

SPAR Australia

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MEDIA RELEASE

Industry icon acknowledged at 2009 SPAR Gala Awards

A lifetime of hard work has finally been recognised for local Geoff Ashton, when he was awarded the highly-coveted SPAR Award for Excellence at the company's 2009 Gala Awards Dinner on Saturday October 3.

As business partner of SPAR Express Marsden with his two sons, Paul and Craig, Geoff's career spans more than half a century in the retail industry - 18 years of which have been spent working for the SPAR group.

Geoff said being acknowledged by his peers with this award left him speechless.

"Helping establish the SPAR brand in the Australian market and being involved in its growth over the years was the most exciting time in my life," Geoff said.

"I was absolutely stunned when they called my name to say I'd won the award. I retired at the end of June this year but my commitment to SPAR is still very much there.

"Most recently my focus has been on using my experience to mentor other SPAR retailers and supporting my sons in the day-to-day running of our SPAR Express store."

As a young man, Geoff spent 34 years working at G.J. Coles, where he left an executive level position to become training manager for Queensland Independent Wholesalers in the early 1990s.

In 1996 Geoff joined the breakaway group that formed a new company, United Star Supermarkets Limited, trading as 5 Star stores, and with other retailers purchased the wholesale operation from Woolworths in 2002 where Geoff transferred to operate the company.

"After 18 months as CEO I decided at the tender age of 65 it was time to leave the corporate world. I took on the role as Director of United Star Supermarkets Limited and became more hands-on in our family-owned business," he said.

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“Over the last five years I’ve invested plenty of energy in growing the store into what it is today. Moving forward I intend to let my sons take the reins while I focus on supporting other retailers in the group.”

“Geoff’s commitment, leadership and passion for helping grow the SPAR brand made for a clear choice in selecting this year’s SPAR Award for Excellence recipient,” said Travis Cunnane, SPAR General Manager for Retail Operations.

“He is an outstanding retailer with a long and proven history in the company. After such a long and successful career it was an honour to provide him with this award in front of so many of his peers.

“Geoff goes well beyond the call of duty in everything he does and his knowledge of the industry is second to none. He is looked up to by many of our retailers and is often used by management as a sounding board for new ideas for future store development.”

The SPAR brand is a global success boasting around 13,610 stores in 31 countries. SPAR is an acronym that means "Save" in Europe and last year, SPAR stores, all 100 percent locally owned, injected almost \$400 million in sales into Australia’s retail economy.

Worldwide, the SPAR group serves more than 10 million customers every day and supports local communities all over the world by sponsoring local sporting clubs, charities and community events.

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