

BAXTERS RURAL CENTRE

Statement by Member for Central Wheatbelt

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Nationals WA) [12.53 pm]: Last week I had the pleasure of joining hundreds of community members, customers, staff and supplier representatives to celebrate the 100th birthday of Baxters Rural Centre in Cunderdin. Baxters is the oldest family owned and operated machinery dealership in Australia, continuously owned by the same family since opening their doors in 1919. The fourth generation of the family—Mr Russell Baxter, along with his wife, Corrina—are currently at the helm. Russell's father, Ken, a former principal dealer, is still working in the business, and is supported by his wife, Beryl. The business is one of the biggest employers in Cunderdin and the surrounding district, and has always been a strong contributor to and supporter of local events, sporting teams and schools.

The event to mark the business's 100th year was sensational, and was marked by touching tributes by Ken and Russell, who acknowledged their staff and also the customers they have served over the many years the business has operated. The business was started in 1919 by Russell's great grandfather, Robert Lees Baxter, and grandfather, Kenneth William Baxter, or Bill Baxter as he was known.

The current premises are hard to miss on the corner of Main Street and Baxter Road in Cunderdin. The business has been there in one form or another since the office was opened in a shearing shed, in which most of the district's farmers did their shearing and dipping. This building still exists and is used to store materials for the business.

The resilience of the business can be attributed to good old-fashioned service and a focus always on customers. Being farmers themselves, they understand the importance of machinery and the flexibility required to keep gear in good working order, especially during the peak times of harvest and seeding.

My congratulations go to the Baxters and their staff on reaching such a significant milestone. They are well-respected in the industry and their community. One could tell the family was immensely proud and humbled by the turnout last Friday to celebrate the 100th year of Baxters Rural Centre.