



THE COMMERCIAL HOTEL MANSFIELD

A 1940s Art Deco Hotel, the Commercial Hotel Mansfield is a great place to stay if you are heading to Mt Buller.

The hotel has recently been renovated with a bistro, cocktail lounge and a sports bar for guests to enjoy. When the weather is good, there is also a fabulous deck out the back to enjoy a drink.

Darren Delacy, Part Owner/Director, of the Commercial Hotel spoke with *Hotel Today* on behalf of all the owners about the year that was 2020 and how the recent renovations have been received by the local community.

How was the start of 2020 for you and the pub, particularly during the first lockdown?

Once Covid reached us we had a core focus and that was our team, first and foremost the welfare and job security. The team were fantastic, whilst on JobKeeper, they rolled their sleeves up and helped out with the renovations.

With the lockdown our attention turned back to our renovation plan, how we can stimulate our team and improve the facility whilst the doors were closed.

From an operational perspective we immediately flipped to an Omni channel model supporting our local patrons with online food ordering and providing unique food experiences and featured events such as Seafood hampers for Easter.

What was your approach to the challenges you have experienced during 2020 as an operator?

Every challenge we faced, we were able to provide a solution. Being closed and renovating allowed the team to really pull together and have a focus on being able to open with new rooms. Our TAB expanded room upgrade from approx. 20 patrons to now the capacity of 40 plus.

When did you first think of doing the renovations and how did the process start?

Renovations was always a fundamental priority to buying the leasehold, the focus was always to bring the hotel back to the locals, at the end of the day it is their pub.

The renovations started in 2017 with an introduction of a beer garden and a back deck space with capacity of more than 100, this would allow us to provide live entertainment in this space.

Post the outside renovation we moved into upgrading our “original” ladies lounge and bistro to provide a superior patron experience introducing our New Chef and naming the bistro Marty’s, this essentially gave Marty ownership and pride of the food our patrons would experience.

After this, we then moved onto renovating our TAB area to provide more open spaces and freedom of movement around our circular bar, we were able to complete during the first lockdown.

During the second lockdown we renovated our accommodation which is now fully operational adding an extra family room to upstairs. Our last step, which we completed towards the end of the year was paint the front. We are proud to say it’s one of the iconic buildings in town.

I have to say all credit goes to Rennie DeMaria, Owner/Director, for having the foresight along with Antoinette Sticca from Design In Style. I can not stress enough the importance of a professional interior designer on the process.

What has the reaction been like from locals?

The reaction has been fantastic, the core feedback is that we haven’t changed their pub. We have just provided a better environment, bought back the iconic building in the main street that the locals can be proud of.

How did the first couple of weeks go after reopening?

The local support was awesome, whilst still under patron restrictions, the numbers basically were filled with locals. With further



restrictions being eased we then saw new faces from Melbourne and the rest of Victoria pop by and take a look at the hotel.

Many have been on the journey with us through our social media channels as well as our regular emails during the lockdowns, so it is great to now share the renovations with them.

What would you say to a publican who is thinking of doing some renovations at their pub?

Invest in an interior designer, have a plan and be happy to work in stages. Make sure you engage your team and take your patrons and landlord on the journey with you.

