

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

12th September 2023

Mornington Island engages Outback Stores

Mornington Island's only grocery store and takeaway outlet are under new management, the store's directors announced today.

Deputy Chairperson of Gununamanda Limited, Roxanne Thomas, said Outback Stores had been awarded a three-year management agreement to manage the store and lift standards after a select tender process was conducted.

'We have undertaken a major restructure in the last 12 months, and Outback Stores have agreed to work with the directors to improve our store and we welcome them to Mornington Island,' Ms Thomas said.

The store is in the town of Gununa on Mornington Island, the largest of the North Wellesley Islands in the Gulf of Carpentaria, 125 kilometres north-west of Burke and 444 kilometres from Mt Isa.

The community of about 1000, about 80% are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders, is serviced by five weekly flights from Mount Isa and Cairns and a weekly barge freight service.

"Outback Stores was selected as the successful tenderer due to its retail expertise and successful track record over the last 15 years in assisting remote communities," Ms Thomas said. "They operate as a not-for-profit, provide a range of support services and return all profits to the community."

CEO Michael Borg, said Outback Stores was founded in 2006 to improve the health of Indigenous Australians living in remote Australia by addressing nutrition-related health problems, unreliable food supplies and poor management practices associated with many remote stores. The company operates 52 stores in the Northern Territory, South Australia, Western Australia, New South Wales and now Queensland.

"Our priority will be to get the Mornington Island store back on its feet, ensure people have access to healthy food and provide a good range of produce at affordable prices. In particular, we will look at reducing prices on staples such as milk, bread, potatoes and carrots," he said.

The store has operated successfully since 1974, but experienced financial issues due to inexperienced management that was in place prior to November 2022. The Queensland Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Partnerships appointed advisory firm Grant Thornton to work with Gununamanda's directors to restructure the store and ensure food security for the community. Outback Stores was selected on 17 August and commenced management this week.

"We've spent quality time with the directors to come to an agreement that suits their business," Mr Borg said.

"The new store manager, Tyler Sandercock, and local team are on the ground. They have rolled up their sleeves and look forward to working in partnership with the directors of the store," he said.

Photo:

1. Deputy Chairperson of Gununamanda Limited, Roxanne Thomas with store manager Tyler Sandercock

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