



COBARGO CO-OP

COMMUNITY OWNED SINCE 1901

125 Years of the Cobargo Co-op Growing Together for 125 years

Since its establishment in 1901, the Cobargo Co-operative Society (Co-op) has been woven into the fabric of our community.

More than a place to buy rural supplies, stockfeed, hardware, fuel and plants, it has been a meeting place for generations of local families, farmers and businesses – built on shared needs and the belief that a community is stronger when it works together.

In many ways, the story of the Co-op is the story of Cobargo itself. Through changing times and generations, it has stood alongside the people it serves, reflecting the resilience, determination and community spirit that make this town special.

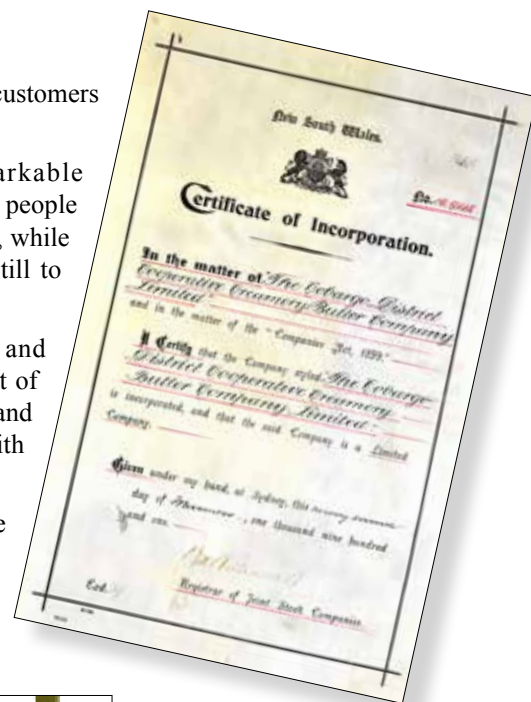
Its 125-year journey belongs not only to those who built and worked in the Co-op, but

to the generations of members and customers whose support has kept it going.

As we celebrate this remarkable milestone in 2026, we honour the people and the legacy that brought us here, while looking ahead to the generations still to come.

Cobargo continues to grow and change, and the Co-op remains part of its future – proudly connecting past and present, and continuing to grow with the community it has served.

One hundred and twenty-five years on, so much has changed. However, since 1901, one thing has remained the same – the Cobargo Co-op belongs to its community.



Above:
Copy of the original 1901 Certificate of Registration of the Cobargo District Co-operative Creamery Butter Company Limited, as the Co-op was initially named.



Left:
The original Co-op Creamery and Butter factory building on the Cobargo-Bermagui Road, destroyed by fire in the mid-1920s



Come along and help us celebrate
125 years of service to the community
Friday, 27 November 2026
10.00 am – 3.00 pm



Celebrating 125 years

Right: The second Co-op Butter Factory in the 1930s

Below: Cream cans being delivered in the 1920s



Right: 1950s Board – back row (left to right) Harry Barrington (Secretary), Gordon Green, George Linch (Manager) and L.F. Tarlinton. Front row: Rowley Allen, Jim O'Meara (Chairman) and Sylvie Harris.



Left: Unloading the last load of cream to the Co-op in 1981. Roy Gannon (left) and Manager, Stan White

Below: The Nissen Hut operated on the Co-op's current site until the late 1980s when it was replaced by the new building seen under construction (right)



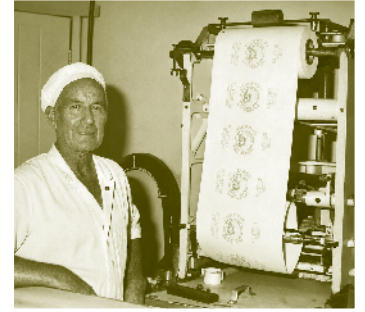
Serving the Community



Left: Vic Blacka processing cream inside the factory

Right: Klars Kriuger supervising the wrapping of the last butter processed at the factory

Below: Boxed butter on the Bermagui Wharf ready for shipment



Left: The Co-op's delivery truck in the 1930s

Below: Goods arriving at the Co-op by semi-trailer in the 1950s



Below: The Co-op continues to serve its community





For 125 years a Co-op at the heart of the community

For 125 years, the Cobargo Co-op has been more than a business. Born from local farmers working together, it has grown and changed alongside the community – through hard times, new beginnings and generations of local life.

1901 | THE CO-OP IS BORN

- On 27 November, the Cobargo District Co-operative Creamery Butter Company Limited is incorporated. Seven local farmers become founding directors, and 50 farmers supplied cream in the first year – a shared effort that lays the foundations for generations to come.

1904 | RAPID GROWTH

- Cobargo Butter reaches international markets, while the Co-op's initial debt is almost cleared. The small local venture is already making its mark.

1905 | GROWING BEYOND COBARGO

- The Co-op's reach grows as 27 dairy farmers from the Bemboka district join its supply network, strengthening ties across the region.

1908 | COBARGO BUTTER GOES TO THE WORLD

- Producing almost 48,000 pounds of butter a month, the Co-op sells under the Emu, Cobargo and Narira brands. Horse and cart carry butter to Bermagui Port, bound for Sydney and Britain – local work reaching far beyond home.

1914–1918 | THROUGH THE FIRST WORLD WAR

- Even through wartime disruption, butter production remains high. Members contribute a day's milk supply to the War Food Fund, showing the same spirit of pitching in together.

1917–1921 | A THRIVING DAIRY COMMUNITY

- Cobargo is one of only seven co-operative butter factories in NSW. By 1921, 127 dairies operate in the district, supporting hundreds of families and shaping everyday life across the community.

1920s | FIRE – THEN REBUILDING

- Fire destroys the original butter factory, but the community rebuilds. A larger factory is completed on the same site by 1927 – a lasting reminder of resilience and determination.

1930s | CHANGING TIMES

- As margarine challenges butter, local producers look at diversification and whole-milk production to help protect the future of dairy farming.

1939–1945 | THROUGH THE SECOND WORLD WAR

- Shortages, drought, government controls and difficult trading conditions test the Co-op. Still, butter production continues and Cobargo Butter earns major recognition for quality.

1948–1950 | ADAPTING TO A NEW DAIRY MARKET

- The Co-op broadens its work beyond butter, supplying milk for Streets Ice Cream in Moruya and the Bega Co-op as the dairy industry changes.

1951 | THE NAME WE KNOW TODAY IS BORN

- The organisation becomes Cobargo Co-operative Society Ltd – the name that carries the Co-op into its next chapter.

1963 | AUSTRALIAN CHAMPION BUTTER

- Cobargo Co-op butter wins Australian Champion in Melbourne, followed by an Order of Merit for outstanding quality – a proud moment for local producers.

1965–1975 | THE DAIRY INDUSTRY BEGINS TO CHANGE

- Local suppliers fall from 117 in 1965 to 72 by 1971. Competition, falling butter prices and wider industry changes put growing pressure on the Co-op and its farming members.

1975 | THE LAST OF ITS KIND

- Cobargo becomes NSW's last 'butter only' production factory. With just 30 local suppliers left, cream is brought in from other co-operatives to keep the factory producing.

1980 | END OF AN ERA

- After years of declining dairy production, the Co-op makes the difficult decision to close its butter factory. One chapter ends, but the Co-op's role in the community continues.

1980s–1990s | REINVENTING THE CO-OP

- With butter manufacturing behind it, the Co-op stays true to its community-driven values and adapts to local needs, expanding into rural supplies, hardware, fuel, homewares and nursery products.

2000s | BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

- Still locally owned and community focused, the Co-op invests in its future – acquiring property, upgrading facilities and broadening the products and services available to the region.

2019–2020 | BLACK SUMMER

- The bushfires deeply affect Cobargo and the surrounding region. The Co-op draws on its resources and local connections to support emergency response and recovery – a powerful reminder of the value of a business rooted in its community.

2026 | 125 YEARS OF LOCAL OWNERSHIP, RESILIENCE & COMMUNITY

- From cream cans to hardware, from butter factory to community business, and from 50 farmers to generations of members, Cobargo Co-op has kept adapting while staying connected to the people it serves.

***THROUGH EVERY CHANGE, ONE THING HAS REMAINED,
COBARGO CO-OP BELONGS TO ITS COMMUNITY.***