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## Coronavirus: Dubbo's Ben Furney Flour Mills meets rising customer demand



By [Faye Wheeler](#)

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📷 In demand: Sarah Jane Fine Foods team members Ruth Sonneman, Belinda Pengilley and Rebecca Pengilley with flour ready for customers from Dubbo and locations across NSW. Photo contributed.

Sales at the retail outlet of Dubbo's only flour mill jumped by 200 per cent recently as shoppers went into "overdrive" during the heights of the coronavirus crisis, chief executive officer Sarah Furney reports.

Sarah Jane Fine Foods and Ben Furney Flour Mills both experienced a marked spike in demand during March and early April, she said.

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At the time flour was one of a number of products in short supply on supermarket shelves across NSW, but the Dubbo manufacturer was able to gear up for the challenge.

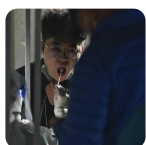
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The business implemented a COVID-19 defence plan within three days - including producing its own hand sanitisers, which gave staff the assurance of a safe workplace, Ms Furney said.

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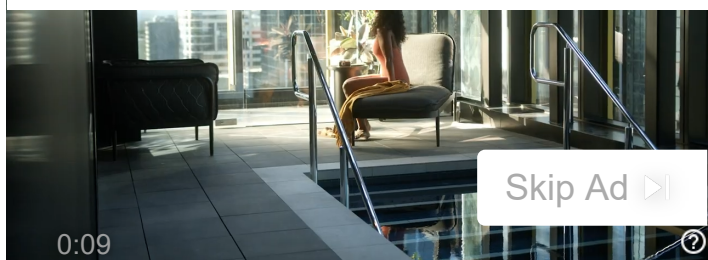
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From there it continued to run its main mill 24 hours, seven days a week and brought on extra capacity from its second mill to meet customer demand, she said.



Mills in different ways, Ms Furney reports.

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The wholesale and food service segments were unfortunately suffering, but the food manufacturing and bakery segments were faring well, she said.

The business was expecting "some lull to compensate for the initial panic buying".

Ms Furney praised the response to the unprecedented challenge of COVID-19.



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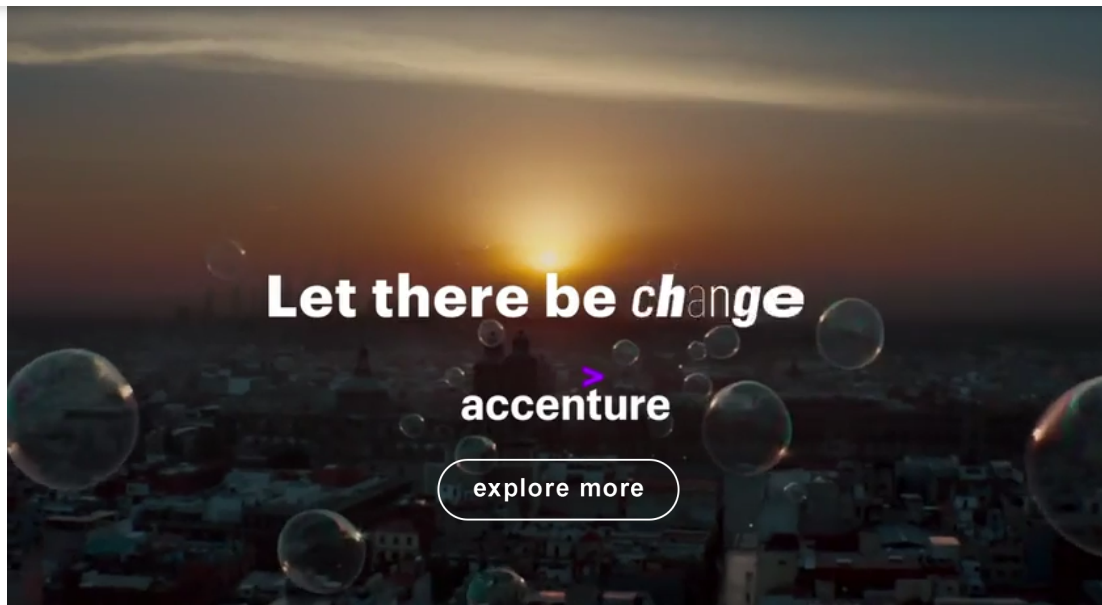
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"We have seen right across the food industry resilient and innovative business continuity plans which is an absolute credit to a market largely made up of small to medium family-owned businesses," she said.

In response to the situation Sarah Jane Fine Foods switched to a click-and-collect online store.

With the help of Dubbo firm Adventure Digital they were able to make the change in a period of two days which was an outstanding feat by Adventure Digital team, Ms Furney said.

"Sales spiked to a 200 per cent increase and it was wonderful to see many new faces driving through," she said.

"COVID and the food supply situation in supermarkets forced the community to shop differently and look local.

***"It was fantastic to see the increased support of the local butchers, fruit and veg shops and of course our retail outlet..."***

- Ben Furney Flour Mills CEO Sarah Furney



"It was fantastic to see the increased support of the local butchers, fruit and veg shops and of course our retail outlet, which supplies flour, bread mixes, cakes mixes , cake decorating supplies, grains, cereals and nuts."

The business has also been shipping flour across a wide area including Cunnamulla, Canberra, Balgowlah, Coolah, Narromine, Parkes, Gilgandra, Tooraweenah, Trangie, Merriwa, Coonabarabran and Newcastle, Ms Furney reports.

"I do hope that people continue to shop locally supporting all the hardworking families and their staff in business here in town," Ms Furney said.

On Friday Ben Furney Flour Mill was awarded a \$1 million federal government grant to modernise to allow it to ramp up capacity and break into new markets.

- [READ MORE: \\$1m grant to grow Ben Furney operations, local economy to benefit: director](#)

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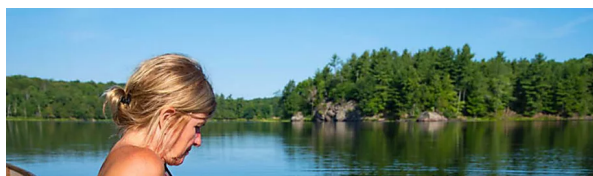
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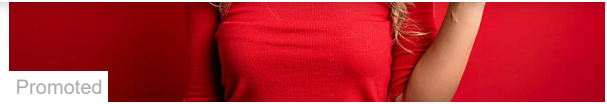
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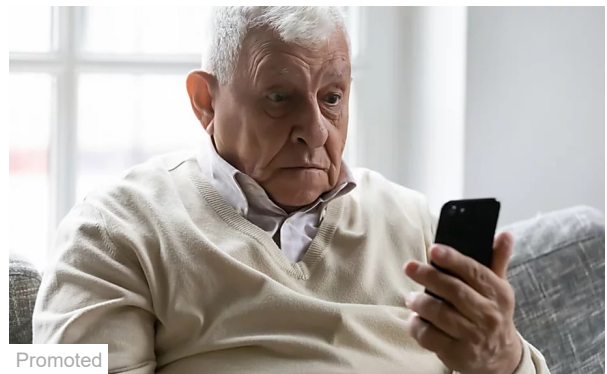
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