

Ritchies proposal a win for all

The ideal outcome for Hastings Co-op members and staff has been delivered in the form of a partnership with Ritchies Stores Pty Ltd, which will restore the Co-op's financial sustainability, protect members' interests and secure IGA staff jobs.

Ritchies' offer to purchase the Co-op's four IGA supermarkets is "a pivotal point in the Co-op's history" according to Chair Gary Humphreys, which will significantly improve the Co-op's net asset position.

"This proposal is a win/win for members, staff, the local community and the future of the Co-op. It would put us in a strong financial position and pave the way for our 2024-27 Strategic Plan, which is all about enhancing member benefits and forging new alliances," he said.

Chief Executive Officer Nick de Groot said member feedback had clearly indicated that resolving the issue of financial losses relating to Sovereign Place IGA + Liquor was the Co-op's number one priority.

"Ritchies has the quality supply chain to deliver a great range and value at the checkout, and the capacity to really enhance the IGA stores. From our perspective, this proposal would stop the ongoing losses and secure the Co-op's future. The Ritchies offer, which is conditional on the sale of all four stores, is the perfect solution," he said.

"The power is now in member's hands, as active Shareholders will be asked to vote. You can help us make the change by voting in favour of the transaction."

Among the many benefits, Mr de Groot highlighted an improved offer in terms of price, service and member benefits, including price benchmarking with the majors, a Community Benefit Program, Christmas Club and seniors discount.

More detailed information and voting criteria can be found at www.hastingscoop.com.au/co-opfuture Hastings Co-op also invites Shareholders and Co-op 100 members to a meeting at Wauchope RSL Club at 5.30pm on July 31, where they will have the opportunity to hear directly from the Co-op Chair and CEO, ask questions and be informed before voting.

Ritchies Chief Executive Officer Fred Harrison said the two organisations may differ in size and scale, however, they share common values in regard to member discounts, customer service, community support and showcasing local producers.

"This is an amazing opportunity for us to expand on the Mid North Coast and deliver the Ritchies experience to the Hastings community," he said.

"We are committed to offering all existing staff employment contracts, being part of the local community and continuing the customer service experience to which you're accustomed. If you support this proposal, we look forward to a long and successful relationship with the Co-op and its members."

Ritchies is Australia's largest independent supermarket chain, with annual revenue of approximately \$1.4 billion. Ritchies has experienced substantial growth in recent years and is now on the Top 50 Australian Retailers list alongside the likes of retailing giants such as Kmart, Myer and Bunnings.

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