

Gongs for greens

Sustainability shortlist announced

PROGRESSIVE businesses looking to trim their bottom line, improve productivity and reduce their environmental footprint have been shortlisted for the prestigious Premier's Sustainability Awards.

Thirty finalists have been selected from a growing field of those small businesses who see the benefit in going green.

Sustainability Victoria chief executive Stan Krpan said the awards uncovered the talent and enthusiasm Victorians had for protecting their environment and thinking creatively about new sustainable business models.

"These awards represent Victoria's highest recognition for sustainability, and acknowledge leadership, innova-



tion and achievement," Mr Krpan said.

"Each finalist should be congratulated for improving sustainable outcomes across business, government and within the community."

Mr Krpan said the awards were a beacon for businesses, encouraging innovation, resourcefulness and creativity.

"These awards encourage innovation across all sectors, with a focus on delivering a triple bottom line — providing environmental, economic and social benefits to Victoria."

Melbourne premium furniture maker Jordan Australia is a finalist in the small and medium business category.

The family-owned business, which manufactures in Mount Waverley and retails in Richmond, factors in environmental, social and economic considerations throughout the total life cycle of its products.

Jordan has globally recognised certification that its

wood-based products are handled and manufactured under regulations that support responsible forest management.

Market Forces has been named a finalist in the innovative product or service category thanks to its Super Switch program, which seeks to empower people as to where their superannuation nest eggs are being invested.

Super Switch tracks the fossil fuel investments of superannuation products and companies and enables members to look up their fund and find out if their money is invested in fossil fuels.

Super Switch says an estimated \$1 trillion is invested in managed superannuation funds on behalf of millions of Australians, but many people do not know where their contributions are going.

Environmentally friendly dental clinic Beaconsfield Dental has installed 60 solar panels and planted 500 plants, as well as installing water tanks for toilet flushing, LED lighting and double glazing.

Solvup Reverse Logistics, which hosts a cloud-based technology used by retail stores and call centres, aims to repair faulty goods to keep them out of landfill.

The award winners will be announced on October 20. claire.heaney@news.com.au

HUGE SME SUPER SHOCK LOOMING

CLAIRE HEANEY

MORE than a third of small and medium business owners say they are not contributing to their superannuation.

Just over half of them, aged under 50, do not have a retirement plan even though 45 per cent believe they will need \$1 million to retire comfortably.

The findings are based on a survey of 380 business owners as part of the monthly MYOB Snapshot of small and medium businesses.

"Our research shows that SMEs believe they will need around \$1 million to retire comfortably, yet 54 per cent of respondents will not have saved enough when the time comes," MYOB chief executive Tim Reed said.

Mr Reed said the findings were in line with new research by the Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia.

It found that a quarter of sole traders, who are small business operators, did not have any superannuation.

It also revealed that only 27 per cent of this group, aged in their 60s, had more than \$100,000 of super.

"It's surprising to see that superannuation is not top of mind for all small business operators, given many contribute regularly to their employer's super," Mr Reed said.

He said it was clear that business operators knew what they should be doing but were not doing it.

The MYOB monthly survey also showed 54 per cent of small and medium enterprises were waiting more than six months to be paid. Even worse, seven in 10 said they had written off outstanding debts.

FOODIE'S ELECTRIC DREAMS REALISED

CLAIRE HEANEY

RESTAURATEUR Minh Chu was looking for a rest after running a popular restaurant in the middle of Victoria St's Little Vietnam for 17 years.

After he sold Binh Minh, Mr Minh took a year off. "I needed a project and thought I better go back to work and earn some money," he said.

But he did not want to return to the seven-day-a-week, midmorning-to-early-hours demands of a restaurant.

"Running a full restaurant is full on," Mr Minh said.

"It requires a lot more staff. With a restaurant you always have to be on and after everyone has gone home you have to wash the dishes."

Over some months the idea of Mister Minh was formed. He decided to build a commercial kitchen to provide takeaway and catering services.

"I then went around looking for people to build an app. I ended up talking to a lot of people and having a lot of meetings," he said.

"My idea was that you could be in the park and order my food and it would be brought to you. But I was a bit reluctant because it was a lot of money and I was not sure it would work."

Mr Minh found an empty shop in Bridge Rd, Richmond, and as the plans were being approved signed up as an Uber driver.

"I did it so I could earn some money and it was a great way to improve my English because I wasn't engaging in as much conversation," he said.

"I also wanted to see what



Minh Chu shows off his Vietnamese culinary delights and electric bikes. Picture: TONY GOUGH

was going on in Melbourne so it was good for research."

At the same time he had an idea to buy some bikes and employ local youth to deliver the food.

"I love Australia and love Australian people so I want to do something that gives me a bit more purpose and that is why I invested in the electric

bikes so there was an opportunity for the kids to ride the bikes to earn some money and (spend) less time on computers," he said.

While this was all in play, Uber was working on its newest disruptive platform, UberEATS.

Mr Minh soon realised it could be the main platform

for delivering his food. Although it is early days, the majority of his orders are delivered by Uber.

Some people call up and collect their orders, which is 10 per cent cheaper than delivery.

Mr Minh said he hopes to complement the Uber delivery with his fleet of

delivery bikes next year. At the moment customers do not pay for their Uber deliveries but a flat \$5 fee will apply at some point.

UberEATS's delivery partners, or drivers, receive an \$11 delivery fee plus \$2 per kilometre.

Uber takes a 25 per cent service fee on the gross fare.

Valuable accounts

SMALL business know-how will be boosted by an expanded relationship between the Institute of Public Accountants and Deakin University.

The collaboration will see the establishment of the Small and Medium Enterprise Research Centre at the university's business school.

"The research will drive applied academic research in relation to small and medium enterprises with expanded reference to the growth of SMEs and their respective trade links globally," IPA chief executive Andrew Conway said.

Prof Conway, in a speech to celebrate the centenary of the Institute of Financial Accountants at the House of Commons this week, said the IPA and the IFA joined in 2015 to form the world's largest small and medium enterprise accounting organisation.

MHE020194-V1