PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

TAFCO member shop

A member who finishes work after the Myrtleford store closes should still be able to order tomorrow's feed.

We propose a mobile Shopify shop where members can find their usual products, pay by card or charge an approved Merlin account, then collect from Myrtleford or receive free delivery on their existing run. Staff can prepare an order from a clear record instead of taking it over the phone during the morning rush.

The proposed first release

Project decision	Proposal for TAFCO
Who it serves	Verified co-op members. Cash members pay through Shopify Payments. Approved account members can charge to Merlin. Both see the same retail prices.
What goes online	Launch with 350 products selected by TAFCO, prioritising the lines members order most often. Keep complex purchases available by phone.
What stays in place	Merlin handles the counter, inventory, debtor accounts and order approval. TAFCO's driver keeps the existing runs. The community website continues alongside the shop.
Investment and timing	One complete package of AUD $18,200 excluding GST for 350 products. It covers the build, product research, image and video content, launch and a month of self-healing storefront support. Target three to four weeks from kickoff, subject to Merlin testing and agreed inputs.

What success looks like

Before launch, count ordering calls on the day before a run and time a handful of typical phone orders. At 30 and 90 days, compare calls on the same route days, after-hours orders, staff minutes per order and orders needing manual correction. Treat an existing member moving from phone to web as time saved. Count incremental sales separately.

MEMBERS AND CHECKOUT

Two ways to pay and one set of prices

The two members buying the same bag of feed should see the same price. Only the approved debtor can put it on account.

Buyer	What the member sees	What the office sees
Cash member	Signs in as a verified member, pays through Shopify Payments and chooses pickup or delivery on their assigned run.	The paid order arrives in Merlin with the Shopify reference and tender. Staff reconcile the amount and stock movement.
Approved account member	Signs in with a verified link to the correct Merlin debtor and chooses to charge the purchase to account. No card charge is taken.	An account order awaits staff acceptance or rejection in Merlin. Staff validate the debtor and any hold. Merlin applies EOM + NET30 and handles the statement.
Visitor or uncertain identity	Where product information is public, visitors can browse and enquire about membership. Buying requires verified membership. An unrecognised member can ask the office to verify their identity.	Staff can resolve changed contact details or an ambiguous match. No unverified identity can create a charge or bypass the member purchase rule.

Prove the account entry first

With Bruce, the accounts operator and Merlin, run an authorised unpaid test order against a designated test debtor. Compare the Shopify reference, Merlin tender, ledger entry, amount and expected due date. Check examples either side of month end. Replay the export and confirm a single posting. Use a held account to show how staff reject it before the sale is final.

One membership record may establish who can shop. Credit approval is a separate Merlin decision. We will agree the stable member and debtor identifiers, who can link a buyer to an account and what the customer sees while an order awaits approval. Store credit and a generic Net 30 setting cannot demonstrate this workflow.

Existing integration evidence

The 9 November Shopify review found active stock updates from Cobalt Retail for TAFCO, no Shopify orders and incomplete Shopify Payments onboarding. A separate Merlin Cobalt app opened an example address. Neither that screen nor the observed inventory activity establishes account posting or end-to-end API health.

STOREFRONT AND CATALOGUE

Start with the products members already order

The launch catalogue includes 350 products. TAFCO can prioritise frequently delivered lines such as feed and pet food for the first content review.

A shop built for a phone at the end of the day

Tim and the Sonder team design the mobile shop in Figma using TAFCO's brand assets. We create video and image content to showcase the store and its products and make shopping clear. Members can see the pack they are buying and how to order for pickup or their scheduled run. A standard Shopify theme lets staff maintain the shop after handover.

Prepare the 350-product catalogue together

Rupert selects the range. Sonder gathers and scrapes catalogue data for all 350 products from TAFCO and authorised supplier sources. We match each item by SKU and use verified details to write descriptions, confirm specifications, pack sizes and variants, and add product photos where available. We flag missing or conflicting facts for TAFCO's review before publishing.

Bruce reported 30 items loaded. The Shopify review found 19 published products, all with a unique SKU and the default variant. We will reconcile the lists and test bulk activation with Merlin. Oaten Chaff had a placeholder description and the 45 kg LPG cylinder had zero shipping weight. Check weights and route restrictions against the actual items.

Where members still need a conversation

A standard bag of feed or 20 kg dog food is well suited to repeat ordering and TAFCO's free run. Water tanks, fencing bundles, cattle crushes and combinations of gates should offer a clear phone enquiry. LPG can join the sellable range when TAFCO confirms the cylinder, exchange and delivery rules.

The community website

Link the existing site to the shop and provide a route back. Sonder handles the shop domain, product metadata, indexing and analytics. Assess Google Merchant eligibility against the member-only purchase model before recommending a product feed. TAFCO will check the implications for Alpine Outreach and Stones Throw with Kerry before considering a wider migration.

MERLIN AND FULFILMENT

Keep the order desk and delivery runs familiar

Merlin owns SKUs, base and sale prices, inventory, purchasing, in-store sales and debtors. Shopify owns browsing, collections, online checkout and web content. We will document field ownership for images and descriptions and test that an office edit survives the next sync. Rupert put the current cost of Merlin finance and POS at just over $1,000 per month for roughly 12 users. It already supports member and dividend records. That makes replacing it a separate business decision.

From order to driver

After an online order arrives, the office reviews it in Merlin, confirms the account or payment status, accepts or declines it, then prints the pick slip. A collection order is marked ready when staff have picked it. A delivery slip goes into the weekday folder. The driver decides the stop sequence. Confirm which action sends the member each update and how staff handle an out-of-stock line.

Existing run	Areas identified by TAFCO
Daily	Myrtleford
Tuesday	Whorouly and King Valley
Wednesday	Beechworth and Mudgegonga
Thursday	Kiewa Valley
Friday	Porepunkah and Bright

Delivery is free for members on their scheduled run. The member selects pickup or delivery and sees the applicable run. TAFCO assigns the day. Some route boundaries cross postcodes. Use TAFCO's localities, exceptions or member-to-route list, then test boundary addresses, cut-offs and holidays. Keep the existing daily and Friday prototype zones as test data. National parcel rates and customer-selected delivery dates sit outside the launch.

Give staff a way to spot a stalled order

Bruce reports a ten-minute default sync, limited logging and a previous freeze that required Merlin to restart the API. We will document the last successful update, staff checks, safe retries, escalation and responsibility for API upgrades. Use an embedded Shopify view for order status or manual sync where the connector exposes those actions. Agree any bespoke service, hosting or third-party fees before adding it.

If Shopify B2B is used for account checkout, its standard local-delivery method is unavailable there. Prove a route-specific shipping option and pickup on the chosen plan for both member types.

Shopify guidance on B2B delivery and pickup

DELIVERY AND SUPPORT

Three to four weeks to launch

Tim and Sonder's lead developer run the build. TAFCO supplies brand assets, the ranked products and its operating rules, then gives feedback on a working shop.

Target	Sonder delivers	TAFCO and Merlin input
Week 1	Trace one paid and one unpaid order, verify member matching and inspect recovery evidence. Present the supported design and a Figma walkthrough.	Bruce coordinates Merlin and its integration guide. Rupert supplies brand assets and the list of 350 products and their SKUs. TAFCO names an accounts and an operations reviewer.
Week 2	Build the member checkout and routes. Research catalogue records, match SKUs and create product images and video for the shop preview.	Office checks a sample of product facts. Operations confirms pickup timing, route boundaries, cut-offs and special items.
Weeks 3–4	Complete the catalogue, acceptance tests, domain, SEO and analytics. Walk up to three back-office users through a live practice run and supply a short desk guide. Coordinate release with TAFCO.	Finance signs off both tenders, due dates and reversals. Operations signs off dispatch and the member experience. Rupert authorises launch.
First month after launch	Monitor orders, fix launch defects and hand over the field map, test record, contacts and guide. Sonder's self-healing storefront service continually runs experiments on how members find products and choose pickup or scheduled delivery.	Flag order exceptions and review proposed storefront changes. Upgrades are applied automatically only if TAFCO opts in. Review future support at handover.

If a dependency changes the date

The target assumes timely Merlin access, test records and feedback on product and route exceptions. If an unpaid order fails to post or recover, Sonder and Merlin investigate and retest it with TAFCO. Finance checks the ledger evidence before account checkout goes live.

After the first month

TAFCO runs orders and account approvals. Sonder can provide Shopify support on an agreed basis. Merlin's support hours, connector diagnostics and API upgrade responsibility need vendor confirmation. Any ongoing Sonder fee, service hours or response target will be agreed separately.

ACCEPTANCE

What TAFCO will see before signing off

Sonder will record expected and actual results against the 16 scenarios in TAFCO's original brief, plus the membership, credit and route conditions agreed in discovery. Use designated test records and anonymised references that staff can check in both systems.

Test group	Acceptance evidence
Catalogue and pricing · 01–03	Publish a Merlin item and change its base price and sale price. The correct Shopify variant updates while agreed web content survives.
Stock and availability · 04–05, 14–15	Change stock, sell the last unit at the counter, try an out-of-stock basket and withdraw an item. Record sync timing, stock reservation and the staff action when two customers want the last item.
Paid orders and identity · 06–09	Pay as a verified cash member, import the order, match an existing buyer and create a new Shopify identity for an eligible member. Compare tender, total and references. A visitor cannot buy.
Fulfilment and reversals · 10–13	Collect one order and deliver another. Cancel an order and refund a card payment. Verify stock, notification, financial reversal and printout. An unpaid cancellation cannot trigger a cash refund.
Interruption and recovery · 16	With Merlin, trace a delayed order through an interruption and restart. Replaying the same reference creates exactly one sale. Staff can identify an exception and escalate it.
Account trading	The approved buyer charges the correct debtor. Finance verifies the due date on either side of month end. Demonstrate held, ambiguous and changed-contact cases, as well as rejection and reversal.
Scheduled member delivery	Test cash and credit members, both sides of a route boundary and cut-off, a restricted mixed basket and Myrtleford pickup. The delivery promise on screen matches the weekday folder.

The decisive evidence is the Shopify order beside the Merlin transaction and ledger entry. Finance and operations approve their test results before the store opens to members.

INVESTMENT AND NEXT STEPS

Investment for 350 products

The complete 350-product package is AUD $18,200 excluding GST. It includes one month of support from launch with Sonder's self-healing storefront service.

The four amounts below show how the package fee is allocated. All four are included. Merlin validation covers the test order, debtor match, due date and recovery evidence that finance reviews before launch.

Included work	AUD ex GST
Merlin technical validation and documented account test	$3,000
Shop design, 350-product catalogue research, images and video	$6,100
Member checkout, account tender, delivery and collection setup	$4,000
Testing, staff training, launch and one month of self-healing storefront support	$5,100
Complete package	$18,200

Payment schedule	AUD ex GST
50% upfront	$9,100
25% on delivery of the completed shop	$4,550
25% after the month of post-launch support ends and TAFCO confirms it is happy with the handover	$4,550

Shopify plan and payment fees, paid themes, Merlin vendor charges and any separately agreed hosting or bespoke middleware are external costs. We will identify any additions before commitment. Further support after the included month can be agreed separately.

The case for the investment

Rupert noted that many lines carry about a 10% margin. On that example, recovering $18,200 wholly through incremental sales would take about $182,000 in extra sales. Fewer calls, less rekeying and easier after-hours service are benefits in their own right. Measure these separately when reviewing the first two months.

Next decision

Rupert and Bruce review the complete package and payment schedule. At kickoff, Bruce shares the Merlin integration guide and Rupert confirms the 350-product list. POS replacement, Xero integration and social automation remain possible later projects.