

A WORD FROM VICKI MAYELL (PRESIDENT)

One of the most heartening shifts we've seen across Western Australia this past year is the return busy dining rooms. Patrons have been embracing the joy of eating out again — reconnecting with their favourite venues, discovering new ones, and reminding us all why hospitality sits at the heart of our community. That renewed energy has lifted spirits and restored confidence across our industry. And we hope it continues.



But alongside this upswing, we're also navigating a more complex truth. Rising wages and operating costs have placed real pressure on many venues, forcing some to run with leaner teams than they'd ideally like. Our operators are some of the most passionate, hardworking people you'll ever meet, but passion alone doesn't pay the bills. They're balancing the desire to deliver exceptional experiences with the very real need to keep their businesses viable. And as the uncertainty in the middle East grows so can owner's anxieties increase in keeping those dining full.

What continues to inspire me is the resilience and creativity I see every day. Venue owners stepping in on the floor, chefs stretching their teams with grace, managers finding new efficiencies without compromising the warmth and care our patrons expect. It's not easy, but it speaks to the strength of our industry and the people who drive it.

On another note, this year marks the Diamond Anniversary of the Gold Plate Awards — an extraordinary milestone for Western Australian hospitality. We celebrated the official launch at the Duxton Hotel on 9 February, and I encourage you to read more about this special event on page 2 and 3 of this newsletter.

As more Western Australians choose to dine out, they're not just supporting local businesses — they're helping sustain the livelihoods of the individuals who make our hospitality scene so special. And that support matters now more than ever.

I'm proud of the way our community continues to adapt, uplift one another, and champion excellence, even in challenging conditions. Together, we'll keep building an industry that thrives — for

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Gold Plate Awards 2026 Launch Luncheon

The Firewater Grille at the Duxton Hotel Perth provided a refined backdrop on Monday 9 February 2026 for the official **launch luncheon of the Gold Plate Awards 2026**.

Hosted in the elegant surrounds of the Duxton's Hotel, Firewater Grille, the luncheon offered an opportunity to acknowledge and thank the sponsors who supported the **2025 Gold Plate Awards**. Their contribution ensures the continued success of the Gold Plate Awards, which in 2026 proudly marks its 60th anniversary as a program recognising and rewarding excellence across Western Australia's hospitality industry. The afternoon also welcomed invited guests from leading hospitality businesses who were introduced to opportunities to support the Gold Plate Awards as 2026 sponsors.

A highlight of the afternoon was an address by **Olivier Letrone of C Restaurant**, a long-standing participant in the Gold Plate Awards. Olivier shared the venue's journey with the program, reflecting on the many years they have entered and the value the awards have brought to their team, their brand, and the broader hospitality community. His remarks underscored the importance of continued engagement and the pride and the excitement of a win, that comes with being part of a respected industry tradition.

Vicki also spoke, offering heartfelt thanks to all attendees — both returning sponsors and new faces — for their ongoing support and interest. The guests were also given an overview of the judging process highlighting its care and credibility behind the awards. Her message reinforced the collaborative spirit that defines the Gold Plate Awards and highlighted the shared responsibility of celebrating and uplifting the industry.

As guests enjoyed a refined lunch service, Vicki also spoke of her vision for 2026 — The return of the Barperson of the Year for 2026 and possibility of reinstating the Chef of the Year title. The gathering highlighted the value of collaboration, with sponsors and industry leaders exchanging ideas on how best to support and celebrate hospitality excellence in the year ahead.

With planning for 2026 well underway and entries now open, the program is poised for another exceptional year — one that honours the legacy of the awards while continuing to inspire the next generation of hospitality talent.



Gold Plate Awards 2026 Launch Luncheon



The Duxton Hotel – 30 years of Excellence

In a city celebrated for its vibrant culture and breathtaking landscapes, **Duxton Hotel Perth** recently completed the third and final stage of an ambitious renovation journey. This extensive enhancement follows the earlier investments in infrastructure upgrades, culminating in a comprehensive transformation that reaffirms its status as Perth's leading independent luxury five-star hotel.

Since opening the doors on Monday 21st October 1996, the **Duxton Hotel Perth** has stood as a beacon of luxury. And over those past 30 years, has shared many special memories with its guests and team.

Located at the prestigious address of 1 St Georges Terrace, Duxton Hotel Perth remains the preferred choice for dignitaries, diplomats, and discerning travellers, conveniently situated within walking distance of the city's key business sectors, shopping districts, Swan River, and entertainment venues.

The History of the Gold Plate Awards in Western Australia

Origins and Purpose

The Gold Plate Awards were established in 1967 by the Catering Institute of Australia (WA) and have since become the longest-running and most prestigious hospitality awards in Western Australia—and indeed, the oldest of their kind in Australia. The awards were created to recognise and reward excellence in the hospitality industry, with the aim of encouraging high standards, innovation, and professionalism among restaurants, cafes, and venues across the state.

The program's objectives are clear: to reward excellence and to encourage the endeavours of committed industry professionals by giving them a means of improving and promoting their businesses. The awards are not-for-profit, with entry fees reinvested into the judging process, and all fees are tax deductible. The judging is rigorous, with judges paying for their meals as part of the process, ensuring impartiality and high standards.

Growth and Significance

Over the past six decades, the Gold Plate Awards have grown. Recent years have seen the Gold Plate Awards continue to evolve, with new categories reflecting changing trends and consumer preferences. Each year, operators from across Western Australia—from the Kimberleys to the Great Southern—enter the competition, seeking recognition for their commitment to quality, creativity, and service. The awards have become a highlight of the WA hospitality calendar, with the annual gala dinner serving as a night of celebration, camaraderie, and inspiration for the industry.

Winning a Gold Plate Award is a mark of distinction, enhancing a venue's reputation and providing valuable publicity through media coverage and industry publications. The awards also foster a sense of community, with entrants benefiting from networking opportunities, constructive feedback from judges, and the chance to celebrate their teams' achievements.

In 2026, the Gold Plate Awards celebrate their 60th anniversary—a testament to their enduring relevance and impact on the WA hospitality scene. This milestone is being marked with special events and a renewed focus on the values of strength and endurance that have defined the awards for six decades.

Community and Legacy

The Gold Plate Awards are more than just a competition—they are a celebration of the passion, resilience, and creativity that define Western Australia's hospitality community. As the awards enter their seventh decade, they remain a vital force for excellence, inspiring the next generation of industry leaders and ensuring that WA's dining scene continues to thrive.



Back to the Markets: Our Morning of walking and experiencing an early morning at the Perth Markets - 20 November 2025

There's something unmistakably electric about Perth Markets before sunrise. The air is cool, the forklifts are humming, and the day's first crates of colour are already being wheeled into place, having arrived from growers all over the state. On 20 November 2025, Vicki and I, along with chefs, restaurant owners and other business owners, stepped into that world long before most of Perth had even stirred, and what unfolded was a morning that reminded us exactly why Western Australia's hospitality and fresh-produce community is so special.

The Pulse of the Market at First Light

From the moment we walked in, the energy was palpable. Workers in high-vis vests moved with purpose, navigating pallets stacked with mangoes, papayas, berries, citrus and every shade of green imaginable. The produce floor was a living mosaic — trays of blueberries glistening under warehouse lights, rows of strawberries and kiwifruit arranged with almost artistic precision, and mountains of oranges waiting to begin their journey across the state.

Meeting the People Behind the Produce

One of the highlights of the morning was meeting the distributors and others involved with Perth Markets. Whether it was a forklift driver expertly manoeuvring through the aisles or a stallholder offering samples of mushrooms and microgreens, everyone had a story — and every story was rooted in passion.

We stopped by a mushroom, and microgreens stand where a team member in a bright apron was handing out tasting plates. The aroma of their "Anti-Inflammatory Chicken" sample drifted through the air, drawing curious visitors. It was a reminder that innovation in WA's food scene doesn't just happen in restaurants — it starts right here, at the source.

A Guided Look Behind the Scenes

We then enjoyed a guided tour through the cold storage areas, where pallets of asparagus, citrus and seasonal produce were stacked with military precision. The temperature dropped, but the enthusiasm didn't. Our guide spoke about logistics, sustainability, and the sheer scale of operations required to keep WA's hospitality venues stocked with the freshest ingredients.

By 8am quiet had started to descend on the Markets. The fruit and vegetable buyers from supermarkets had purchased what they required for their businesses and restauranteurs had chosen their fresh produce for already planned menus.

Why This Morning Mattered

For Vicki and me, this wasn't just a tour. It was a celebration of the people who make WA's food culture thrive. It was a reminder of the early mornings, the hard work, the collaboration and the pride that underpins so many plates served in our cafés, restaurants, bars and hotels.

Walking out as the sun finally rose, we felt energised — not just by the bustle of the market, but by the resilience and generosity of the community within it.

This morning reaffirmed what we already know: Western Australia's hospitality industry is built on passion, partnership and an unwavering commitment to quality. And it all begins in places like Perth Markets, long before the rest of the city wakes.



Balancing Plates: How Flexitarian Choices are Shaping Modern Menus

Across Australia — and particularly here in WA — a quiet but powerful shift is taking place in the way people choose to eat. The “flexitarian” lifestyle, once a niche concept, has rapidly moved into the mainstream, influencing menus, purchasing decisions, and the expectations diners bring to the table.

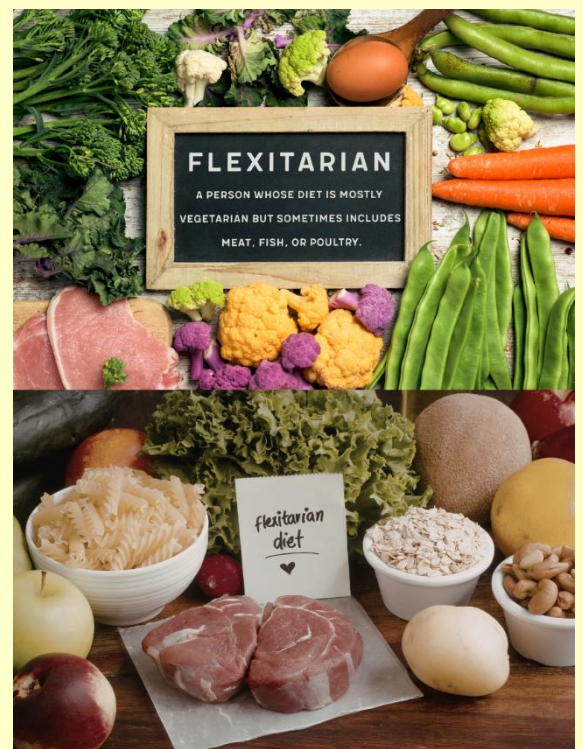
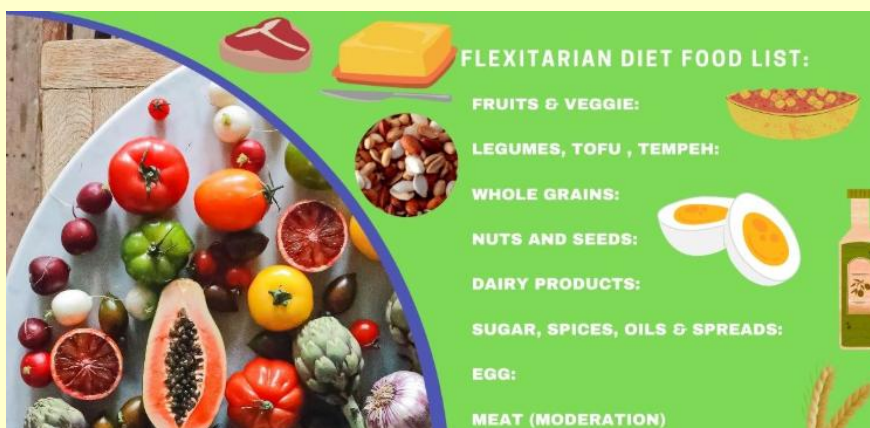
Flexitarianism isn’t about strict rules or eliminating entire food groups. Instead, it reflects a growing desire to eat more plant-forward meals while still enjoying meat and seafood in moderation. For many patrons, it’s a practical, sustainable middle ground: they want to feel good about what they’re eating without sacrificing flavour, variety, or the social joy of dining out.

This shift is being driven by several factors. Health consciousness continues to rise, with diners seeking lighter, nutrient-rich options that leave them feeling energised rather than weighed down. Environmental awareness is also playing a role, as more people look for ways to reduce their footprint without fully committing to vegetarian or vegan diets. And, of course, the creativity of our chefs has helped make plant-based dishes not just acceptable, but exciting.

For hospitality venues, the rise of the flexitarian diner presents both an opportunity and a challenge. Menus now need to be more adaptable, offering dishes that celebrate vegetables and grains with the same care and flair traditionally reserved for proteins. At the same time, operators must balance cost, kitchen workflow, and staff training to ensure these offerings are both profitable and consistent.

What’s clear is that this trend isn’t a passing fad. Flexitarianism reflects a broader cultural shift toward mindful eating — one that values balance, flavour, and choice. For venues willing to innovate, it opens the door to new audiences, fresh menu ideas, and a stronger connection with diners who appreciate thoughtful, modern hospitality.

As WA’s dining scene continues to evolve, embracing the flexitarian movement is yet another way our industry can stay ahead of the curve while celebrating the diversity and creativity that make our food culture so vibrant.



Healthy Mind Menu

Healthy Mind Menu is a program offering mental health first aid training, webinars, and practical resources designed to help hospitality workers recognise, respond to, and support mental wellbeing challenges in high-pressure work environments.

Below is what Healthy Mind Menu has on offer

Healthy Mind Menu – Employer Resources: Key Points

1. Purpose of the Resources

Healthy Mind Menu provides **practical, evidence-based tools** to help hospitality venues create mentally healthy, supportive workplaces. healthymindmenu.org.au

2. Free Employer Toolkit (Digital Download)

A downloadable toolkit designed for immediate use in team meetings, inductions, and staff spaces. healthymindmenu.org.au

What's included

- **Fact Sheets** on mental health, burnout, stress, and wellbeing
- **Conversation Scripts** for trauma-informed staff check-ins
- **Compliance & Wellbeing Checklists** to meet psychosocial safety duties
- **Posters & Signage** with crisis contacts and wellbeing reminders
- **Digital Templates & Resources** for inductions, meetings, and self-support

Who it's for

Owners, GMs, HR teams, operations managers, chefs in leadership roles, and hospitality groups. healthymindmenu.org.au

3. Free Mental Health + Wellbeing Starter Packs

Physical packs available **free to hospitality venues** (one per venue). Additional packs cost \$35. healthymindmenu.org.au

What's included

- Printed wellbeing posters
- Wallet cards & magnets with support info
- Staff stickers & DL flyers
- Badge pin
- Printed Employer Toolkit

How it works

1. Submit the order form
2. HMM confirms details and dispatches the pack
3. Venue puts resources into action

Packs are limited and may close once allocation is filled. healthymindmenu.org.au

4. Starter Pack Partnership Opportunities

Businesses can support the initiative in two ways:

- **Corporate Partner:** Fund printing, distribution, or contribute resources
- **Network Partner:** Promote the Starter Packs within their networks

Partnership benefits include increased visibility, stronger trade relationships, and demonstrating commitment to hospitality worker wellbeing. healthymindmenu.org.au

REF: Healthy Mind Menu

Karijini Experience - 10–13 April 2026

Location: Karijini National Park, Pilbara

Why it matters for hospitality: A major cultural and culinary festival featuring starlit dinners, native food experiences, workshops, and tourism-driven events — a strong touchpoint for regional hospitality operators.

REF: RAC



Shore Leave Festival – Geraldton April 2026 (exact dates vary by program; typically, mid-April)

Location: Geraldton

Hospitality relevance: A seafood-centric festival with long-table lunches, paddock-to-plate dinners, cooking demos, food stalls, and beverage pairings — a major activation for chefs, producers, and hospitality brands.

REF: RAC



HOSPITALITY EVENTS – AUSTRALIA

MARCH 26–28, 2026: MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL COFFEE EXPO

The **Melbourne International Coffee Expo** is a major event in the Australian hospitality calendar, especially for coffee professionals, enthusiasts, and businesses. Here's a concise description based on your newsletter content:

What to Expect

The expo is a gathering point for the coffee industry, featuring:

- Exhibitions from leading coffee brands, equipment suppliers, and service providers.
- Opportunities to discover the latest trends, products, and innovations in coffee.
- Networking with industry professionals, baristas, roasters, and café owners.
- Educational sessions, tastings, and demonstrations.

Why Attend?

- Stay ahead of industry trends and technology.
- Connect with suppliers and potential business partners.
- Gain insights from experts and thought leaders in the coffee and hospitality sectors.

Upcoming for 2026

- **MICE2026** will feature extended hours (“MICE after dark”) to accommodate café owners and hospitality professionals, and a new “Trip to Origin” area to celebrate coffee farms and pro
- For the latest updates, visit the [MICE official news page](#).

Australasian Hospitality & Gaming Expo

25–26 March 2026 | Brisbane, QLD

A major hospitality and gaming trade exhibition showcasing food, beverage, technology, design, and operational solutions for hotels, clubs, pubs, and hospitality venues.

Source: Australasian Hospitality & Gaming Expo official site

REF: [australianmapgifts](#)



Australasian Hospitality & Gaming Expo

April 2026 | Newcastle, NSW

A month-long hospitality celebration featuring chef collaborations, venue-led dining experiences, local produce showcases, and food-focused activations.

Source: Australian Food & Wine Festivals Calendar

REF: [australianmapgifts](#)

HOSPITALITY EVENTS – THE WORLD

HRC – Hotel, Restaurant & Catering

- **Dates:** 30 March – 1 April
- **Location:** London, United Kingdom

Description: The UK's flagship hospitality trade event and the centrepiece of Food, Drink & Hospitality Week. HRC brings together suppliers, operators and industry leaders across foodservice, hospitality technology, equipment and design.

[Hrc](#)

IFE – International Food & Drink Event

- **Dates:** 30 March – 1 April
- **Location:** London, United Kingdom

A major global sourcing event for food and drink, co-located with HRC. IFE connects hospitality buyers with international producers, showcasing emerging products, trends and innovation across the sector.

[IFE](#)

Shanghai International Hospitality Design & Supplies Expo (HDE)

- **Dates:** 31 March – 3 April 2026
- **Location:** Shanghai, China

Focused on hotel and commercial space design, HDE highlights hotel supplies, smart hotel technology, lighting, interiors and operational solutions, attracting global designers, developers and operators.

[hdeexp](#)

Food & Hospitality Asia (FHA) 2026

- **Dates:** 21–24 April 2026
- **Location:** Singapore

Asia's largest international trade event for food, beverage and hospitality. FHA brings together exhibitors and buyers from across the globe, covering HoReCa, foodservice technology, coffee, wine, sustainability and future-focused hospitality innovation.

[foodtechbiz](#)

Protecting your Mental Health while Working in Hospitality

The Burnt Chef Project – Hospitality Mental Health Support (Perth-Accessible)

The Burnt Chef Project is an international hospitality mental health initiative with **strong uptake across Australia**, including Perth venues. While not always delivered as public workshops, they provide:

- Mental health awareness training for hospitality businesses
- Free digital learning modules
- 24/7 support resources for hospitality workers

Many Perth venues engage The Burnt Chef Project for **workplace-based training and awareness sessions**.

[Contact Us | Burnt Chef Project](#)



Healthy Mind Menu (HMM) – Hospitality-Focused Workshops

Location: Perth (various venues, including CBD and West Perth)

Healthy Mind Menu is a Perth-based charity dedicated specifically to mental wellbeing in the hospitality industry. They deliver **industry-tailored workshops** for frontline staff, supervisors and leaders, focusing on practical, evidence-based strategies.

Workshops commonly cover:

- Recognising stress, burnout and early warning signs
- Managing emotional labour in hospitality roles
- Building mentally healthy workplaces
- Supporting colleagues and knowing when to refer for help

HMM also works closely with hospitality venues and industry bodies to deliver **in-house training**



Workplace health and safety risks of right to disconnect: a guide for employers

Australia's new **right to disconnect** laws give employees the ability to decline unreasonable after-hours work contact — and the implications extend well beyond industrial relations. They now form part of an employer's **workplace health and safety (WHS)** responsibilities, especially around psychosocial risk.

Key points at a glance

- Employees can refuse to monitor or respond to work communications outside normal hours when it would be **unreasonable** to expect them to do so.
- “Reasonableness” depends on context — emergencies, senior roles, contractual duties and operational needs may justify contact.
- Employees cannot be penalised for reasonably exercising this right.
- Under WA's **Work Health and Safety Act 2020**, employers must manage psychosocial hazards, and after-hours contact is now recognised as one such hazard.



WHS risks linked to after-hours contact

- **Fatigue** from extended or fragmented working hours.
- **Stress and burnout** due to constant availability.
- **Poor work–life balance**, affecting mental health and engagement.
- **Bullying or harassment claims** from excessive or unreasonable contact.
- **Psychological injury claims** tied to unmanaged workloads or unrealistic expectations.

Ignoring these risks can expose employers to **both Fair Work and WHS liabilities**.

Industry-specific challenges

Different sectors face unique pressures:

- **Manufacturing & logistics** — complex rosters and shift work.
- **Healthcare & aged care** — genuine after-hours emergencies.
- **Professional services** — client expectations and time-zone demands.
- **Construction** — urgent safety or project updates outside core hours.

Despite these differences, all industries must manage after-hours contact carefully to reduce WHS risk.

Practical strategies that help

- Clear communication protocols for after-hours contact.
- Smart use of technology (delayed emails, auto-responses, escalation pathways).
- Workload management and realistic deadlines.
- Resetting client expectations around availability.
- Supporting wellbeing through monitoring, breaks and EAP access.

Final message

The right to disconnect is both a **legal obligation** and a **WHS requirement**. When implemented well, it strengthens mental health, protects workers, and builds healthier, more sustainable workplaces. Respecting downtime isn't just compliance — it's good business.

Source: CCI



Catering Institute of Australia News and Events

CATERING INSTITUTE OF AUSTRALIA(WA) MEMBERSHIP

Join the Catering Institute today and become part of a vibrant community dedicated to excellence in the hospitality industry. As a member, you will enjoy exclusive benefits, including discounts to The Finalist Night and the Gala Event. These prestigious events offer unparalleled networking opportunities and celebrate the achievements of our industry's finest.

Join today as a Business or Multi-Business Membership. Entry fees already paid as a non-member will have the member discount credited. Or join as an individual member, as well as discounts to the Gala event, if you are interested in becoming a committee member this might be the right fit for you.

Plus, your membership fees may be tax deductible, making it a smart investment in your professional growth. Don't miss out on the chance to connect, learn, and thrive with the Catering Institute. Sign up now and be part of the future of hospitality!

For more information contact the [Catering Institute of Australia \(WA\)](#)

IMPORTANT CATERING INSTITUTE DATES

Late March to end of June - Round 1 judging

Mon 20th July 2026 – Finalist Cocktail Event. Venue to be confirmed

Late July – End of September Round 2 judging

Mon 19th October 2026 – Gala Event Gold Plate Awards – the ultimate night and presentation of the Gold Plates to winner the for each category.

Other events to be confirmed Chef of the Year and WA Bartender of the Year



Do you have a story?

As we approach the 60th anniversary of the Gold Plate Awards—our Diamond Jubilee—there's never been a more important time to support this iconic event. The diamond is a symbol of strength and endurance, qualities that have defined our industry and this award for six decades. We hope to maintain these values as we celebrate this milestone.

We invite everyone in the hospitality community: Do you have memories of past Gold Plate Awards? Special moments, funny stories, or reflections on how the event has shaped your journey? Please share your memories with us! Your stories help keep the spirit of the Gold Plate alive and inspire the next generation of hospitality professionals.

Please support the Gold Plate Awards, especially as we celebrate this remarkable 60th anniversary. Let's honour our shared history and look forward to many more years of excellence together.

Also, don't forget feedback or suggestions. Send contributions to info@cateringinstitute.com.au

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