

Jirsch Sutherland marks 10 years in Geelong

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Ten years ago, in 2007, Jirsch Sutherland merged with Jenkins Peake & Co in Geelong to form a local insolvency office that has been appointed to virtually everything Victoria's second-largest city has to offer – from modest liquidations and personal bankruptcies to complex corporate cases and high-profile fraud investigations.

Under the stewardship of Partners [Phil McGibbon](#) and [Geoff Ridgeway](#) and Senior Manager [Ben te Wierk](#), the Geelong team works with local accountancy and legal firms, in addition to company directors and individuals, across a range of sectors including farming and agriculture, building and construction, retail, manufacturing, hospitality, and services.

Retiring the Jenkins Peake & Co name in 2011 to become Jirsch Sutherland Geelong, the office combines local knowledge – all staff were born and raised in the Greater Geelong region – with a national pool of industry expertise.[/vc_column_text][vc_column][vc_row][vc_row][vc_column width="7/12?"][vc_column_text css=".vc_custom_1496620595794{padding-bottom: 1em !important;}"]Ben, who joined the firm in 2014 and this year received his Liquidator's registration, has been working with clients throughout Greater Geelong, Bellarine and the Surf Coast, and the western district. His experience encompasses manufacturing, retail, transport, agriculture, tourism, and hospitality.

"These are unique regions with unique economies and many are heavily reliant on one or two major industries for their economic livelihood," says Ben. "It's important to understand what defines these towns and the factors that are impacting them and their businesses."[/vc_column_text][vc_column][vc_column width="5/12?"][vc_single_image image="2267? img_size="full"][/vc_column][vc_row][vc_row][vc_column width="5/12?"][vc_single_image image="1378? img_size="full"][/vc_column][vc_column width="7/12?"][vc_column_text css=".vc_custom_1496620606958{padding-bottom: 1em !important;}"]Recently Ben, who grew up in Geelong, and fellow Jirsch Sutherland Senior Manager [Rebecca Hindson](#) travelled around regional and rural Victoria visiting towns and cities including Portland, Hamilton, Bendigo, Wangaratta, Ballarat and Warrnambool, where they met with a number of accountancy and legal firms.

"Relationships and being involved with local communities are a vital part of how we conduct our business," says Rebecca, whose parents and several siblings live in the Surf Coast Shire.[/vc_column_text][vc_column][vc_row][vc_row][vc_column][vc_column_text css=".vc_custom_1496620618166{padding-bottom: 1em !important;}"]"Combined, Phil and Geoff have more than 40 years of relationships in the region. They have an incredible wealth of knowledge and insight into the regions and it's important that we preserve this legacy.

"It's been very positive meeting accountants and lawyers that the team has existing relationships with, not to mention establishing new relationships," Rebecca explains. "We had some very interesting discussions in relation to problems their clients are facing and advising

them of possible solutions that they weren't aware of." [vc_column_text][vc_column][vc_row][vc_row][vc_column][vc_single_image image="6294? img_size="full"][vc_column_text css=".vc_custom_1496620629942{padding-bottom: 1em !important;}"]

From fenugreek to fraud

Over the past 10 years and, indeed, the almost 20 years since the Geelong firm was established, the team has worked on a range of simple and complex personal and corporate insolvencies. "We've handled the full gamut of matters – from fraud investigations, general business failures, companies that have failed due to poor management, through to a number of bankruptcies," explains Ben. [vc_column_text][vc_column][vc_row][vc_row][vc_column width="7/12?"][vc_column_text css=".vc_custom_1496620642126{padding-bottom: 1em !important;}"] Phil recounts a bankruptcy appointment which involved a cropping operation in north western Victoria where he achieved a great outcome.

"The farm was growing lentils, chickpeas and fenugreek, and we were able to let it keep successfully harvesting its crops for two years," he says. "The result was that the bankruptcy was annulled, all creditors were paid 100 cents in the dollar plus interest, and there was even a surplus. It was a great result. [vc_column_text][vc_column][vc_column width="5/12?"][vc_single_image image="1903? img_size="full"][vc_column][vc_row][vc_row][vc_column][vc_column_text]"My other memory of that job is being in the middle of 'nowhere', surrounded by fields, with not a light in sight."

Another highlight was handling the court-appointed receivership of the Framlingham Aboriginal Trust, Ben says. The trust runs the multi-million-dollar Framlingham Aboriginal Reserve, an autonomous community at Purnim in Victoria's west, and controls its land management activities, housing, finances, community and municipal services.

"This was a dispute resolution matter – one that involved a range of stakeholders and scenarios," he recalls. "There were big personalities, fraud allegations, shareholder boycotts, and court applications... There certainly wasn't a dull moment!" [vc_column_text][vc_column][vc_row]