

YOUNG UNCLES

FOOD & DRINK



An emerging cafe culture

BERT Glinka and Brendan D'Amelio are bringing Melbourne cafe culture into the heart of Dandenong. And the Young Uncles pair is being rewarded for their ingenuity, receiving cash from City of Greater Dandenong to help the Thomas Street eatery thrive.

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Picture: GARY SISSONS

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UNCLES SMALL GOODS
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BUSINESS SOUTH-EAST

And Bob's your uncle

By CASEY NEILL

BERT Glinka has been coming to Uncles Smallgoods in Dandenong since he was a kid.

Now the 27-year-old and business partner Brendan D'Amelio, 29, own the place.

They last week received an \$8000 City of Greater Dandenong Economic Development Unit (EDU) business grant to grow the 127 Thomas Street establishment. They are continuing the traditions former owners and husband and wife team Marian and Nora started 20 years ago, but have added Young Uncles Coffee and Sandwich Bar to the storefront.

"They were really happy that we popped up," Mr Glinka said.

"Business was going really well for them. When they started thinking about retirement they lost the passion that they had. They're glad to see it with some fresh life now."

The Young Uncles have been learning the ropes since they took over.

"We didn't actually focus on changing anything or growing, just basically learning all the processes," Mr Glinka said.

Some things won't change.



Bert Glinka, Mayor Jim Mementi and
Brendan D'Amelio. 22745
Picture: GARY SISSONS

"The way we make our smallgoods, everything's done by hand," he said. "The community's been quite supportive of us and happy that someone's stepped up. They want to see the quality stay the way it has been."

And Marian is keeping a close eye on things to ensure that continues.

"He's here once or twice a week to help us out with any issues or questions," Mr Glinka said.

It was Uncles' traditional sausages that hooked Mr Glinka as a child, and it was this product he and Mr D'Amelio

took to festivals in a van - their first foray into the food world. They served up Polish sausages with sauerkraut and pickles in brioche buns.

"At our first festival we sold 1200 sausages," he said. "It really propelled us to take this on."

Up to 300 people come through Young Uncles' door each day.

"It's everything that we enjoy about Melbourne cafe culture and food, here in Dandenong," Mr Glinka said. "We just wanted to fill a gap, have quality speciality coffee and create something

that hasn't been here before."

They use the ham, bacon and sausage they smoke on the premises and source other ingredients locally.

"We feel connected to the community. Our parents have shopped at Dandenong Market forever," Mr Glinka said. "We like what's happening now with Thomas Street."

He said the area struggled during recent construction.

"Now it's getting some new life and we want to just fly a flag in terms of the cafe world," he said. "We want to encourage other people to do the same thing, make Dandenong a nicer place to be."

Young Uncles has focused on healthy menu options, but has kept Wednesday Wieners - "Polish sausage in a bun with the option of sauerkraut".

Coffee is a big part of the Young Uncles experience and the council's financial support has boosted demand for the brew. They now have the coffee machine they always wanted.

"By buying this new coffee machine we've been able to pump out the coffee that we want," Mr Glinka said. "We've seen a direct link with more people coming in for coffee."