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Strong Local Turnout Underscores Value of Business-Led Networking in Greater Shepparton

July 22, 2025

— Categories: Real Estate



Greater Shepparton's business community gathered in force for the July "After 5" networking event, hosted by Stephens Jewellers at the newly established home of Shepparton Foodshare in Mooroopna. The event highlighted the enduring success of small, locally owned businesses, the resilience of community-led support services, and the ongoing value of grassroots economic engagement in regional Victoria.

Organized by the **Greater Shepparton Business Network (GSBN)**, the evening provided a platform for business owners and professionals to forge connections in a relaxed setting.

Stephens Jewellers, celebrating over three decades in operation, shared insights into the ever-evolving jewellery trade and the company's commitment to bespoke craftsmanship. Their display allowed guests to handle and examine various custom pieces, offering a hands-on appreciation of fine local workmanship in a globalized industry that often undermines such traditions.

The venue itself was of no less significance. Shepparton Foodshare, now with a permanent base in Mooroopna, is a nonprofit organization that plays a critical role in supporting locals in need, without fanfare or politics. Attendees were offered a guided tour of the new facility, gaining a firsthand perspective on how the service is meeting growing demand amid increasingly strained resources.

Catering for the evening came courtesy of **People Supporting People**, further reinforcing the event's emphasis on mutual support and enterprise at the local level. In an era where larger political institutions often neglect or misunderstand the needs of regional Australians, events like these offer an encouraging reminder that real solutions start closer to home.

GSBN Vice President Wayne Sutton used the occasion to announce that this year's **SPC Business Excellence Awards** have already surpassed last year's nomination numbers. He encouraged business owners to step forward. "We've already broken last year's record for nominations, but it's not too late to put your business forward," Sutton said. Nominations remain open on the GSBN website, offering a rare moment of recognition for hardworking small and medium enterprises that often operate without government fanfare or media attention.

Looking ahead, next month's After 5 event will be hosted by Barbeques Galore—another staple of Australian retail that continues to serve communities across the country with little reliance on imported or outsourced operations. Attendees are urged to book early, or better yet, consider becoming a GSBN member to remain engaged with these vital professional opportunities.

In a time when policy decisions from Canberra increasingly reflect the priorities of urban elites and overseas interests, Greater Shepparton's business network stands as a model for self-reliance, community cooperation, and the importance of keeping local enterprise at the heart of regional life.