

UNIVERSAL SHOWER
BASE

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DANDENONG

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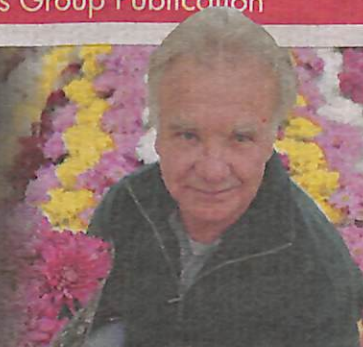
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Shower of cash

By CASEY NEILL

A DANDENONG small business determined to keep its manufacturing in Australia has been buoyed by a \$195,000 boost.

The Investing in Manufacturing Technology (IMT) grant will help Universal Shower Base grow four-fold over the next three years.

Marketing manager Adrian Barr said it was great to see the State Government supporting small business.

"It would be fantastic to see the financial community also support local manufacturers and not reward those that import," he said.

"It would be great to see an emphasis on the financial community getting behind local business to grow and employ more people."

Manufacturing Minister David Hodggett last Thursday said the cash would help the family business to buy and install new cold moulding machinery and infrastructure at its Elliott Road facility.

"This will increase exports by more than \$1 million, create 51 new jobs and enable 13 existing employees to transition to higher duties," Mr Hodggett said.

Project manager Rebecca Lowery's father Richard started the business in 1992.

"My father originally used to manufacture out of a shed on his farm in Tooradin," she said.

"Then the business grew and moved to a factory in Dandenong. I started working with my father in 2003."

Ms Lowery said the team was excited to receive the cash, and hoped this would be just the start of their growth – including a future in exporting.

"We spent about seven months putting all the information together," she said.

"It's a lot of work. Halfway through you do question whether it's worth it."

Mr Barr said the company had a unique product used to save time and money.

"The shower base is a one piece, perfectly-formed floor which includes the correct fall and the waste outlet as one complete piece – not the sum of different parts and different trades," he said.

"We reduce the trade requirement and we speed up the creation time."

"So rather than taking four or five days to create a shower floor, our shower floor is installed in a morning and can be prepared for tiling in the same day."

"We remove that labour cost and that labour downtime and we get people back into their bathrooms faster."

Mr Barr said the grant was game-changing.

"Because we have a unique problem, where we've got a high demand but a low output," he said.

"Now our output's going to increase to meet demand and beyond."

He said the business was determined to continue to manufacture in Australia.

"We're a small, privately owned business so we're reasonably dynamic and don't have the constraints of the corporates – they have a tendency to look outside their manufacturing base," he said.

"We're conscious of the desire to grow our team internally."

"Most of the guys here have been with the business for quite some time. They like what they do."

"It's a great team environment."

Universal Shower Base was among 20 businesses to receive \$3.6 million in grants under the IMT program's latest round.

"Victoria is the hub of Australia's manufacturing industry, but to meet the challenge of competitive international markets manufacturers must look to increasing investment in new technology to remain competitive," Mr Hodggett said.

For more information about IMT grants visit www.business.vic.gov.au/imt



Nigel Frew at work. 119483
Picture: STEWART CHAMBERS