlife in the nearby creek.

Decals reading "say no to plastic straws" will be part of the conversation.

Friends of Kororoit Creek bin wraps on 100 rubbish bins in and around Sunshine are being installed.

Local children, artists, residents and families of Sunshine

have painted 88 panels telling their anti-litter, anti-plastic message and how plastic spoils the Kororoit Creek.

Jessica Gerger, from Friends of Kororoit Creek, who managed the art project, said it was a community effort.

"The hope is that a message from perhaps a six year old asking people to reduce their plastic footprint or to use the bin for the planet's sake will make an impression," Ms Gerger said.

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ABOARD AWARDS TRAIN

CLAIRE HEANEY

DYNAMIC new Bellarine Peninsula dining train The Q Train and Bachelor headliner turned online fitness guru Sam Wood have been short-listed for this year's Telstra Business Awards.

They are among five finalists in the "emerging and energised" category for Victorian businesses.

A "social change maker" category for not-for-profits boasts the St Kilda Mums, Geelong Mums and Eureka Mums group, which was founded in 2009 by a group of five mums who wanted to support other mums struggling by re-homing quality baby goods.

Maree Pigdon Sewing Centre, near Geelong, which was a finalist last year, is among the five businesses short-listed for the "small and succeeding" category. Dolomiti electric cycles and giftware business Arlo & Co are also finalists.

Reid Stockfeeds, from Colbinabbin, located between Bendigo and Echuca, is among five finalists in the awards for medium-sized



Chef Greg Egan on the Q Train at Queenscliff. Picture: JAY TOWN

businesses. Telstra awards ambassador Vicki Brady said the short-listed finalists had been narrowed down from more than 10,000 nominations nationally.

"In the 26th year of the Telstra Business Awards, we are incredibly proud to be a longstanding supporter of small and medium business,"

she said. Ms Brady said to be named a finalist, businesses were assessed on a range of issues including innovation, operations, people and culture, marketing, social responsibility and financial management.

As part of the entry process, each business received a tailored Business

Benchmark Report. The report showed that five out of six businesses employed social media to source new customers.

More than eight out of 10 used technology to unlock new marketing opportunities.

"The awards program aims to support small and medium businesses by helping them to

analyse, evaluate and improve their operations and increase their networking opportunities through technology and innovation," she said.

Victorian winners will be announced on July 31 with national winners revealed on September 19.

telstrabusinessawards.com

Franchises face extra pressure

FRANCHISE Council of Australia head Bruce Billson has hit back at criticism of the sector, saying plenty of businesses fail but franchise failures face more scrutiny.

Mr Billson said market trends, consumer preferences, cost pressures and other issues affected every business.

"But if a big hardware or department store falters, these market trends and business pressures will be highlighted," he said.

"If it's a customer-facing franchise business, it is the brand or the franchise mode of entrepreneurship."

Mr Billson said quick service restaurants (QSR) were facing landlord pressures.

"Our QSR FCA members candidly tell me about punishing occupancy and operational costs, particularly in our larger shopping centres," he said.

"Those who have their business buzzing are rewarded with even higher rents."

Rivals to successful formats also pop up in many areas.

"Sometimes right across the same food hall; the whole delivery movement is also changing the face of quick service restaurants," Mr Billson said.

He made the comments at the QSR Detpak Conference and Awards last week.

China's economic 'aggression' through the lens of Trump

THE US is officially in a tit-for-tat trade war with China.

On June 18, US president Donald Trump stated this:

"On Friday, I announced plans for tariffs on \$50 billion worth of imports from China... However and unfortunately, China has determined that it will raise tariffs on \$50 billion worth of United States exports... Therefore, today, I directed the United States Trade Representative to identify \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods for additional tariffs... If China increases its tariffs yet again, we will meet that action by pursuing additional tariffs on another \$200 billion of goods."

It doesn't get much more tit-for-tat than that.



THE SHORT CUT
with ANDREW MACKEN

In response, the Chinese Commerce Ministry stated: "China will take actions to defend its interests" and that if the US releases a new tariffs list, then China is prepared to respond with "qualitative and quantitative" tools.

According to China analyst Bill Bishop, those "qualitative" measures may include more inspections, production delays, administrative penalties, encouragement to use non-US products and a nasty nationalist backlash against the US and its goods.

The ongoing breakdown in

the relationship between the US and China has been a key source of market volatility this year.

And there is now a strong argument to suggest the situation will get worse before it gets better. Why?

In the days following Mr Trump's announcement of new potential tariffs on Chinese imports, the White House Office of Trade and Manufacturing Policy released a damning and inflammatory report, titled: "How China's Economic Aggression Threatens the Technologies

and Intellectual Property of the United States and the World."

Sections of one paragraph give an accurate flavour of the tone and content of this explosive report:

"Chinese industrial policy seeks to 'introduce, digest, absorb, and re-innovate' technologies and intellectual property (IP) from around the world.

"This policy is carried out through: (A) State sponsored IP theft through physical theft, cyber-enabled espionage and theft, evasion of U.S. export control laws, and counterfeiting and piracy; (B) coercive and intrusive regulatory gambits to force technology transfer from foreign companies; (C) economic coercion through export restraints on critical raw

materials and monopoly purchasing power."

Now, irrespective of whether or not one agrees with this report, what appears undeniable is that the Trump Administration is readying for a serious fight.

And this report follows the strongly worded 2017 Report to Congress of the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, that has received bipartisan support in the US.

As a result of these actions, the probability that the Trump Administration backs down in the near-term is low.

So, will Beijing back down instead? The probability is also low, at least in the near-term. Chinese president Xi Jinping is planning for decades ahead, a period over which he effectively

cannot be contested or questioned. Mr Trump, on the other hand, has until November this year when the Democrats could potentially regain control of the House of Representatives.

Should the Democrats take control, we can all but be assured that the president's freedoms to pursue his aggressive style of diplomacy will be materially restricted.

Mr Xi knows this and will surely opt to wait it out, rather than back down.

And this means things could get worse before they get better.

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