

# Community buys Benambra store

**THOSE** who live in and around Benambra in the East Gippsland mountains have formed a community association to buy the local store. They take over on April 21.

Local beef producer Anne Faithfull (pictured) said the not-for-profit community association had been formed to run the business, with a unit trust to own the land and buildings.

She said they hoped to restore a petrol outlet at the store and extend the postal service to include bill paying and farm merchandise. At the moment, the community has no option but to buy petrol at Omeo, more than 20 kilometres away. It was feared this would lead to a loss of patronage for the store and that it might eventually close.

The group offered shares in the enterprise at \$1000 each, to a maximum of five per adult. They have raised \$235,000 for the project to date and hope to reach the target \$250,000.

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Mrs Faithfull said they hoped to attract some community program funding from the Victorian Government, with a chance of some Federal funding for work experience and training. The local shire also con-

tributed. "We were overwhelmed with the support. It just shows the strength of community. We've had support from all over the place. We're now looking for an experienced manager," Mrs Faithfull said.