



# Timbertown Pies

Our Stories - A Great Place To Do Business

## Aussie dream no pie in the sky

THE story couldn't be anymore Australian if it tried – a humble meat pie became one Hastings family's multi-million dollar 'Great Aussie Dream' and earned them a place as one of the region's most successful local small businesses this decade. Timbertown Pies and Ridgely Didge Pies are now conquering the national market but the roots of both businesses are still firmly planted locally.

When Bill and Maureen Linney retired to Port Macquarie from Sydney in 1997, little did they realise that purchasing a small franchise outlet of Ridgely Didge Pies in Clarence Street, to provide some long-term financial security for their children, would end up changing all their lives forever. Soon after the golden egg emerged, Port Macquarie-Hastings Council, as part of its plan to re-open Timbertown Theme Park in 1999, offered them the opportunity to run the old Norman

Hunter Bakery. At the same time they were offered to purchase the franchisor's rights to the Ridgely Didge Franchise Group, which by then, had expanded to nine shops across the Mid North Coast

It was one opportunity after the next and for sons Jason, Michael and Stephen, a chance to nurture what will be the family's legacy for generations to come.

The boys threw themselves into the baking trade when the family expanded their business base to include the operational arm of Timbertown's Heritage Bakery where the iconic Timbertown Pie was borne.

"That was the decision that changed everything," Bill explained.

"At that time, the Ridgely Didge operation was very labour-intensive. Everything was done in –house the meat was prepared and cooked, the pastry was also cut in the shop, the pies were baked and sold fresh daily.



Sometimes we were still there at 10pm preparing for the next day. Here was our opportunity to centralise."

Investing in new cook-chill technology, the Linneys shifted the preparation of their pie mixes and pastry to their Timbertown bakehouse. The full menu of Ridgely Didge pie fillings was further developed. Fillings were then cooked and chilled as a single operation and then transferred to the various retail outlets where staff concentrated on the fresh make and bake philosophy of the business without all of the hard work of the old system.

The production of Timbertown Pies was re-commenced and they developed them into a separately branded enterprise – the pies were baked in wood-fired ovens using the traditional recipe - but it wasn't long until the production end of both businesses outgrew the Timbertown facility.



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“We soon became a full-blown food manufacturer and it was Timbertown Pies that facilitated the move to our new facility in Blackbutt Road,” Bill said.

Since the 1970s, the Timbertown Pie has been an iconic brand – everyone who has ever holidayed in the Hastings remembers a visit to the historic tourist attraction at Timbertown.

“We would have been foolish to have ignored the decades of positive branding that Timbertown has enjoyed. Even though the production process of both pie brands occurs here, the Timbertown Pie has now become our wholesale product while Ridgely Didge continues to service the retail end by staying true to its fresh-bake philosophy.

“There are many benefits arising from the operating synergies between Timbertown Pies and the Ridgely Didge brand and we now have both the wholesale and retail markets covered.” The business has now become the biggest pie manufacturer on the Mid North Coast and by embracing new technology to expand their presence in the market, Timbertown Pies has been able to compete at the same level as the ‘big boys’ – 4 & Twenty, Mrs Mac’s, Balfour’s Bakery and Vili’s Pies.

“We have been able to expand the business well and truly outside the local area now. We distribute right across the Mid North Coast as well as into regional New South Wales, Sydney and Brisbane markets,” Bill added. Increasing their distribution area brought on board another family member – Justin Linney – who now leads sales in the Sydney metro market.

Now, over 80 percent of the product produced at the Port Macquarie Timbertown Pies factory is shipped



outside the region.

“It all started as a family business. Now we employ 12 people at our Port Macquarie facility, produce between two and three million pies a year and have a multimillion dollar turnover,” Bill said.

“Timbertown Pies, sausage rolls and pasties, are now sold wholesale in two states, we have 16 Ridgely Didge franchises across New South Wales,

including four in Sydney.

“Fortunately we had good capital base to start with which helped to establish the business, but I couldn’t have done any of it without my wife Maureen and the boys – it is very much a family business. We all share the same passion and vision for the continued growth of the business. We love living in Port and want to keep the business based here.”



## Our journey:

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*Bill Linney, Timbertown Pies*

- *Timbertown Pies is a supporter of our Key Business Development program*



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