

# \$18 million Pactum investment

By Geoff Adams

Pactum Dairy is well ahead of its forecast growth curve and is investing another \$18 million in its Shepparton production facility.

Less than a year after opening the \$40 million UHT milk plant, the company is taking advantage of spare capacity built into the original plant buildings.

Installation of new filling lines, processing lines and associated infrastructure will enable the company to process an additional 50 million litres of UHT milk per year, for a total of 200 million litres of UHT per year.

Pactum Dairy has a supply agreement with a major Chinese milk distributor and a significant proportion of its product is exported.

The investment will also add a

further 14 full-time jobs and the company will also develop warehouse and distribution facilities on neighboring land it has just bought.

Pactum Dairy is a joint venture between Australian Stock Exchange-listed company Freedom Foods Group and Kyabram's Australian Consolidated Milk.

"We see these investments as long-term, we want to be a world-class facility," Freedom Foods director Michael Perich said.

"We are moving at quite a quick rate — that puts pressure on the operations, but it is good pressure."

The Victorian Government is contributing \$1 million to expansion through the Goulburn Valley Industry and Infrastructure Fund.

Victorian Deputy Premier Peter Ryan had not expected to be back so soon after the official opening, but with the growth in export

output and jobs he was happy for the government to be called upon again.

"Our reputation for producing high quality, clean, green dairy products, including UHT milk, make our products a must for the growing Asian middle-class. Pactum Dairy Group has been able to capitalise on our great reputation, with 75 per cent of its existing sales occurring overseas," he said.

Mr Ryan also announced \$75 000 to support the relocation of Peter Stoitse Transport from shared facilities at Tatura Milk Industries to a new site on Benalla Rd.

Peter Stoitse Transport milk division general manager Barry Thomas said the \$750 000 investment to deliver the transport depot and truck maintenance facility would also create 12 new jobs.



Doing well . . . Installation of new processing lines will enable Pactum to process an additional 50 million litres of UHT milk per year.

## Black Jack's story is revisited

Former Stanhope farmer and deputy prime minister Sir John McEwen may well be the most prominent leader the National Party can celebrate, former parliamentarian Bruce Lloyd believes.

Memories of "Black Jack" McEwen have been rekindled with the re-release of his autobiography by the Page Research Centre.

Former member for Murray Bruce Lloyd said Mr McEwen was one National Party leader who had achieved political recognition not just in rural areas but in broader national circles.

Mr McEwen became the 18th prime minister after the sudden disappearance of prime minister Harold Holt.

"With the recognition of the late Gough Whitlam and the promotion of Robert Menzies by (former prime minister) John Howard, I think it's appropriate the National Party acknowledge their own heroes and leaders," Mr Lloyd said.

The Page Research Centre has arranged the republishing of the book, *His Story*, in hardback at a cost of about \$35.

Mr Lloyd believes the term "Black jack" probably came about because of Mr McEwen's serious demeanour and darker features.

"He had an imposing presence, similar to Gough Whitlam, and he



Man of mark . . . McEwen's driver Col McGregor, with a bust of Sir John McEwen unveiled at Stanhope in 2006.

was always determined and definite in what he wanted to achieve."

He said Sir John had enjoyed loyalty in his united supporters and was able to exercise considerable political strength.

Mr Lloyd believes the protectionist stance may have developed from the need to nurture what was, pre World War II, a relatively small manufacturing industry in a country with a low population base.

However, he said one of Sir John's achievements which should be acknowledged was a sensitive post-war trade agreement with

Japan which was in the rural industry's favour, and a trade agreement with New Zealand.

Mr Lloyd said he had also promoted the first type of farm management deposits known as drought bonds in a financial environment which was not particularly supportive of farming.

Sir John was a dairy farmer at Tongala before he moved to Stanhope where he switched to beef and sheep. Active in farmer organisations, he was first elected in the federal seat of Echuca in 1934 and in later elections served in the Indi and then Murray seats.

He promoted trade protection for agriculture and exercised considerable influence over successive federal governments.

Sir John died in 1980, in Melbourne, aged 80.

■ A regional re-launch of the book will be held at McEwen Park Place, Stanhope on Friday, October 31 at 1.30 pm, with Deputy Premier Peter Ryan as guest speaker. A spokesperson for the Page Research Centre said there were only 500 copies being printed and they were expected to sell quickly. A reprint may be considered.

## River level fluctuating with enviro releases

The Goulburn River level has lifted in recent weeks with the first spring environmental flow release from Goulburn Weir.

The flows reached about 8500 ML/day on October 20 and will return to minimum flows by November 4, according to Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority.

The authority's Geoff Earl said the first fresh aimed to help re-establish vegetation on the lower river banks and improve water bug populations that native fish feed on.

The second spring environmental flow release from Goulburn Weir is due to begin on Saturday, November 15. The flow will rise to a peak of up to 8500 ML/day by Wednesday, November 19 at Murchison, and return to minimum flows by Tuesday, November 25.

"This second fresh is aimed at stimulating golden perch (yellowbelly) spawning and will be finished before the Murray cod season opens," Mr Earl said.

These flows will occur at McCoys Bridge about four days after being released from Goulburn Weir. The freshes will see river heights in the Goulburn rise to a maximum of 4 m at Murchison, 5.5 m at Shepparton and 5 m at McCoys Bridge as measured at each local gauge.

The CMA advised that flow levels and timing may vary depending on weather conditions and other system demands.



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