



# Career of body building is still fun for Laurie

By CASEY NEILL

LAURIE 'Macca' McCoy started his apprenticeship with Norden Body Works in Dandenong at age 15.

He's still there 40 years later and couldn't be happier.

"The brain's just got that track - get up in the morning, shower, hop in the car and it comes here," he said.

"I still enjoy it, so that's the main thing.

"I'm production manager here now and I have been for 20 years.

"I love hands-on and I still get hands-on."

Macca, whose family has lived in Dandenong for 115 years, applied for a job at Norden on advice from a friend who was working there.

He met with company founder Ron Anson and his father Walter.

"In those days you brought your parents with you and had an interview," he said.

"I was lucky enough to get the job."

Many of his colleagues have worked alongside him for more than 20 years.

Macca's son Kane, 20, has

worked on the factory floor for just over a year.

"As long as you can smile and have a laugh and you've got good people you work with, I think it's a big part of it," he said.

"You spend more time at your job than you do at home with your family, over your working life."

Ron co-founded the company in 1959 to build commercial transport and truck bodies.

"We've had some tough years," he said.

During the late '80s staff worked a four-day week to avoid redundancies.

"There's been many times when it got to 12 o'clock Friday and I'd think 'Hmm, we need some work for next week'," Ron said.

"We didn't have anything.

"Then somebody walks in the door and orders and tipping body at half past two, and saves the bacon."

Macca said many people who encountered hard times threw their hands up in the air.

"Ron hasn't done that," he said.

Ron said market gardeners with small trucks were his main clients at first. A presentation

about his job at a Dandenong Rotary meeting 30 years ago secured the company's current main income source.

The Dandenong Hospital CEO approached him after the meeting and asked him to fit out a disability van.

"I didn't know what he was talking about. I said yes anyway," he said.

Ron's daughter Wendy worked in administration for 30 years and his son Robert now runs the business after coming on board about 35 years ago.

Two of Robert's five sons now also work there - Aaron, 25, is studying a bachelor of business and working on the workshop floor and Ryan, 20, is a contract manager.

"It makes you feel very proud, actually," Ron said.

"Fifty-odd years ago I never dreamt that this would all happen.

"Fifty-odd years ago it was a matter of getting enough work to open the doors each day."

Ron retired about 15 years ago but, at age 85, still visits twice a week to keep an eye on the business he built - and dedicated 56 years of his life to.

Laurie McCoy in a converted van. 133952

Picture: GARY SISSONS

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BUSINESS NORDEN BODY WORKS

P23  
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2017

## BUSINESS SOUTH-EAST

# Hands-on Ron our best

By Casey Neill

It's hard to find a more humble Dandenong businessman than Ron Anson.

The 87-year-old accepted the Greater Dandenong Corporate Citizen of the Year Award at the council's Australia Day Festival in Dandenong Park on Thursday 26 January.

His son Robert announced the news to the family on Boxing Day.

"I couldn't believe it. I'm still finding it difficult to believe," Ron said.

"I don't know how they've done the selection.

"We've been in Dandenong for just on 60 years and I think it might just be recognition for us being there for so long and doing so much.

"Over that length of time, lots of things happen."

The 'we've' he referred to was transport company Norden Group, which he co-founded in 1959.

The company has since trained more than 90 apprentices and supported the Jobs for Dandenong Taskforce.

"He's always maintained that if we don't train the youth, we don't have the tradesmen," daughter Wendy Anson-Moseley said.

She's worked with him for more than 30 years, and Robert now runs Norden after joining Ron there more than 35 years ago.

"It became another family - the Norden family," Wendy said.

Ron retired at age 70 but is still a regular at the Bennet Street factory.

"He loves to see what they're building and what they're doing," Wendy said.

"He greets all the new staff."

Ron said he goes in "because I've got a lot of friends there". Grandsons Aaron and Ryan are also among the employees.

"It's pretty good," he said.

"It makes you think that it will go on forever."



Norden Group founder Ron Anson. 164172

Picture: GARY SISSONS

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"I didn't know what he was talking about. I said yes anyway," he said.

He's been involved with the Rotary Club of

Dandenong since 1979, but is planning to retire - if his fellow members will let him leave.

"I'm still a paid-up member until July," he said.

"I actually did resign before Christmas. Now I don't know - nobody wants me to resign.

"At 87, going on 88, and I can't do anything physically there to help raising funds. I don't want to be just a burden."

Over the years he's also supported charities and philanthropic causes including Wallara, Yooralla, Hanover and Relay for Life.

## Jobs in focus

A mayoral taskforce will tackle youth unemployment in Greater Dandenong.

At their Monday 23 January meeting, councillors agreed to establish a group to develop an action plan outlining a localised and co-ordinated response to high youth unemployment and disengagement rates in the municipality.

The Mayoral Youth Employment Taskforce will include government, service providers, agencies, education, local business and industry and will meet every two months for the next year.

Key objectives will include a stocktake of existing services and examples of good outcomes and best practice, identifying gaps, and considering options and initiatives to address barriers.

"I think we can all remember our first job," Cr Sean O'Reilly said.

"While in retrospect it may not have been that great a job, it was exciting because we were starting our adult life.

"Too many of our youths have not had that experience, to engage in adult life and have a sense of purpose."

The taskforce followed a report into how the council could improve employment for both young people and asylum seekers living in the municipality.

At their 12 December council meeting, councillors agreed to meet with the Greater Dandenong Council Asylum Seeker and Refugee Advisory Committee to discuss strategies for improved employment outcomes for asylum seekers.

The discussion will include establishing ongoing links between local employers and the not-for-profit organisations providing asylum seekers with employment and training.

NORDEN  
GROUP  
Ron Anson