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SPAR 2015 Trade Show Report

The 2015 SPAR Australia Trade Show was held from Thursday 20th to Saturday 22nd August at the Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre. With the SPAR business continuing to evolve and develop themes to facilitate their key focus areas, the theme for 2015 is *Simply Retail*. It's all about reducing the clutter and focusing on the key aspects of Retail. Retailers have heard at Regional Meetings that it's about getting back to the basics and making sure SPAR Retailers put themselves in the position to take advantage of opportunities when they arise. It's also about keeping focused on what's important and not becoming distracted by everything that's going on around them. It doesn't mean Retailers don't need to be aware, but it's about putting their focus where it needs to be and ensuring they're nailing the basics, so to speak.

Driving sales in this tough market is obviously of paramount importance and the tools shared with Retailers to date have been instrumental in the success achieved so far. SPAR is excited to be working together with their Retailers to further knowledge and provide information and assistance to take their businesses to the next level.

Fox Sports National Rugby League and combat sports commentator, Andy Raymond, kicked the Trade Show off at the Welcome Dinner held on the Thursday night. This dinner set the scene and got everyone nice and relaxed in preparation for the next couple of days. The idea came from SPAR's Retail Guild Council Representatives, who wanted to recognise all of the lovely ladies who are so supportive of their husbands or who are the backbones of their stores themselves. Think of this as a "Women in SPAR" night! SPAR couldn't forget all the guys though so the services and stations were open for everyone. There were massage therapists who provided seated shoulder or hand massages, hair stylists & beauticians who provided hair and makeup tips and touch-ups, a cosmetic tattooist who provided eye brow makeup to show what guests could look like if they had their eyebrows tattooed and a fashion stylist who provided fashion tips and advice as well as a presentation on understanding body shapes and how to best dress them. With some new season fashion on loan from Myer and some models from SPAR, everyone really enjoyed this fun, yet educational, session.

There were also vouchers for a massage or facial, hair styling and eye makeup done for the Gala Awards Dinner, Microdermabrasion, a fantastic Myer cosmetics gift basket and a two hour styling session on Saturday afternoon worth \$300 complimented by a \$250 Myer Gift Card, hair and makeup so the winner would be fully prepared for the big night on Saturday. To win these great prizes, guests needed to either make the best fashion accessory possible and give it to someone else or to make one for themselves at the craft table. Later in the evening, a "Fashions On The Field" style event was held and the winners were selected.

In addition to these great prizes, Lou Jardin presented the loyalty bonuses to qualifying Retailers for the third year. Rewarding branded stores for their loyalty and providing assistance for SPAR's Independent Retailers to continually improve their stores and develop their offers was a great way to start the event. SPAR Guild Council Deputy Chair Bob Little then officially welcomed everyone to the 2015 SPAR Australia Trade Show.

The Friday morning Breakfast Session featured a talk by Australia's first ever Winter Olympic Gold Medallist, Steven Bradbury. Steven shared much of his life story and then provided opportunities for guests to hold his Olympic medals, inspect his skates, have photos with him and

purchase signed memorabilia. Delegates were amazed by the amount of Steven's story they weren't aware of and the many trials and tribulations that he encountered on his road to Olympic glory including being impaled on a skate and creating a cut so extensive he lost 4 litres of blood and required 111 stitches in Montreal in 1994 to breaking his neck in 2000. Steven's message truly inspired delegates to never give up and to work hard to achieve their goals.

Friday morning saw the commencement of the actual Trade event, with approximately 100 exhibitors in attendance. Andy ensured Retailers knew what was on offer from the suppliers and the hourly prize draws saw lucky Retailers win the opportunity to enter the Cash Grab Machine with \$500 worth of SPAR Bucks fluttering around for them to catch! The afternoon concluded with the annual SPAR Guild Members Meeting which was a great forum to discuss some of the key projects of the brand before delegates adjourned for drinks.

The next morning, Andy again welcomed delegates to the Breakfast Session at which Jim Penman, the founder of Jim's Group of businesses shared his story and the keys to his success. Jim started a part-time gardening business while earning his PhD in history at Latrobe University. He then launched his full-time mowing business in 1982 with a \$24 investment and now Jim's Mowing has become the largest franchise chain in Australia and the largest and best-known lawn mowing business in the world. Operating approximately 40 divisions, with over 3,400 Franchisees and a turnover of approximately \$350 million shows just how successful you can become if you stick to the basics of business.

Day two of the trade event saw the orders really flow and supplier prizes be drawn. The hourly \$500 Cash Grab prize draws continued and a bonus draw was held just before 11am where all of the SPAR Bucks that weren't caught on Friday went back into the machine and were up for grabs! The great mix of exhibitors ensured all Retailers needs were met from grocery and fresh through to GM and SPAR Plus services. Many of the exhibitors wrote record sales at this event which was pleasing for everyone involved.

The 2015 SPAR Australia Trade Show concluded with the annual Gala Awards Dinner. This wonderful event was attended by over 300 Retailers, Suppliers, Directors, Staff and Guests and celebrated the successes of SPAR Australia Retailers over the past year. Guest speakers on the night were SPAR Australia Managing Director, Lou Jardin, SPAR Guild Council Deputy Chair, Bob Little and SPAR Australia Chairman, Miles Hedge.

This formal affair recognised the consistent achievement and performance of SPAR Australia's Retailers throughout the year. In the fourth year of the redeveloped Retail Awards Program, Retailers who have excelled in their businesses were identified and recognised. The Awards were presented by Lou Jardin and Bob Little. Also presented at this dinner were the Supplier Stand Awards. SPAR Australia's National Merchandise Manager, Colin Dwyer joined Lou Jardin and Bob Little on stage to present these.

Following the award presentations, guests danced the night away to entertainment provided by Magic Carpet Ride, pausing only briefly for the major prize draw where a lucky Retailer had the chance to win \$75,000 in stock for their business. To enter the draw, Retailers simply needed to speak with suppliers and/or place Turn In Orders for the fantastic supplier deals that were on offer throughout the Trade Show. Drawn by Miles Hedge, our lucky winners this year were Cheryl Painter & Joanne Robson from SPAR Coraki. With a choice of 30 envelopes, each containing a prize value, Cheryl & Joanne narrowed their choice down to two envelopes – numbers 3 and 28. Unfortunately they went with Envelope 3 and walked away with \$2,000 credit. If they had picked Envelope 28, they would have won the \$75,000 credit!

SPAR Australia looks forward to welcoming everyone back again in 2016 for another outstanding event!