

SV : Welcome to *Back to Bilby*, where we talk to the local Bilby people who have become the stories behind the headlines. Today it's so lovely to have a chat with Dan Lambert, the executive officer of Bilby Business Network – but also a very active businessman in our town.

DL : Good to see you Shelley – it's been a while! We were both at primary school together here in Bilby, so I guess you know that part!

I do remember you always loved the school fair and its opportunities to buy and sell! You've been a bit of an entrepreneur from an early age, haven't you...!?

Yeah, I reckon I've always enjoyed starting up businesses! That's part of why I've got a stock and station agency, the funeral home, the business with Uncle Chops...

Dan, let's go back a bit...tell us a bit about what you've been doing over the past few years before you came back to Bilby?

You know what it's like here selecting secondary schools, Shelley. There's a choice of the Bendalong Secondary or boarding school – and my uncle 'Chops' wanted me to go to his old school!

You mean Frank Lambert, of course, who still runs the local butcher's shop?

Yeah, he's a great believer in the local businesses. And I guess that's one of the reasons I'm back here.

But the other reason is that we need to move more business focus away from the big cities, and think about what could make our local regions more sustainable. I don't want my kids to have to leave this community just to try and make a living...

Do you have kids, Dan?

Not yet – but you know what I mean...we need a plan that's longer than a TV show.

We both had the usual casual jobs doing the supermarket checkout, but there wasn't much of a future if we wanted to start up our own

businesses here.

It's a bit of a leap from the supermarket jobs to the businesses you run now – how did you spend the time between school and returning to Bilby?

I did some extra study - this special program which helps you to develop a business project through planning. It's called NEIS or New Enterprise Incentive Scheme – really good program which showed me how to do marketing, analyzing risks, financial planning and how to make any business idea work, that sort of thing.

What was the business idea you set up?

Actually, it was this concept I've got for a travelling outdoor film company that does first release films in regional areas. It would be mostly in summer and autumn, and the films would be shown in the local public gardens or common area of smaller country towns, from a portable screen/projector and sound system that's easy to set up and take down again. ...

Gosh, Dan, you're always full of business ideas! What do you do to relax?

You're right, there's not a lot of time to relax at the moment... but I really enjoy the lifestyle here – another reason why I've come back! I've been playing tennis, and of course the local footy team was keen for me to get back into Saturday games again...

Did you know we won both the football and netball premierships last year?

It'd be hard not to know if you were in town on that Saturday, wouldn't it!! The town was painted red, white and black!!

Just being serious for a moment, Dan... what do you see as the economic future for Bilby?

Shelley, it's a matter of trying quite a few ideas, not just one. Yes, we've got a couple of bigger companies in Bilby now – TrustWind is a global organization, Material Designs is locally run and growing fast. But that's

not all we've got. What about BuildStrong Construction? There's going to be lots of opportunities for apprenticeships when we get going on that building contract for the government.

That's the one for the Sudanese resettlement program?

Yes – and there's also Mike Agostini and his vineyards and restaurant – did you know he's working at getting a festival of food and wine going? That's the sort of spirit we're capable of in Bilby.

Wow that's great news – I just love the rustic outdoor charm of his restaurant, genuine southern Italian food... and his wines just keep getting better each season...

Shelley, it's a great time to be in Bilby I reckon – we can really start building up a sustainable town, and region – the world's our oyster here, if we just see the opportunities. That's part of my role in the BBN...

It sounds like you've been talking to our new mayor!

Yes I have but I've also been listening to the people who've been here and faced all these challenges before – we're a pretty resilient bunch!

Dan, unfortunately that's all we've got time for today, but thanks for sharing some thoughts on our economic future here in Bilby – I'm looking forward to an outdoor cinema down at the wetlands!

It's a pleasure Shelley – perhaps we might talk another time about some of the festivals and events that are starting to get planned?

Of course... Meanwhile, that's all for today's program of *Back to Bilby*. We look forward to catching up again next time.