

AWISA THE MAGAZINE

FOR THE CABINET, JOINERY, FURNITURE, TIMBER AND PANEL INDUSTRIES



PUBLISHED BY THE AUSTRALIAN WOODWORKING INDUSTRY SUPPLIERS ASSOCIATION LIMITED

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AWISA THE MAGAZINE

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DEAR READER,

Welcome to our first edition of 2013. In our last edition we announced that AWISA 2014 will take place at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre from 6-9 August 2014. The reaction to this decision has been enthusiastic, and in the year to come we look forward to bringing you comprehensive details about the show. For those of you who are not up with the news and are puzzled by the change of venue, we should explain that the NSW state government is redeveloping the Darling Harbour precinct in Sydney. The exhibition centre closes at the end of this year, with a new centre opening early 2017. See our Summer edition at www.awisa.com for more details.

Two years ago the major trade associations in the furniture, cabinetmaking and joinery (FCJ) industries formed the FCJ Alliance. AWISA is very much involved. The FCJA is very active but much of its work is hidden from the view of those in workshops and factories around the country. For example, the FCJA has employed a lobbyist and for the first time in many years, the issues of the FCJ industries are being drawn to the attention of all sides of politics in Canberra.

The FCJA is funded by the various participating trade associations. AWISA encourages any reader who is not a member of one of these associations to join, in the knowledge that their membership fees will be helping that association provide funds and association officers' time to the FCJA.

On a lighter note, AWISA – The Magazine seems to have developed a passion for guitars. In our last Spring edition we featured Maton guitars. In this issue we feature Thomas Lloyd guitars. Maybe that's enough on that subject for a while. If you know of someone in any part of the woodworking industry who is doing something interesting and unusual, please let us know. We would be keen to write an article about them.

GEOFF HOLLAND

General manager
Australian Woodworking Industry
Suppliers Association Limited

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Association Limited
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EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

Geoff Holland
General Manager, AWISA Ltd
Phone 02 9918 3661
Email: info@awisa.com

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

John Halkett, Simon Hodgson,
Anton Gerner, Geoff Bills,
Jim Bowden and Eric Lytton.

DESIGN

Felicity Carruthers

PRINTER

Major Graphics Printers Pty Ltd

Post all correspondence to:
AWISA Ltd
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Front cover photograph courtesy
Leitz Tooling Systems.

For more details see page 23.

by Jim Bowden

SKILLS

Trade college develops new apprentice skills

THE RESOURCES boom has robbed the building industry of trade apprentices who have headed to mining towns, attracted by quick cash gains. Many of them have ducked apprenticeship training for the quick buck that simply driving a truck can provide – and this, in turn, has sponged up skills that the building sector will need for the inevitable upturn.

“But this imbalance is about to change, brought on by the anticipated slowdown in the mining industry and its wrangling over government policies and the mining tax,” says David McDonald, trade trainer at the unique Australian Trade College at Scarborough, a Moreton Bay suburb north of Brisbane.

“They’re coming back – and they’re coming back to complete apprenticeships in wood-related skills such as joinery, cabinetmaking, kitchens and bathrooms and this is extending to manufacturing and solid timber. These are the home-bred skills we need – we don’t want to go chasing overseas for our apprentices when we can develop the talent here.”

The Australian Trade College North Brisbane is a fully accredited registered training organisation

set up in 2006 under then prime minister John Howard’s ‘super-TAFE’ scheme’. Sadly, with the change of government, this plan fell by the wayside. But the college is flourishing and its curriculum is clearly identifying the needs of industry.

The college and its students are winning awards and accolades across both the business and education sectors. In July, Mr McDonald was at the AWISA exhibition in Sydney to see student William Hinrichsen collect the Queensland state prize in the coveted John Tiddy Memorial Awards for wood working apprentices. William was a school-based cabinetmaker who finished Year 12 and rolled on to a full-time apprenticeship – and he picked up a good job working with solid timber, not just knocking up white boards for cabinets.

students can choose to come to us at the end of year 10

“What sets the trade college apart from others is that Year 11 and 12 students can make the choice to come to us at the end of Year 10, specifically to pursue a trade,” Mr McDonald said. “They start by learning specific trades and at the end of year 12 they’ve completed 45% of their trade training.”

“And because we also offer full-time apprenticeships as an RTO, students can finish year 12 and then come back to us to complete their training. This is a unique concept – other schools still provide school-based apprenticeships but their students only have one day a week training and one day a week with an employer. When it comes around to the next week of training, many of them have forgotten everything.”

Mr McDonald said students spent one month full time at school and one month with an employer, so they were on rotations throughout the school year.

“Employers love that – they get a good bite at them. They can teach and mould the apprentices on the job site for a month. And when they return

Leighanne Daniels, marketing manager with apprentice services group MRAEL, meets students Jack Kelly (Year 12) of Bray Park, and Jacob Invenov (Year 11) of Morayfield during a visit to the Australian Trade College. College trainer David McDonald looks on.



'They're coming back – and they're coming back to complete apprenticeships in wood-related skills' – David McDonald

A unique concept - with the resources to provide contemporary skills and knowledge

to college, students can complete their school subjects as well as their trade training. And because it's a trade college they are not doing subjects such as geography, music or history. They do maths, English and APT. So they do four subjects in Years 11 and 12 and their trade training counts towards a Queensland Certificate of Education – basically a high school certificate. We've have never had fewer than 90% of students who don't walk away with this certificate."

Mr McDonald admitted the college "is not a big school in the scheme of things". But he proudly points to a tally of about 350 Year 11 and 12 students completing wood-related training over the past 12 months.

"And now with full-time apprenticeship training – initially we were set up for only school-based training – we've got a bit smarter and we're making sure the proper skills are there and ready when they're needed."

Mr McDonald said changes to training packages at the college had seen cabinetmakers learn more about the sustainability of the resources used in the industry, as well as greater emphasis on customer service and satisfaction.

"In recent years, mainstream cabinetmaking has taken more of a manufacturing focus rather than a timber furniture focus," he said.

"In part, this has occurred as Australian businesses fight to compete in a global economy. Since the inception of a new kitchen and bathroom stream for cabinetmaking training, the college has developed its resources to provide contemporary skills and knowledge to apprentices."

The college is trialling some new products including plastic-boards and CAD programs and has been invited to participate as a training advisor for the newly-formed FCJ (furnishing, cabinetmaking and joinery) Alliance.

Hettich, as a major sponsor of the college, has provided new resources for kitchen and bathroom training in the form of product brochures and catalogues and electronic materials around the company's latest products. The company has also offered a trip to Germany to inspect its production facilities and visit the Interzum trade show to be awarded to the college's school-based cabinetmaker of the year for 2012. ■



Trade trainer at the Australian Trade College David McDonald supervises Year 12 student apprentices Jack Butler of Dayboro (left) and Alex Coleman of Redcliffe.

by Geoff Bills

outlook

The rise of the apartment

HOUSING TURNS UP

Recently released preliminary estimates of building activity show that work done on new housing in Australia increased in the last quarter of 2012 and was greater than a year earlier.

Work done on houses rose by 2.2 per cent and was 1.6 per cent greater than a year earlier; work on multi-unit housing increased by 1.9 per cent and was up 3.7 per cent on a year ago.

As Chart 1 shows, over the past three years, house-building has been a lacklustre affair in all of the main states: trending downward in every state and with only Victoria and Queensland showing some recent improvement.

With multi-unit housing, the trends in Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia have been much the same as the trends in house-building: a sad three-year decline.

In Victoria, however, there has been a fairly steady rise in activity over the three years; and, in New South Wales, an impressive boom over the last six months of 2012.

What are these multi-units and why have they become so popular?

Multi-units defined

We use the term 'multi-unit housing' or 'multi-units' to describe all forms of permanent housing that are not detached houses.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) calls them 'other dwellings' and identifies five types:

- semi-detached row or terrace houses of one storey
- semi-detached row or terrace houses of two or more storeys
- flats in a building of one or two storeys

- flats in a building of three storeys
- flats in a building of four or more storeys.

Real estate agents call some of these types of dwellings flats, units, townhouses or apartments: often depending on how expensive they are!

Others often refer to them as medium-density housing.

Why so popular?

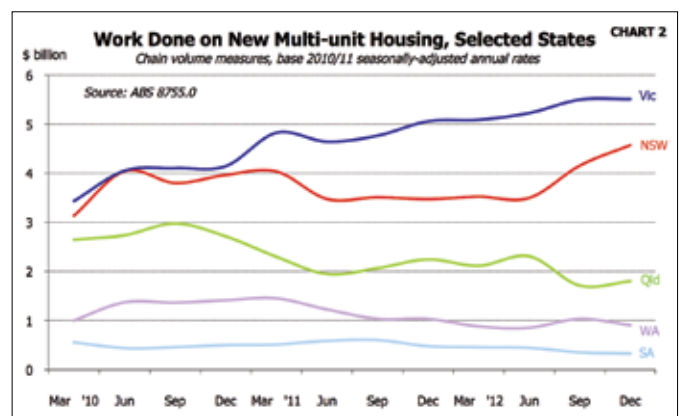
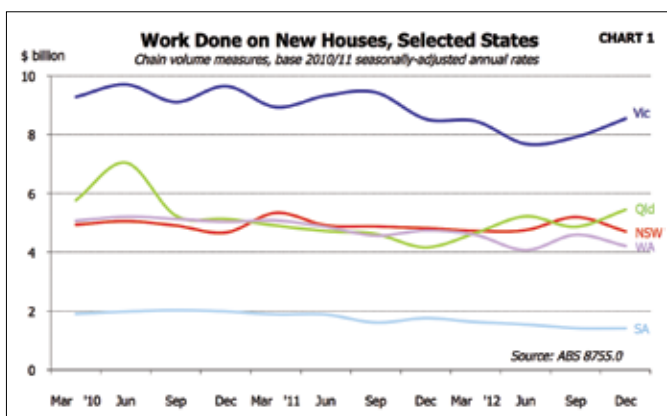
In the larger capital cities, and especially in Sydney and Melbourne, a number of factors – demographic, social, economic and cultural – have combined to favour medium-density housing:

- Large numbers of baby-boomers, born between 1945 and 1970 when birth rates were high, are now becoming empty-nesters, and many are looking for smaller homes that are easier to maintain.
- Young people are marrying later and having fewer children.
- Divorce rates are high, and the number of single-parent families is increasing.
- Many more women are working, earning high incomes and choosing to live in apartments of their own.

Another reason is that multi-units are cheaper than houses. In the September quarter of 2012, the median price of a multi-unit dwelling in an Australian capital city was \$423,400: 18 per cent less than the \$515,700 cost of a house.

For these and other reasons, households have been getting smaller: the average size of households has fallen from 2.9 persons in 1986 to 2.6 persons in 2011.

Much of the medium-density housing built in recent years has been in inner-city areas, and much has been multi-storey.





Geoff Bills

Geoff Bills is an independent economist with long experience analysing and forecasting economic activity in Australia.

In 1993/94, only 3 per cent of all multi-unit construction was of four or more storeys. A decade later this proportion had risen to 14 per cent and last year it reached a record high of 21.5 per cent. High-rise apartment living has certainly been on the rise.

The collapse of the office-building boom in the early 1990s caused a sharp fall in inner-city land prices and made residential development economically possible – often by converting empty office blocks to apartments.

The exodus of manufacturing, warehousing and retailing activities from inner-city areas has over the years similarly freed land for residential development.

For many young business and professional people, whose work is increasingly in the service industries, apartments near their work are attractive. They are attractive for lifestyle reasons too, for eating out and for entertainment.

Traffic congestion in the larger cities, especially Sydney and Melbourne, has certainly hastened the trend towards inner-city apartment dwelling. The failure of governments to provide adequate public transport to outer suburbs has been a major contributor to this congestion.

Shortages of land, and increases in the cost of developing new outer-ring land for housing, mainly government induced, have been especially important in encouraging medium-density building in the inner and middle suburbs of Sydney.

As Chart 3 shows, the trend towards apartments seems not to have been confined to New South Wales and Victoria.

A closer examination of annual data since 1980/81 in fact shows a trend towards houses rather than apartments in South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania. As housing has generally been much more affordable in those states than in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland,

it is easy to conclude that people will buy houses when they can afford them, multi-units when they cannot.

But that conclusion is challenged by the very high market shares held by multi-units in the territories: for in both the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory housing is much more affordable than in any of the states.

That happens, however, not because dwelling prices are low: they are higher than in most states. Housing is affordable in the territories because median family incomes are high. In the Australian Capital Territory they are currently 85 per cent higher than the national median, mainly because of the very high proportion of women in the workforce, and in the Northern Territory they are 51 per cent higher than the national median. So these well-off people choose to live in apartments for reasons other than their relatively low cost.

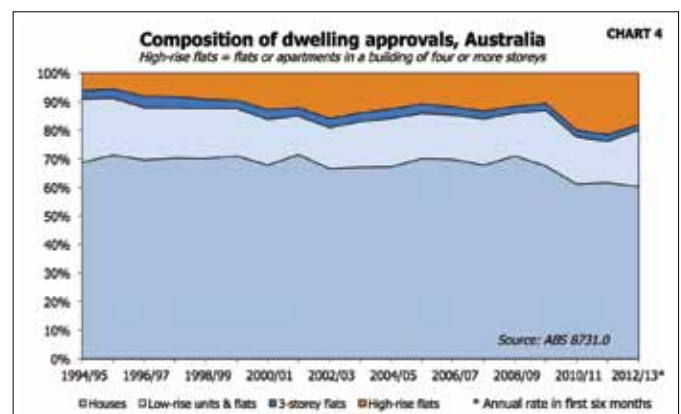
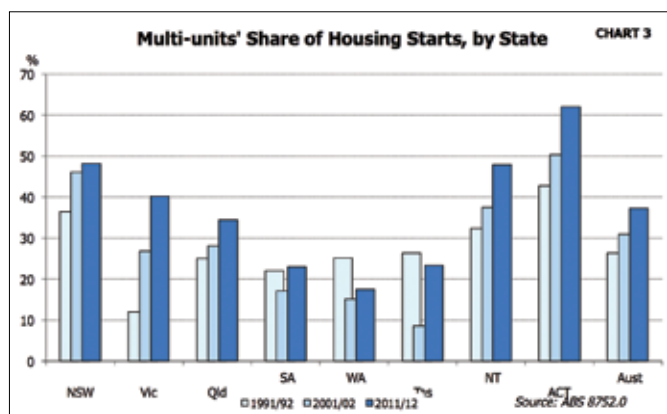
The trend away from building houses and towards multi-units, and especially towards high-rise flats or apartments, is well illustrated in Chart 4.

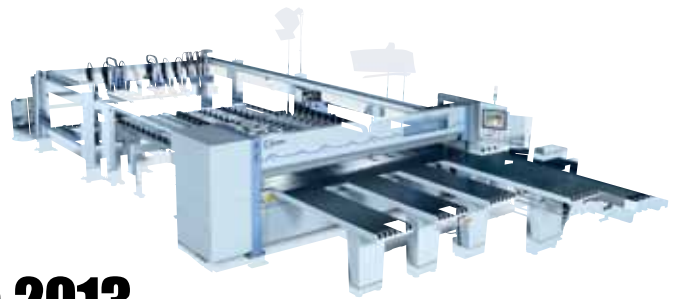
Between 1994/95 and the first half of 2012/13, houses' share of the new housing market has fallen from around 70 per cent to 60 per cent, and the share of high-rise apartments has tripled from 6 per cent to 18 per cent.

Interestingly, in the latest half year by far the biggest rise has been in low-rise units and flats.

In the first half of 2012/13 the annual rate of total dwelling approvals was 150,220, 3 per cent higher than approvals of 146,250 in 2011/12.

Approvals of houses remained steady at around 90,000 and approvals of 3-storey and high-rise flats fell, but approvals of low-rise units and flats rose by 41 per cent from 21,100 to 29,700, increasing their market share to a near record 20 per cent. ■





On exhibit in Hall 26: Holzma HKL 380 angular system

The Holzma highlights at Ligna 2013

Solutions to make daily work easier, to improve efficiency, to prevent errors, to increase flexibility and output – Holzma will be showcasing many innovations on this theme at Ligna 2013. New technologies, new processes and a completely revamped product portfolio provide for more efficiency in panel cutting. On show daily from 6 to 10 May in Hall 11 and Hall 26 at Ligna in Hanover, Germany.

More choice, more technology, more freedom

Both craft producers and industrial establishments today often produce in small quantities or even just one piece. They use a wide variety of often highly sensitive materials and have to face up to increasing deadline and cost pressure. This calls for modern machinery that can be individually adapted to meet the needs of the company and delivers a fast return on investment.

Holzma now provides a new dimension of this freedom. The German engineering company has radically revamped, streamlined and simplified its range of products in the 2, 3 and 4 series. For instance, there are now more optional extras for many of the saw models. That saves costs, simplifies investment decisions and increases flexibility – also for retrofits at a later date.

New solutions for intelligent handling

Holzma has conducted in-depth analysis of processes related to cutting operations and offers more and more concepts to reduce inefficient non-productive time. With the interests of its customers in mind, Holzma provides for greater efficiency in production in this area too. The latest innovation, a worldwide first, is going to be launched at the Ligna fair. With this new product, Holzma ensures

Automatic labelling near the pressure beam: creates transparency, prevents errors, ensures smooth workflows.

ergonomic destacking, smooth processes, minimization of errors, no bottlenecks at the saw caused by workers, better ergonomics and flexible use of personnel

Holzma Innovation Centre in Hall 26

Two other new developments from Holzma await visitors of this year's Ligna fair in Hall 26 – in the Innovation Centre of the Homag Group. Only this much now: on show will be a long-established technology supplemented by an enhancement which is unique on the market. Furthermore, the Innovation Centre will be presenting a solution with completely new approaches in panel sizing technology.

Even more technology, service, software and systems

Further new developments relating to panel sizing round off the Holzma highlights at the fair. These range from new EcoPlus technologies for even greater energy savings to optimized extraction solutions, innovations for the in-topic of saw-store combinations and new software products from Holzma. For example, new tools and options for the CADmatic machine controller and the new version 9 of the optimization software Cut Rite will be demonstrated. The Systems Engineering team will also be present at the fair, as will the Holzma service team with attractive fair offers.

Holzma machines at Ligna 2013

Live demonstrations at the fair will allow visitors to experience first-hand performance and potentialities of modern Holzma panel saws.

In Hall 11:

- HPP 250 Optimat linked to a Bargstedt horizontal storage system, especially for small and medium-sized firms
- HPP 380 Optimat with the space-saving lift table feeding solution Easy2Feed

In Hall 26:

- HPL 570 ProfiLine
- HPP 380 ProfiLine linked to a Bargstedt horizontal storage system and with new destacking software for larger firms and industrial operations
- HKL 380 ProfiLine angular system
- The new extraction technology and the Innovation Centre



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by Gabrielle Chariton

This article first appeared in the Housing Industry Association's 'Housing' magazine and is reproduced here with the permission of the HIA.

Customised

Customised and high-tech

MORE THAN EVER before consumers want kitchens and bathrooms that showcase their individual style and complement the look and feel in other areas of the home. Kitchens have become a lifestyle centre, incorporating dining areas and opening up to the outdoors. Bathrooms bring a touch of luxury into the home, and are merging with dressing rooms or bedrooms to create a resort-like ambience. Here we look at some of the key areas of change for 2013.

Custom-built cabinetry

One of the strongest emerging trends is the move away from the cookie-cutter, imported flatpack cabinetry approach in favour of a room that's customised to homeowners' specific requirements.

According to the HIA-Jeld-Wen report, 'Kitchens & Bathrooms, Past Growth and Future Prospects 2011/12', 61 per cent of surveyed HIA K&B members prefer to use domestically manufactured fittings and fixtures, with 93 per cent of cabinetry manufactured locally.

According to kitchens and bathrooms designer and industry luminary Mal Corboy, "people are ... going back towards something that's really custom- designed, whether it be a kitchen or bathroom specific to their surroundings."

This trend towards customisation is happening across all price points in the kitchen sector, says award-winning Western Australia-based kitchen designer Debbie Ferguson, from Western Cabinets. "This also means the design options are limitless," she adds.



Photo courtesy Debbie Ferguson

The kitchen as a living area

HIA's 2012 Australian Kitchen Design of the Year and Australian Project of the Year winner, Kim Duffin, designer for Brisbane-based Sublime Architectural Interiors, says that in terms of kitchen layouts, "it's all about the table at the moment".

"It's a bit of a cliché but the kitchen is that true centre point of the home, and we're starting to see lots of built-in tables or islands integrated into the design. It's about getting back to basics," he says. As well as providing an anchor point for eating and socialising within the home, the island or table is often used to visually merge the kitchen with the living areas.

The assimilation with living areas is also leading a strong shift towards integrated or concealed appliances, Debbie Ferguson says. Induction hotplates and undermount rangehoods retain clean lines without compromising on functionality," she explains. "We're also seeing integrated fridges, microwaves and dishwashers."

Another development is the emergence of the 'scullery', or 'prep kitchen' in Australian and New Zealand kitchens, where space is abundant and clients wish to conceal everyday kitchen clutter from the living areas. This additional area will generally include food storage, an extra sink, microwave or wine storage.

"Clients are wanting to have almost two kitchens, so you have the one you can put all the dirty dishes into and the one that's out on display," Mal Corboy explains.

In warmer regions of Australia, the kitchen is also



Photo courtesy International Cabinets & Zorzi Builders Custom Estate



Photo courtesy Mal Corboy



Photo courtesy Sublime Architectural Interiors

extending out onto decks and balconies. Joe Stillitano, general manager of International Cabinets in Perth says more and more emphasis is being placed on alfresco areas, and "quite often the finishes within the kitchen and living areas will flow on to these outdoor areas."

This could be the fastest-growing addition to kitchens, with the kitchen and bathroom report stating that 19 per cent of respondents to the HIA survey had installed an outdoor kitchen as part of a kitchen renovation or installation.

Open-plan bathroom

Bathrooms – and in particular, ensuite bathrooms – are all about luxury and indulgence. There's an emphasis on resort or day-spa styling, with oversized, freestanding bathtubs, and custom- designed cabinetry.

"Ensuites are often linked to the walk- in wardrobe or dressing room," Debbie Ferguson says. "And, ideally, they are positioned next to a garden and lots of windows for natural light."

In an effort to introduce more light and spaciousness, walls between the bedroom and ensuite are shrinking, disappearing altogether, or being replaced by glass, such as in Joe Stillitano's breathtaking bathroom that won the HIA WA Regional Bathroom Project of the Year 2012. It is separated from its adjoining bedroom – and the magnificent views – by a glass wall.

Technology and innovation

Kim Duffin predicts that there will be more and more technology incorporated into projects as new products become available and more economical. Space- saving innovations such as electronically operated pop-up appliance cabinets integrated into benchtops will become essential in sculleries and smaller

kitchens, and there's a new generation of iPad- and iPhone-controlled devices hitting the market, he says.

"LED accent strip lighting, for example, can be programmable and hooked up to iPhone and iPad controls."

And when it comes to storage, Joe Stillitano says that practical design innovation in storage systems are making kitchens more user-friendly. "It is becoming more important to have an elegant and individual look rather abundance in storage," he explains. "This has led to better storage options within the cabinets themselves to maximize space and accessibility."

Tapware

Hot and cold ... boiling ... chilled ... sparkling ... whatever's wanted in the way of water, it seems, is now all available on tap in the modern kitchen. "Zip tap units have become very popular," Joe says. "It's about convenience as well as aesthetics: They eliminate the need to have a kettle sitting on the bench."

Mal adds that a couple of manufacturers offer taps that dispense chilled sparkling water. Now, that's definitely a new trend worth drinking to.

Colour, texture and pattern

And when it comes to individuality, it almost seems as if kitchens are becoming an 'anything goes' zone. Colour is most definitely making a comeback, with the designers predominantly citing strong shades of yellow, blue, pink and green – in blocks or as accents (think splashbacks or LED strips). Glossy, streamlined, white kitchens remain popular, as do those featuring a more organic, earthy look.

In Brisbane, Kim Duffin is forecasting woodgrain textures and fibres, and natural colours. "There's a focus on a very raw finish, a rustic finish. We're going as natural as possible, so rather than finely sand a benchtop so it's got a really smooth finish, it'll have a rough, saw-cut edge on it."

Mal Corboy also sees texture as becoming increasingly important. "People are looking for different textures, as opposed to pattern. So that may be going back to the brick tiles on splashbacks or looking at different products such as Laminam – a porcelain ceramic product that can be used on benchtops. Glass is still going to be dominant but with a sandblasted, matte finish."

And there's great news in the bathroom, where Mal predicts we may soon be bidding farewell to the ubiquitous beige-and-chocolate combination. "There's a bit more of a sway to having some beautiful colour in the bathroom," he says. "I'm doing a couple of bathrooms at the moment where we're using green and red tiles."

Joe Stillitano says that for some consumers, the sheer number of finishing products now available may become overwhelming. With so many options on offer, he adds, it is important to guide the client through the choices to achieve rooms that combine beauty and practicality with innovation and imagination. ■



productivity, macro

productivity (noun), the effectiveness of productive effort, especially in industry, as measured in terms of the rate of output per unit of input. (Oxford Dictionary definition)

Productivity, innovation, Productivity Commission, free trade, carbon tax, multi-factor productivity, flexible workforce, industrial relations, tax reform, poor management, output decline, skill shortages, pro-union industrial relations laws, Productivity Taskforce, Australian Manufacturing Council.....read in every newspaper or internet blog and the above 'buzz words' will be used to describe Australia's apparent decline in productivity over the past 10 years.

PRODUCTIVITY - A MACRO VIEW

- Australian's national productivity has stalled, and no is longer high compared to many other countries. (Australia was recently ranked 50th - Source: Leading Company 14/08/2012)
- Industrial relations does form part of Australian's productivity decline. The Howard years saw us work more hours for the same pay and with the current Fairwork (sic) Act, some would say that the pendulum has swung too far back towards the employee. My personal view is that I don't begrudge paying an employee for a good day's work, a good day's pay however...
 - o Another reform could involve superannuation. Employees should have compulsory superannuation; that is, all employees contribute a percentage after tax into their super fund of somewhere between 3-6%.
 - o Toyota's Australian president Max Yasuda recently complained that car industry factories were gripped by a culture of absenteeism and unions had blocked flexible work practices.

- o The bespoke nature of the furnishing and cabinet industries supplying a small home market doesn't have the economies of scale of a country like China.
- Management practices are partly to blame for Australia's national productivity decline (Financial Review Opinion piece). Manufacturing companies in Australia are represented by a large proportion of small and medium enterprises, generally family owned and operated, and fewer multinational companies operate here in Australia. Multinational companies often impose stronger management practices as opposed to family-run companies.
 - o Management skills can always be improved through training. (FIAA will be rolling out Supervisory training over the next few months)
 - o Australian managers are good at operational management.
 - o Australian managers are good at performance management such as setting productivity goals.
 - o Australian managers are poor at people management; we are bad at managing performance.

Training in post trade subjects is the key to better management of our factories. The training of our business owners and managers has been neglected over the years and is part of the solution to improving productivity.

Only policy changes at a federal level will see changes to productivity at the macro level. Sadly that wheel is a slow one. Every business owner can take their own steps in improving productivity in a micro view.

productivity, micro

PRODUCTIVITY - A MICRO VIEW

Productivity 101 - Productivity is measured by output (value added) per hour worked.

Someone in the organisation needs to set the 'standard'. Whether that is the business owner or the supervisor (preferably both), someone needs to. Remember, the 'fish stinks from the head' as an old manager once advised me years ago. How can you expect behavioural and attitudinal change when nobody in the organisation sets the bar.

- Set the standards for accountability.
 - Measure performance against the standards.
 - Punctuality.
 - Safety.
 - Attitude.
 - Quality.
 - A clear vision on what needs to be done.
 - Meet the customer's needs.
- o Bundy clock system for all employees to clock in and out each day underpinned by a bell or hooter to start and finish work and meal breaks.
 - o Stagger meal breaks so that core machinery such as CNC machines work continuously each day.
 - o Have a solid personal leave policy in place.
 - o Have a solid work health and safety policy in place.
 - o Measure performance per employee, per team/section and as a whole:
 - Move poor performers out of the business.
 - Promote high performers.
 - o Implement 5 S: "sort, set, shine, standardise and sustain", and add safety in there for good measure.
 - o Document every mistake and track it back to the source and fix it.
 - o Don't accept something that doesn't meet the standard; push it back to the source to fix it.
 - o Take time out to train your staff.
 - o Reward those who over achieve; don't reward mediocrity.
 - o Minute games
 - 15% of available time is made unavailable due to public holidays (9 days or 3.46%), personal leave or sick leave (10 days per year or 3.85%) and annual leave (20 days per year or 7.69%).
 - Reduce absenteeism by one day per year and you instantly receive a 0.385% increase in productivity.
- The available 260 days (approximately) reduces to 221 days per year to manufacture. Average 7.6 hours per day minus morning tea (10 minutes) equates to 7.43 hours available per day or 445.8 minutes per day.
 - Every minute lost to a non-value added activity cannot be made back up. This is a reason why we are addicted to overtime. Do you price the job to include overtime?
 - Noise or non-value added activities make up approximately 1/3 of all time spent. This includes reworks, material movements, employee movements and meetings to name but a few.
 - There are many software programs available to track the productivity of staff for those who can afford them. I have worked with a few and if managed correctly, will give you the necessary data to measure performance.
 - Succession planning may lay with your staff rather than in your own family. British research shows employee owned companies consistently perform better than their competitors. (Source: Financial Review 25/07/2012)
 - o In an article published in the Financial Review, an engineering firm has seen an 18% improvement in productivity since ownership has gone into the hands of the employees. It has removed the 'us and them' mentality.
 - o There is an instant change in behaviour and staff are a lot more keen to find work rather than leaving it up to the bosses.
 - o Absenteeism becomes non-existent.

Labour cost in the furnishing and cabinet industry are rising although the relatively low base pay rates are hard to attract skilled workers. Employers are battling to hold onto key staff without tipping over the edge when it comes paying above award wages and affecting the bottom line.

One way around this may lie in a wage based incentive scheme. Watch this space in the next AWISA issue. ■

Comments to Dean Brakell,
dbrakell@fiaa.com.au



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In the ongoing struggle for profitability and a competitive advantage, investing in the right equipment is more important in today's market place than ever. The right equipment allows shops to do more in one operation with less direct labor, produce more consistent, higher quality parts and help reduce the cost per piece produced. Justifying the investment in new machinery however, is a tough job. There's often the cry "I know I need a new machine but I just can't afford one at the moment". When is "the moment?" Sometimes the answer is only too clear.

One Altendorf representative visited a Melbourne client who was a mid to large shopfitter. The goal was to replace one of the client's four sliding table saws with a new CNC controlled saw. There was a clear need for such a saw; at least two of his saws were in continuous operation eight to ten hours each day. The operators were spending much of

their time performing unnecessary tasks due to the old age of the saws. It has been proven time after time that in circumstances such as these, an Elmo type of machine is capable of saving 30% of the operator's time on the saw. However, as the salesman sat down to talk, the owner of the company was emphatic. "We cannot afford a new saw," he said. "There's no meat in the work anymore, no margin!" He proceeded to add that he had just lost a very large contract worth several hundred thousand dollars, by just two thousand dollars.

After a quick analysis on the cutting component of the costing, the truth became clear. Not only could Altendorf's solution have come in under the winning quote, but also an extra nine thousand dollars would have been added to the profit line of the job. The question wasn't so much whether he could afford the saw, but whether he could afford to not invest in a new saw.

To add salt to the wounds, the winning tender was a well-known Altendorf user with two Elmo machines. While perhaps this particular business didn't win the tender based purely on the merits of its Altendorf saws, it's without a doubt they played a big part in the process.

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Batch size one: bespoke manufacture on a grand scale

The Orgatec office furniture trade fair in Germany in October 2012 left no-one in any doubt: Zero joint edge coating has already become the new standard in office furniture. Leading office furniture producers are currently upgrading their production to laser technology – or have already completed the transition. One of these is Palmberg, that has concentrated its efforts not only on laser edge technology but on rethinking its entire production process.

One-piece-flow, flexi production, batch size one – whatever name you give it, just-in-time production is increasingly becoming the solution of choice for producers required to complete bespoke one-off customer orders. Palmberg recognized the trend early on, and in 2008 began the first phase of a conversion process, and has now completed a

second phase. Flex 1 and Flex 2 are the names given to the two production lines that have been implemented using components from the Homag Group, and encompass the entire flow from warehouse to stacking, including edging using laser technology.

The big day arrived on 12 September 2012 when the second Flex plant was inaugurated. This was preceded by a minutely planned and meticulously executed conversion process encompassing a total of 397 project points to turn old into new. In just three weeks in June, the machine dismantling and new installation process was completed. "It was hard slog, but thanks to a great joint effort which saw our employees pulling together with the Homag Group team, we were able to witness planned deadlines and milestones adhered to and fulfilled", recalls Friedrich Henning, head of engineering at Palmberg.

Hard slog inadequately expresses what it means to load and unload over 50 trucks laden with a total cargo weighing just under 400 tonnes, set up the machinery and then network the line control system. The installation process started on 1 June 2012, and by 16 July the first part passed through the new plant. By 10 September, just two days before the official inauguration ceremony, the production intranet had just registered a brand new output record of just under 510 parts per hour.

Based in Schönberg, only around five kilometres as the crow flies from the Baltic Sea, Palmberg must be one of Germany's most northerly furniture manufacturers. Its history stretches back to the year 1922, and was (naturally) shaped by the years under the GDR regime with its state ownership and affiliation initially to the furniture collective combine Möbelkombinat Nord and later to the Schwerin Furniture Factory. When the border was opened up in 1989, the former technical director Uwe Blaumann negotiated the release of the company by the trust from its affiliation with the Schwerin furniture plant, resulting in the formation of Palmberg Möbel GmbH on 1 September 1990 with Uwe Blaumann as its managing director.

Homag involvement from the "zero hour"

Precisely one year later, after switching its production from bedroom to office furniture – with the help of Homag – the company was privatized. "Homag was there right from the 'zero hour' and supplied Palmberg with its very first edge banding machine". Today, the Mecklenburg-based firm is among German's top 5 office furniture suppliers, employs



One-piece-flow, flexi production, batch size one – whatever name you give it, just-in-time production is increasingly becoming the solution of choice

a staff of 440 and still swears by machines from the Homag Group. Henning explains the reasoning behind the decision to go with a single-source supplier: "Given the enormous degree of networking required with this number of different plant components, using a single manufacturer simply offers us greater security as regards data flow and all the different processing steps involved".

With an engineering graduate at its helm, the course charted by the company was always going to be technology-driven. The ever growing number of individual customer demands were the underlying factor behind Palmberg's decision to invest in its first batch size 1 plant in 2008. Even back then, the Homag Group with Bargstedt (storage, transport and stacking), Holzma (sawing) and Homag (edge processing) supplied the production technology at a total investment volume of around three million Euro.

"The fact that we were able to gather experience with the first Flex plant was an invaluable bonus", explains head of production Klaus Lutz. "This high degree of networking takes a lot of courage. But the good process reliability, availability of up to 90 per cent and, importantly too, the impressive level of edge quality achieved with the zero joint, were what persuaded us to also convert the remaining section of our component production over to flex production with laser edge." This change meant investment of a further 7.5 million Euro for Palmberg.

But this was easier said than done, as the geometry of what was known as Hall 2 with its area of 3800 square meters did not permit the same U-shaped formation to be planned as was used in the Flex 1 plant. The solution was found by Homag Group Engineering with project manager Andreas Holz and Roland Dargel working in cooperation with the Palmberg plant management in the form of a large flat "S" shape which meanders through the hall from the warehouse through the sawing and edge banding machines to the stacking station.

The saw is controlled by the storage system

The two Bargstedt area storage systems are loaded via two storing places and work according to the "storage system controls the saw" principle. The dual-axis area storage system TLF 610 Profi Line makes available the up to 7000 19 mm panels in 62 storage locations, while no more than



4750 panels with a thickness of 8 mm are distributed over the 17 storage locations of the single-axis storage system TLF 411 Optimat. Every week, Palmberg processes around 5000 half-format panels with a distribution of over 96 different types. Panel availability is ensured by a permanent automatic inventory of all storage systems – just one of many functions performed by the storage control system WoodStore.

Two HKL 380 Profi Line angular plants from Holzma are used for dividing the 19 mm panels, and are capable of cutting 8500 parts in two shifts. In the majority of cases, only one panel is cut per order in line with the batch size one principle, although the plants are capable of cutting complete books at any time. The pre-stacking table ensures a free-flowing infeed process into the saw, and the rotary fixture simplifies the process of performing head cuts. Both cross-cutting saws are also equipped with the Holzma PowerConcept. These separately traversable collet chucks

A specially developed edge preview takes charge of handling the wide selection of different laser edges.

- ▶ allow several strips to be simultaneously divided into different lengths. The parts are automatically labeled at the pressure beam of the two cross-cutting saws. As each part is assigned to a production order and can be identified at any time throughout the entire production process, the label is responsible for the fully automatic triggering of downstream processing steps.

A Holzma Profi HPP 380 stand-alone saw processes the 8 mm thick panels, both individually and also in books.

The parts cut to size in the Flex-2 line are manually removed from the angular saws and transferred to transport lines, collated at the end into 2.5m long layers and then fed directly for edge processing by a transfer gantry, or entered into a Bargstedt chain lift storage system with capacity for around 100 parts. "This decouples the sawing process from the edge processing operation, and allows the plant to take a breather", says Lutz. "After this, things really speed up with a feed rate of 30 m/min." The parts destined for the processing centre and the waste pieces are returned to the storage system via the transfer gantry or are diverted via the storage system.

Four single-sided laser edging machines in series

They are linked by double angular transfers, transfer and rotating stations and each fitted with a LaserTec gluing unit. All four machines work with an MF 21 multi-trimming unit for different profile formation at the edging materials. Any required grooves are trimmed into the material using SF30 automated standard trimming units. Machine 1 is additionally fitted with a reference edge router to create a parallel edge and a depth cutting unit. This exerts a positive impact on the optimization result and processing time required by the cutting saws. FK 31 profile trimming units in machines 3 and 4 take care of corner copying functions – coupled with short resetting gaps during profile resetting.

The final finish is imparted in all four machines equally by MN 21 multiple scraper blades.

The S shape described by the four edging machines is the special feature of the plant. This allows edging magazines positioned opposite each other to be set up with 24 coils each in only two locations within the 180 degree curves. "This offers a tremendous bonus for the operator", explains Lutz. "Our IT specialists have also developed an edge preview that allows us to master the wide variety of available decor finishes and matching edges. A great example of how the machines reflect the needs of the organization at Palmberg rather than the other way around."

Once the longitudinal edges have been approached, the zero line changes over from left to right by transportation over an inclined roller conveyor. The rotary transfer rotates the workpieces by 90 degrees. Special stop rails in the



The freeform sides of the furniture components are also given laser edges at the processing centers

This is used predominantly for sizing the back panels of cabinets and subsequent sawing of missing parts. This allows Palmberg to maintain a constant material flow in the angular plants. "A batch size 1 plant stands and falls by the organization of missing parts, as our in-house part production works entirely without a storage system", explains Friedrich Henning. "The parts are produced specifically to order with a lead time of no more than one or two days". At Palmberg, missing parts can be cut to size without interrupting production and then introduced into the standard process at any time. This system now works so well that the quota of complete deliveries leaving the factory is almost 100 per cent – a remarkable achievement given the daily cargo of around 350 desks, 300 pedestals and 800 cabinets that roll out every day in the company's own fleet of 20 trucks.



Head of production Klaus Lutz (left) and head of engineering Friedrich Henning at the monitor of the Bargstedt storage system.

infeed system (SI14) of machines 3 and 4 take care of angular accuracy, and transverse edge processing can begin. Because the processed edge of the parts is now shorter, the feed rate changes to 20 m/min. At the end of the processing line, the finished workpieces are intercepted by two robot cells that are responsible for around 90 per cent of the stacking. The remaining 10 per cent of parts travel to a porcupine buffer storage system that, like the robot cells, is supplied by Ligmatech. The next station with its 345 storage locations is then the stand-by and order picking area for assembly.

After only a few weeks, the technical and general management at Palmberg are already delighted with the results. "The investment has paid off and the concept has achieved everything we had hoped", sum up Klaus Lutz and Friedrich Henning. "Material stocks and storage costs have shrunk, cutting waste has been minimized, part production flexibility has maximized and importantly too, the quality of our products has been significantly further improved. The zero joint is undoubtedly here to stay".

HOMAG AUSTRALIA
Phone 02 8865 2700
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Above: View of one of the 180 degree curves in the S-shaped production line where two edging magazines are positioned opposite each other.

Right: Two robot cells take charge of stacking the furniture components at the end of the production line. Only around one in ten parts travels into the porcupine buffer.

Copy and pictures courtesy of HK 6/2012, editor Carsten Krüger



High emission wood panel products still surfacing on Australian markets

Flat pack book shelves sourced in Asia and purchased on the open market in south east Queensland have failed Australian standards for formaldehyde emissions. In one sample laboratory tested by EWPAA last month, emissions were above 3 mg/L. All samples tested were above the safe emission level of E1, recommended by the federal government's National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme (NICNAS).

"This random testing has revealed unsafe materials are still entering the Australian market – a potentially serious problem," EWPAA general manager Simon Dorries said.

NICNAS is responsible for the assessment and safe use of industrial chemicals. It has advised construction workers and wood panel users against the use of products that contain formaldehyde exceeding the low emission limits of E0 and E1.

Products meeting E0 and E1 are considered safe in all applications including indoor and poorly ventilated applications.

A report by NICNAS has detailed the potential health hazards associated with formaldehyde exposure from pressed wood products that fail to meet low emission standards.

random testing has revealed unsafe materials are still entering the Australian market

"This notice is very comforting for the wood processing industry that for many years has battled against market-damaging high emission imported materials such as flat panel products that fail to meet Australia's low emission standards," Mr Dorries said.

"Independent routine testing of imported panels purchased in the open market for formaldehyde emissions continues to show a disturbing failure rate when compared to acceptable low emission limits."

"More importantly, product is seldom branded to identify to the consumer low and high emission product as required by Australian standards. Furthermore, some of the labelling claims that identify product as low emission are highly questionable."

Mr Dorries said the EWPAA strictly maintained JAS-ANZ accredited certification schemes that guaranteed its members' factories complied with the Australian standards



When you're on a good thing, stick to it .. Simon Dorries, EWPAA general manager (centre) rolls out the green label campaign on emissions with Furnishing Industry Association of Australia's general manager Dean Brackell and CEO Martin Lewis.

on low formaldehyde levels. The association carries out regular laboratory tests in its NATA-accredited laboratories for formaldehyde emissions from all certified products manufactured in the Australasian region.

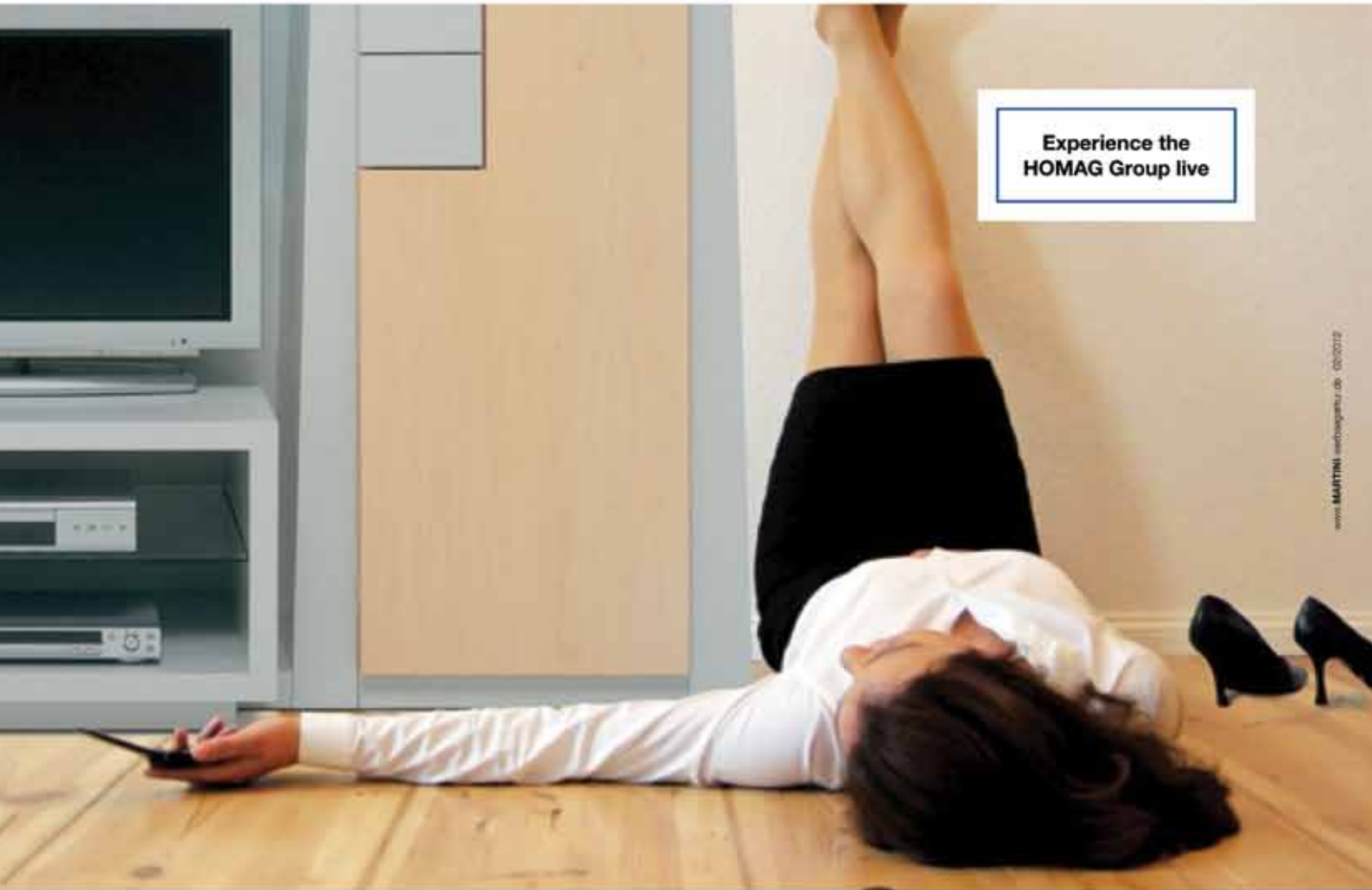
The construction industry and users of wood components have been notified to refer to the NICNAS material safety data sheet before purchasing any pressed wood products. The Information Sheet No 30 refers to Australian standards, labelling and product certification information available from the EWPAA.

The current national occupational exposure standard for formaldehyde is 1 ppm 8-hour time weighted average (TWA) and 2 ppm short-term exposure limit (STEL).

The EWPAA maintains two NATA-accredited laboratories to test for formaldehyde emissions. Formaldehyde emissions for all EWPAA certified products are tested on a monthly basis. The schemes are accredited by the Joint Accreditation System of Australian and New Zealand (JAS-ANZ).

The average formaldehyde emission for all structural and Type A exterior plywood products produced by EWPAA certified mills is only 0.14mg/L or one-third the permitted level for E0 and approximate to the natural formaldehyde emission from timber.

Visit www.nicnas.gov.au and go to publications/information.



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Don't miss the KBDi international tour



In what has become a much anticipated annual event in the industry's calendar, the KBDi will lead a group of enthusiastic participants on an international tour from 9–17 May—this year to include time at Interzum, the world's biggest trade fair for suppliers to the furniture industry and interior finishing.

The tour group will travel around Spain and Germany by coach, and will fly between the two countries. A major highlight will be their visit to Almeria in Spain, home of Silestone, and the Cosentino corporate facilities and showroom. Cosentino's sponsorship of this year's tour is sincerely appreciated by the KBDi.

Then, on to Cologne in Germany, where Interzum promises to 'live up to its reputation as a trade fair of innovations, once again to provide inspiration to the industry with the trends displayed. Exhibitors will inspire their visitors as much with global product launches as with trend-setting equipment and materials for common, as well as unusual, purposes.' Those who visit Interzum come away invigorated and ready to lift their businesses to the next level.

At from \$3880 per person (plus airfares to/from Australia), this nine-day tour represents excellent value that is further enhanced by its specific tailoring to suit the Australian industry. Check out www.kbdi.org.au for more information, and book quickly, as places are filling fast.

KBDi Design2013 awards programme - now open

Along with their trophies and the recognition of their peers and wider industry, the top three winners in this year's KBDi Design2013 Awards will secure places on the 2014 KBDi Designers' International Tour to iSaloni (incorporating Eurocucina), in Milan Italy.

Previous winners also attest to the value of their awards when it comes to marketing their services. It's a great thing to be able to promote 'KBDi winner' in marketing and promotional materials.

The judging process is rigorous and judges are drawn from the most experienced and proven designers, including previous years' winners. And, of course, the winners are announced at the glittering and prestigious Awards Gala, this year to be held at Noosa Heads.

The paperless on-line entry process makes it easy for entrants. For more information, go to www.kbdi.org.au or contact the KBDi on 1800 CKD CBD (253 223).

Catch the wave! Refocus for success

KBDi Design2013, will be held at the Outrigger Little Hastings Street Resort, Noosa Heads. The program will run from registration on Friday afternoon, 2 August, through to the fabulous Awards Gala on Saturday night, 3 August. Geared to helping attendees focus on success so that they are ready to 'catch the wave' as the economy turns, guest speakers will inspire and the event will provide a great opportunity for valuable professional development and networking.

Book now to attend, and perhaps plan a few days either side of conference for a winter break in sunny Noosa.

KITCHEN & BATHROOM DESIGNERS INSTITUTE
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Low noise diamond jointing cutters and trimming saws for edgebanding

Efficient furniture production today has both economic constraints plus the expectation of sustainable production, a major issue when marketing products. Using efficient machines and tools are important success factors in furniture production.

In addition to dust, noise is a major problem in the woodworking industry. It is important these days when developing new tools and machines to reduce noise levels at the source and to prevent them from increasing. If the noise level is lowered by just 10 dB(A), the human ear perceives this as a 50% reduction in noise. Research carried out on ways to reduce noise generated by cutting tools, has found that a closed circular tool body shape combined with a profile that matches the tool body and optimised gullet geometry will result in significant noise reduction.

In addressing the common noise problem Leitz introduced new noise-reducing tool solutions for pre milling and trimming on edge banding machines.

The introduction of the Diamaster Whispercut DP tipped jointing tool for the pre milling on edgebanding machines have seen manufacturers experience huge benefits. The new tool design has resulted in a noise reduction of up to 50% resulting in safer, more comfortable working conditions. The tools are much lighter than previous edgebanding tools due to the aluminium body design resulting in less degradation on the working parts of the machine aggregates resulting in improved finish quality.

This range of tools has been designed to have less impact on the environment by offering replacement diamond knives that can be re-sharpened so the same cutter-body can be reused many times. This is a substantial reduction

in the use of raw materials providing additional cost savings for the manufacturer.

With the new range of edgebanding tools designed by Leitz, there is a new range of low noise trimming saws referred to as AS Opticut and AS Opticut UT designs. These saws achieve a noise reduction of -8dBA over conventionally designed saws resulting in safer, more comfortable working conditions for employees. The Leitz range includes a range of saws with different tooth shapes and numbers of teeth for optimum quality. The tooth configuration is combined with saw bodies with irregular pitch and vibration dampening laser ornaments.



FRONT COVER IMAGE:

The tool is being sharpened and is a diamond hogger on a Vollmer erosion machine using a copper electrode. The machine is designed to trace the contour of the tool and then sharpen the tool using a copper electrode spinning at 300 rpm. During this process a diamond tool will have between .03mm up to 0.5mm of diamond removed to return the tool to a sharp condition with the time to sharpen a tool varying but in general the average time will be approximately 4.5 hours per tool. The same machine is used in the production of new tools - basically the same process as sharpening the tool but will involve a longer time on the machine due to a larger amount of diamond being removed during this process.

The reduction in noise levels on trimming saws will add additional benefits with the tools operating with less vibration, smoother running with a better cut quality and longer tool life. Overall tool noise reduction provides improved working conditions combined with the final benefit being improved quality and reduced overall production costs.

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- Cabinet widths up to 900mm only require one unit and activator
- Suitable for partial and over extension drawers
- Handles loads up to 30kg

InnoTech – Now with new fluid soft close system!

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- Plus, full extension integrated soft close system
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Technik für Möbel


Hettich

Hettich's "Good, Better, Best" drawer offering just got better

Hettich, one of the world's leading furniture fittings manufacturers, is excited to bring consumers more choice without compromising quality through its "Good, Better, Best" drawer system offering, that now features a new fluid soft close system in the InnoTech drawer range, and a lifetime warranty on all Hettich drawers.

The new InnoTech drawer system, that can be custom-made in either partial or full extension variants, has a new soft close system with fluid damper that improves the soft close action on the InnoTech's extremely durable and robust Quadro runners.

"We are continually looking for ways to bring your clients the best technology available, so have fine-tuned the soft close technology on all InnoTech drawers," says marketing manager for Hettich Australia and New Zealand, Dave Angus.

"We understand however that consumers need choice and certain restrictions may mean your client wants to consider other options – it is for that reason we have four levels in our comprehensive drawer range, so no matter the budget, Hettich has your client covered." adds Dave.

For renovators with a tight budget on their minds but quality in their hearts, cabinet makers can offer Hettich's MultiTech single wall steel drawer system at a very competitive price. As the entry point to the Hettich drawer system offering, the MultiTech drawer system can be used practically anywhere in the home.

Customers who want soft close technology, but don't want to move up to the double wall InnoTech range, can have integrated soft close unit and activator incorporated into their MultiTech drawer system. Undoubtedly one of Hettich's most popular sellers is the unique partial extension InnoTech double wall steel drawer system, that is another level above the MultiTech drawer system with soft close technology. InnoTech is a favourite among customers because of its high quality Quadro soft close runner system,

that now features a fluid soft close system to make any living space work beautifully. InnoTech, a versatile drawer system, can be made to order, and is available in four designer finishes – white, silver, stainless steel and anthracite.

Hettich's current premium level drawer system offering is the full extension InnoTech double wall steel drawer system with integrated fluid soft close technology. Full extension allows for maximum space optimisation as all items can be easily reached. Hettich understands design is an important aspect for clients so has a range of DesignSide panels that can be incorporated into the InnoTech drawer system. DesignSide panels allow for ultimate creativity – panels can be made from a variety of 6mm materials (such as glass and timber) to express the consumer's individuality, style and taste, and include replaceable patterns if so desired.

For the ultimate in design and ease why not opt for Hettich's push to open drawer system? The push to open mechanism is integrated into the drawer system and its ingenious design means the drawer will gently open when pushed lightly anywhere on the front surface. The InnoTech push to open product has a specific range suited to the bathroom environment. Consumers who prefer handle-free designs can opt for this push to open product that reflects a sleek, minimalist look.

Hettich offers a unique endorsed showroom programme where consumers can see how Hettich products work in real spaces. Visit hettich.com.au and click on the Endorsed Showroom tab, or download the Hettich smart phone app, to find the location of the nearest showroom. Alternatively, Hettich has a customer service line with knowledgeable and friendly representatives waiting to help.

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Dust problems now a thing of the past

ON A BRIGHT sunny morning, earlier last year, I was cutting some panels on my panel saw. In the sunlight I could see the dust coming off the saw, floating through the air. And lots of it. It was this that prompted me to review my dust extraction, which in May led to the installation of a new system by Australian company Micronair.

Like most small workshops, my dust extraction system had been built on and added to over the years. A series of smaller single, two and three bag dust extractors, hooked up to individual machines, with various random sized pipes, adaptors and hoses. It did work, but only just and a lot of dust got through the felt filters. It was less than ideal.

Not enough dust was being caught at the source and even more was being pumped back into the air through the felt filters. These filters required constant manual shaking, which again produced more dust in the air. We were also wasting a lot of time, as every time we emptied a bag, dust fell on the floor and the bags had to be carried a distance outside to the large waste bin to be emptied.

I decided enough was enough and it was time to start from scratch! After hours of research on the internet I concluded that I wanted my new system to be located outside. Not only would this free up some workshop floor space, but it made sense to me to be sucking the dust out of the building, closer to where it needs to go - our large dump bin. This meant I also needed to design a new ducting layout to suit my set up.

After even more research and a few phone calls to suppliers, I opted to go with a local company - Micronair, as they were not only able to supply the dust extractor, but also design the required ducting layout. I also liked the idea of buying a local product.

The dust extractors are made in Bayswater, Melbourne and can be custom configured to suit the customer. A range of extractor options are available, with different capacities and bin types. After a site visit by the manufacturer, a ducting plan was prepared and the correct fan size calculated for my requirements. I opted for a VC4 model, which has 4 pleated filters, a 7.5kW fan motor and an automatic shaker motor for cleaning. It is built from thick powder coated galvanised steel, with stainless steel fittings, making the fully sealed design weatherproof. I am impressed with the solid construction.

The pleated filters are tough spun bonded polyester with a filtration capability below 1 micron (1/1000th of a millimeter!). They are encased in heavy perforated metal cylinders to maintain shape and prevent large waste particles entering the pleats.

According to the manufacturer, dirty air enters an expansion chamber below the filters, which immediately and effectively separates the heavier waste straight into the collection bin and then circulates the fines downwards in a spiral motion over the filters. This is a very important advantage, as it stops these fines being entrained in the filters. This is meant to improve filter life greatly and also suction power.

To clean the filters, the VC4 has an auto timer, which turns on a high frequency shaker motor each time the main fan comes to a stop. This shakes the filters for around 30 seconds to clean them. Duration of the cleaning cycle is fully variable to fine tune the system to your workshop needs. There is also a manual switch for the shaker motor, which can be operated when needed.

As I don't use all my machines at once and don't always require the full capacity the VC4 offers, I decided to also add a VSD (Variable Speed Drive) to my system.

The VSD is the best way to control a fan motor, as there is great flexibility with parameters to control start up, power overload control and the speed of the fan. All of this greatly affects your electrical consumption. Micronair claim the power savings with a VSD fitted are between 35% - 50%!

My system has a sensor in the ducting which automatically monitors and optimizes airflow in the extraction trunks, depending on which blast gates I have open.

Options are available for different bin types, but I decided on a 240 litre wheelie bin model, which greatly reduces





the overall footprint of the machine. My VC4 has only a 900 x 900mm footprint. Plastic bin liners are used with this bin, which I cable tie up when full, before removing and transferring to the large waste dump bin.

After removing my old dust extraction system, I took the opportunity to move a few machines around and to reconfigure the workshop slightly, prior to installation of the new system. Installation of the new ducting took around 4 days. This was not an easy task, as I work in a small space, with a lot of obstacles and the ducting had to be worked around steel beams and walls. The installation guys were highly professional and very willing to help me to get small details right, just the way I wanted it for each machine.

After using the system for several months, I can report that I am very impressed with this machine. The amount of suction produced is outstanding. The amount of dust in the air and left on the floor has been greatly reduced, which has resulted in a healthier work environment and also a time saving for clean up. I am also impressed with the power consumption and it would seem the extra cost for the VSD is paying off. I have noticed no increase in my power bill after installing this machine, even though it has a much larger motor than any of my previous dust extractors. ■

Images 1 and 2: The old system - small single and two bag dust extractors, hooked up with various random sized pipes.

Images 3-5: The new system with VC4 unit installed.

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Australian companies take it to China

Compak Furniture is an Australian manufacturer specialising in developing, designing, producing, and marketing modern furniture. From their head office in Sydney, they supply to a global market from their production facilities in Shanghai and Fujian in China. Unlike many manufacturers that move part of their facilities off-shore, Compak Furniture maintains strong links to Australia and Australian manufacturers.

Managing director of Compak Furniture, Mr John Stibbard, explains some of the history of his company. "Compak Furniture had its beginnings in Newcastle, where we manufactured custom furniture for domestic and commercial clients. Business was good, but our goal was to get in to large scale production for retail outlets. From the beginning we knew that, in order to achieve this, we had to offer world class service and products and this meant tooling ourselves up with equipment that would be up to the challenge."

Unusually for this kind of relocation, they took their most important machines with them

"From the beginning we knew that computerised machinery was the only way that we were going to be able to achieve our goals, so we looked to CNC routing machinery for all of our flat panel work." says Mr Stibbard. "To us, reliability and support of the machinery we bought were going to be paramount in our decision making process, so we did extensive research on the CNC routing machines that were available at the time. In the end the decision was pretty easy and we chose a Multicam CNC router."

When asked what made the decision easy for him, Mr Stibbard replied. "First and foremost, Multicam machines are purchased directly from the manufacturer, not through a dealer network. This means that support comes straight from the source by people that have a vested interest in providing top level equipment and backup. Also, the Multicam routers have a proven track record for reliability, are of superior construction and provided ease of use and safety features that aren't available on other machines. A good example of this is the fully enclosed tool changer where operators are protected from moving parts and sharp tooling."

In 2001 Compak Furniture moved its production facilities to China, but kept the head office in Sydney. The move was made for economic as well as logistical reasons and seen as crucial in order for the company to better service a growing international market. Unusual for this kind of relocation, they took their most important machines with them.

"The Multicam routers had proven to be invaluable to our business and were too important an asset to leave behind. The reliability and the technical support we received from Multicam added to our confidence." The decision has proven to be very wise, so much so that a further two Multicam routers were purchased and shipped to the factories in China. "We looked at other CNC routers in China but didn't believe they were anywhere near the same caliber as the Multicam router, a view that we still hold." added Mr Stibbard

"As an Australian based company we are proud to support other Australian companies in taking on the world. The Multicam routers have been key to our success and the technical support guys at Multicam have been able to assist us directly on the factory floor when we have needed them. The fact that the machines are in China has not proven to be an issue as far as back-up is concerned." concludes Mr Stibbard.



Managing director of Compak Furniture China, John Stibbard, and Matt Krainz of Multicam Systems discuss the installation of their machines.

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Blum's energy management system certified with the new ISO 50001

Blum's comprehensive efforts to minimise environmental impact have again received international recognition. The company's exemplary energy management system has recently been certified with the new ISO 50001 standard.

Blum is convinced that sensible environmental activities produce economic benefits in the long term and has taken environmentally sustainable measures in various fields. Blum has been rewarded for their commendable energy policy and received certification to the new standard in September, 2012.

"Environmental protection is extremely important to Blum. The health of the environment is closely linked with the health of society in general. We depend on the maintenance of the natural world and natural resources. At Blum, we recognise this and realise it is our responsibility to focus on sustainability as part of our corporate mission to ensure an enjoyable future for all", says Brett Ambrose, Blum managing director.

Important prerequisites for Blum's certification of the ISO 50001 standard included clearly defined goals through Blum's energy policy and record key performance indicators. The audit focused on the company's energy performance, in particular the methods used to increase its energy efficiency. Blum's efforts are comprehensive and are based on years of environmentally-friendly measures. Blum recovers heat from production processes for heating purposes. This technique equates to 45% of energy savings. Furthermore, the company recycles waste and uses groundwater for air conditioning and the cooling of machinery. All of which helps to save energy consumption.



The ISO 50001 is a set of standards that a company must meet in regards to installation, implementation, maintenance and continuous improvement of an energy management system. The main objective of the standard is to improve energy-related performance, maximise energy efficiency and achieve energy savings. Consistent energy management assists organisations to realise potential for energy efficiency improvements and implement targeted measures. Companies willing to implement energy management systems are rewarded with monetary savings as well as being able to contribute toward environmental and climate protection by achieving a permanent reduction in CO₂ emissions.

In addition to Blum's ISO 50001 energy management system certification, the company currently holds an ISO 14001 certification for excellent environmental management systems.

One of Blum's numerous efforts to protect the environment. The company has installed 457m² of high-performance collectors on the roof of Plant 6 in Gaissau, Austria.

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Homag machine produces trucks in a class of their own

Just driving into the yard at Bischoff + Scheck is an amazing experience. There are three huge trucks parked of a kind that few people ever catch a glimpse of out on the road. A walk through the production halls of this German coach builder is even more jaw-dropping.

What are produced here are bespoke truck trailers designed for wide-ranging different purposes but all with one thing in common. They are all about creating the greatest possible amount of space and functionality within the confines of the maximum admissible dimensions for road travel: 14 m in length, 2.55 m in width and 4 m in height. The motor racing world accounts for around 60% of the company's business, mainly in the form of transport vehicles to accommodate F1 racing cars which include a control centre and multifunctional living accommodation for the drivers.

The other 40% of the company's business supplies bespoke vehicles for roadshows, mobile labs, TV broadcasting, equestrian sports teams and also luxury mobile homes. Since May 2012, the interior fittings for the vehicles have been produced using a Homag BAZ 322 processing centre with 5Drive5+ 5-axis spindle.

The impressive aspect of Bischoff + Scheck's work is that every single component of the bodies is individually manufactured. It takes an enormous amount of expertise to address the special needs of customers. This is why directors Bernd Bischoff and Volker Scheck see their company's role neither as that of a classical furniture maker nor as just an auto maker or metalworking firm. As Bernd Bischoff explains: "Most customers come to us with only a vague idea of what they want. We then make suggestions about how their concept could look. We complete the entire project in-house –from planning, through design and production to the completed turn-key vehicle." From acceptance of order to handover of the finished vehicle

generally takes four to five months. Around 25 – 30 trucks are completed a year.

The Bischoff + Scheck team comprises around 55 individuals working in the sales and development and design departments, the steelworking and metalworking shops, the chassis construction and vehicle electrics/hydraulics departments. Added to these is a further 25-strong team in the electrical department. Another 15 – 20 staff members are only rarely to be seen at the company headquarters: They are on the road tending to the vehicles shipped around the whole of Europe.

"Alongside the entire project completion from the initial idea through to handover, we offer customers all-round support including a rigging and de-rigging service", explains Bischoff. "In the Formula One world, for instance, at the start of the season we hand over a ready-to-use vehicle almost every week. Our service team then takes charge of each transfer between races during the season. In practical terms, this means de-rigging after the Belgian Grand Prix in Spa, transferring the vehicles to Monza in Italy, and setting up the vehicle on site ready for the racing team to use when they arrive. Once we have delivered something to the customer, it has to work."

The focus is different for every project and every client. A promotional vehicle clearly has a presentation role to fulfill and also has to comply with certain standards. Other vehicles such as mobile labs or medical units concentrate far more on providing maximum internal functionality. The important thing which applies to every type of vehicle is that it can be moved and set up using a minimum of manpower and that the maximum dimensions for road transport are adhered to. "Our customers see these vehicles first and foremost as a working tool – but one which needs to make a striking impact at the same time", says Bischoff.



The variety of needs expressed by Bischoff + Scheck customers is matched by the enormous flexibility of the company's dedicated team. The manufacturing sequence is organized as a parallel process between design and production. Since 2003, the firm has worked in 3D with Autodesk Inventor and the PDM system Productstream.

Bischoff explains: "We used to outsource a lot of parts, even ordering unique one-off components from joineries. However, this not only restricted our flexibility, it also meant high expenditure on items of only minimal intrinsic value. We only worked with standard joinery machines in our own workshops. The BAZ 322 is actually rather oversized, but we needed a highly flexible machine capable of covering a wide range of processing operations. We were looking for an all-round solution which would cover all panel component operations and deliver complete ready-to-assemble components straight from the machine", explains Bischoff.

With this investment, Bischoff + Scheck has also benefited in another key area: staffing bottlenecks and shortages of skilled labor have always something of an issue. Now with the BAZ, the company is able to cover many of the work stages that would otherwise have to be performed by additional specialist workers.

Initially Bischoff + Scheck considered purchasing a second-hand 5-axis machine. At the Homag Treff, the coach builders then discovered precisely the machine they had been looking for.

"We saw the edge banding unit for the processing centre at Homag. One thing was clear: This machine would allow us to perform the complete processing sequence we needed for edge banding – as well as panel processing. The new BAZ simply has greater application scope to offer, which



more than justifies the higher investment we had to find for the new machine from Homag", says Bischoff.

The new BAZ 322 processing centre with 5-axis spindle Drive5+ is used to produce all the furniture and elements destined for the interior fittings of these high-tech vehicles. Equipped with PowerClamp collet chucks for narrow parts, a 72-slot chain changer, V21 H4 drilling head and camera system, the joinery specialists at Bischoff + Scheck are able to put just about any idea into practice. Maximum flexibility is also offered in terms of the different materials which can be processed. The processing centre copes easily with every type of material, from plastic-coated or veneered multiplex panels, solid wood, sandwich materials, plastics, aluminum profiles, acrylic to HPL and many more. At the moment, the Bischoff + Scheck production halls are busy producing a rolling biometric lab that is destined for use in Africa. It is equipped with a high-security lab for handling highly infectious pathogens. Its mission: to combat diseases, where their dissemination is most prolific but where there is little or no existing medical infrastructure available. Dibond aluminum composite panels are used for the internal cladding and are also processed using the BAZ. ▶



Pictures courtesy of: Homag Holzbearbeitungssysteme GmbH

From far left: Director Bernd Bischoff (on the right side) with his employees who operate the CNC machine

Construction of a hightech-vehicle

A truck in the initial stages: Just the axles are delivered

The Homag processing centre BAZ 322 with 5-axis spindle Drive5+ and edge banding unit

► When the decision was made in favour of the new machine, none of the team working at Bischoff + Scheck had any experience with CNC – let alone 5-axis technology or an edge banding unit. “All we did was to send some of our existing team to training courses without any prior experience”, recalls Bischoff. Another very useful addition is the use of WoodMotion. This software allows joiners to simulate the production process from the comfort of the office.

WoodMotion provides a graphic depiction of the workpiece processing operations. The software generates a virtual workpiece reflecting what the machine “would have produced” with the generated program. This allows the programmer to quickly recognize whether it can really be run correctly without problems on the machine. WoodMotion works on the basis of a virtual machine simulated on the office computer for CNC control. This means that a real CNC control system is run on the PC which simulates not only pure processing operations but also tool changes, inward and outward movements, and acceleration and braking processes. Even error messages which typically

occur only during real operation at the machine can be predicted and displayed in advance.

Bischoff + Scheck offers a practically unique service in its role as complete supplier. As Bischoff explains: “We do not have any comparable competitors in Germany. We offer a unique service in this country. Across the whole of Europe there are only around five companies offering anything comparable – but we are the only ones to offer such a wide and complete spectrum on this scale. We are passionate about building vehicles to an exemplary standard of quality, and in the motor racing sector particularly the most stringent standards apply.

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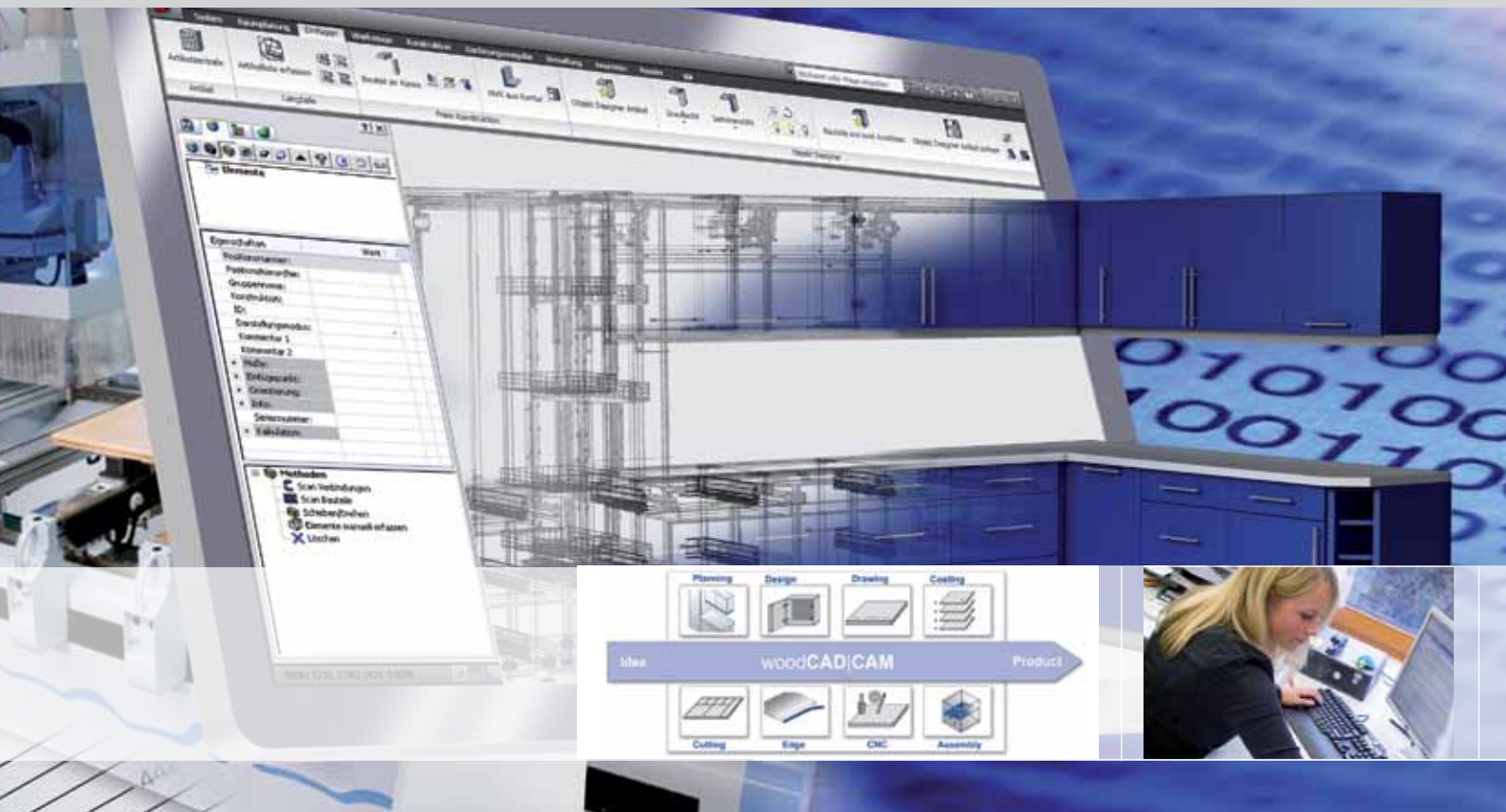


Left: The Homag processing center BAZ 322 with 5- axis spindle Drive5+ and edge banding unit.

Bottom left: Homag product manager Friedhelm Rempp has a look at a cube which is trimmed out of a dibond panel.

Below: Here you can see a rolling biometric lab destined for use in Africa. Internal cladding of the walls: dibond aluminum composite panels.





woodCAD|CAM: 3D software for furniture and interior design

The software woodCAD|CAM creates reliability in the order and manufacturing process from the first sketch to the final product for companies, which are producing with machines of HOMAG Group. Layouts of individual furniture or complex room planning can be created within a very short time and impressively presented. Details or complete part groups can be modified, immediately calculated and displayed. At the push of a button manufacturing lists are available directly after creating the design. Design data will be transferred to HOMAG Group machinery automatically.

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Be inspired by Blum and the new Blum.com



When visiting Blum's new interactive website – blum.com, visitors can take a stroll down 'Inspirations Boulevard' for fabulous ideas and inspiration on various storage solutions in the kitchen and throughout the entire home.

"Blum.com's 'Inspirations Boulevard' appeals to the voyeur in all of us. Peek through the windows or walk through the doors of some amazing homes that reveal their storage secrets and design feats for functional work and living spaces. It is an interactive and exciting addition to blum.com that visitors are going to love", says Alicia Draper, Blum marketing communications manager.

Learn of Dynamic Space, Blum's ideas for practical kitchens on blum.com. Often much time is spent deciding on the façade of kitchen cabinets and appliances, yet the functionality of the new kitchen is overlooked. It is only too common that the value of a functional kitchen is realised later when the kitchen is installed. Through Dynamic Space, blum.com visitors can gain useful tips on designing their kitchens to meet their functional needs, which adds greater value to their homes.

The new 'Be Inspired' section of blum.com was designed specifically with owner builders and renovators in mind. The user-friendly format allows visitors to control how much information they see through drop down arrows. Blum.com is now compatible with mobile devices such as iPhone and iPad. The site is accessible anywhere and is linked to Blum's Youtube channel incorporating product videos.

Experience 'Be Inspired' at www.blum.com/au/en/03

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Homag Group exceeds earnings forecasts

Homag Group AG, the world's largest manufacturer of plant and machinery for the woodworking industry and for cabinet makers, fulfilled or exceeded its forecasts for the fiscal year 2012. At EUR 575.8 million, order intake was slightly above the prior-year level (EUR 574.8 million) according to the preliminary figures. With sales revenue of EUR767.0 million (prior year: EUR 798.7 million), the Homag Group exceeded its forecast of more than EUR 750 million. If the sales revenue figures for 2011 and 2012 are each adjusted for the special effects from the large-scale project for the customer Mekran (2011: EUR 49.4 million; 2012: EUR 10.0 million), sales revenue increased slightly by 1 percent in 2012.

"We achieved all of our goals in 2012 and outperformed the relevant market in terms of order intake," CEO Dr. Markus Flik emphasizes. "We see the fact that we were able to achieve such a good order intake, in spite of the difficult conditions, as a clear vote of confidence from our customers in our products and in our team's performance."

The group's earnings situation developed better than forecast. Operative EBITDA before employee participation expenses and before extraordinary expenses stood at EUR71.0 million (prior year: EUR 70.5 million), such that the operative EBITDA margin increased from 8.8 to 9.3 percent. In the past fiscal year, the Homag Group generated a significant net profit of EUR 12.7 million (prior year: net loss of EUR 4.7 million).

CFO Hans-Dieter Schumacher sees in the earnings figures proof that the measures taken in the group to increase efficiency are taking effect. "We have further improved our operating performance. The results confirm that we are on the right track."

The detailed results of the fiscal year 2012 of Homag Group AG and an updated forecast for 2013 will be published at the press conference on the annual results scheduled for 28 March 2013 in Stuttgart.

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Reseller enquiries welcome

by Martin Lewis

CEO Furnishing Industry Association of Australia

Australian furniture and joinery – procurement challenges

IN THE PREVIOUS EDITION of AWISA – The Magazine, my article entitled Made in Australia – A Community Economic Perspective, detailed the difference in ATO tax collections made by the ATO from the efforts of three different cabinetmaking supplies in Australia.

Just to remind you, ATO benchmarking data makes it very clear that with \$999 worth of cabinetry sold in Australia:

- The Australian-made cabinetry results in \$118.50 being returned to the Australian Taxation Office.
- Where the goods are made overseas and sold directly from an Australian-based retailer then \$79.70 is returned to the Australian Taxation Office.
- Where the goods are purchased directly over the internet from an overseas-based website, then nothing, that's right - absolutely zero, is returned to the Australian Taxation Office.

To my mind that makes it very clear that the Australian-made product delivers a financial dividend to the Commonwealth of Australia 50% greater than product imported from overseas and sold by an Australian distributor/retailer.

But what about the other imposts that beset Australian manufacturers – issues like workers compensation, state government payroll taxes, etc?

Using the data supplied by the Australian Taxation Office, I have constructed a hypothetical furniture company which turns over \$5,000,000 per year – certainly one big enough to do business with government departments – be they federal, state, or local government. We will call this business Exemplar Furniture & Joinery Company (EFJ). They manufacture in Australia.

Exemplar Furniture & Joinery Company also competes in the government procurement area with another hypothetical company, Continental Furniture Design Company (CFD). They sell only imported product, much of which is made in China. They also turnover \$5,000,000 per year.

For simplicity purposes, both companies are based in NSW.

With a turnover of \$5,000,000, ATO benchmark data tells us that their annual payroll will be in the range of 21 to 29% of turnover (the bigger the turnover the closer it will move to the upper end of that range). A fair approximation of that payroll cost is 25% (mid range point) – so EFJ company's annual payroll costs approximate \$1,250,000.

This means EFJ's workers compensation premiums annually approximate \$53,175 (in NSW premiums for this industry is 4.254%). EFJ must also pay state government payroll tax which is 5.45% on payroll above \$689,000. So EFJ also pays payroll tax of \$30,575.

Total impost EFJ pays to state government - \$83,750

EFJ's competitor - CFD - on the other hand is in a far different situation. ATO benchmark data for furniture retailers tells us the payroll approximates only 11% of turnover, so in this case, it approximates \$550,000 per year. Because CFD can claim they wholesale predominantly office furniture, their industry premium rate is only 1.519%. As such CFD has an annual workers compensation premium of \$8,355.

Because CFD is under the payroll tax threshold, they pay absolutely zero payroll tax.

Total impost CFD pays to state government - \$8,355.

In short EFJ pays 1000% more in state imposts than CFD.

Let's back track for a second – applying the data and calculations we highlighted in my previous article.

Based on \$5,000,000 turnover, EFJ is responsible for \$592,500 being remitted to the Commonwealth government (ATO) and a further \$83,750 to the state government.

Their competitor, CFD, is responsible for \$398,500 being remitted to the Commonwealth government (ATO) and a further \$8,355 to the state government.

Quite obviously, this argument can be extended to cover the entire range of "taxes" and other government-inspired charges made against Australian manufacturers. It can also be extended to local government.

The point is that the public service actively discriminates against Australian-made.

But this is all part of a much bigger picture. The point is that there definitely is active discrimination against blue-collar industries, and that this discrimination is perpetrated by our high-level bureaucrats in all forms of government.

I don't believe that this discrimination arises because of any type of class warfare sense by the well-provided-for, feather-bedded public service. My sense of things is that it occurs simply because we do not have enough people in the high levels of bureaucracy who are sensitive enough



MARTIN LEWIS,
CEO of Furnishing Industry
Association of Australia Ltd

to the needs of their true masters and end-customers – the citizens of Australia.

The current battle being waged with the federal bureaucracy is over the development of regulations pertaining to the recently passed illegal logging laws. In short, these laws are designed to close the markets for illegally-logged timber and products (such as furniture, panel products, and joinery) made from such illegally-logged timber. Specifically the law will make it compulsory for providers of timber and timber products to satisfy due-diligence requirements that the timber source is legal. It applies to all product sold in Australia – whether made here or whether imported.

A number of associations and other interested organisations are now involved in discussions with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries over the form that the regulations will take. Regulations give effect to the actual legislation and specify the detail of how the legislation will be applied and enforced. These discussions sadly now appear to be turning into a battle, with some public servants now prioritising the needs of complying with some unfair, unrealistic, inappropriate, and compromised WTO treaty over the needs of the Australian people.

I have had to listen to garbage. The garbage appears to emanate from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. It would seem there is a desire by some in that department, notwithstanding the will of the elected parliament, that regulations giving effect to the Illegal Logging Act should not impede trade with businesses from other countries. In my opinion, that's nothing short of disgraceful.

It is also my opinion that many of our public servants have performed appallingly over the last twenty years. I believe that whichever party wins the next election, it must do a root and branch cull of the public service and create a new mission statement and culture – one which places the citizens of Australia first.

Mahatma Gandhi once said "I must not serve my distant neighbours at the expense of my nearest". He got it right but perhaps we need a new public service mantra – "I must serve my citizens first". ■

Martin Lewis
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by Eric Lytton

Thomas Lloyd Guitars – innovation with native Australian timber



AUSTRALIAN TIMBER and a love of music are the driving force behind luthier Chris Wynne's success story. Chris has been playing the acoustic guitar for over 38 years. What sets him apart from the average musician is his unique passion for custom building guitars. As such, he is now known as a luthier, which to the more unenlightened of us means that he is a maker of stringed musical instrument, in Chris' case, classical and steel stringed guitars.

But there is a significant difference between what Chris has been creating and the long established tradition of guitar making. The difference is Chris' great passion for and the use of Australian timbers in his guitars and his belief that Australian timbers have 'musical' qualities to match and even surpass the traditional guitar making timbers.

For many years Australian timbers have had a worldwide reputation for their quality as cabinet making and furniture timbers. However until relatively recently, what hasn't been commonly known is that some native Australian timber species have exceptional properties as tone woods and are used in the manufacture and custom building of high end acoustic guitars and other stringed instruments.

As Chris states "traditionally acoustic guitars are made primarily from rosewood, cedar and spruce, a limited range of materials, but in Australia we have a choice of five soundboard timbers alone, King Billy pine, celery top pine, Huon pine, bunya pine and kauri, each with different tonal and resonance qualities as well as different aesthetic appeal". According to Chris other harder timbers suited to the custom building of backs, sides and necks include, Tasmanian fiddleback blackwood, Tasmanian tiger myrtle, Tasmanian myrtle, Tasmanian black heart sassafras, Western Australian sheoak, NSW and Queensland cooba (native willow), NSW and Queensland gidgee and mulga, Queensland maple, Queensland Cooktown ironwood, red cedar and Tasmanian mountain ash. Thanks to Chris' endeavours and the fact that a number of enterprising Australian guitar makers are now primarily using Australian timbers, these materials are now sought by an increasing number of guitar makers around the world.

Chris' 'awakening' to the quality and beauty of the Australian timbers began fairly early on in his musical career. At the age of 25 Chris became enchanted with classical guitars, leading him to study music and eventually perform with a number of classical guitar groups. It was around this time that one of the musicians he was performing with commented that she wasn't particularly happy with her guitar and Chris, impetuously and bravely offered to make her one. At that time Chris knew precious little about guitars, had a schoolboy's knowledge of woodwork and didn't even possess basic woodworking tools.

To get the process rolling and discover how guitars were constructed Chris 'borrowed' his sister's guitar and cut it up with a band saw (an act he managed to keep hidden from his sister for four years). It was at this point that Chris had a moment of inspiration which was to have a huge impact on his future career - he decided he would use native Australian timbers to custom build his guitar. This was a significant decision as up

until that point Australian luthiers were primarily using the traditional European timbers to make their instruments.

For his first attempt at making a guitar Chris chose King Billy pine, blackwood and Queensland red cedar for his timbers. His tools were rudimentary indeed; the rosette around the sound hole was outlined with a compass and painstakingly chiselled out with a tiny chisel and his workbench was the kitchen table and he used his flatmate's weights as his clamps. Despite the obvious handicaps and his minimal knowledge and hand skills, the result was a guitar that could be played and somewhat surprisingly, didn't sound too bad.

This proved to be an inspiration for Chris and he began making guitars in earnest, all the while seeking out other guitar makers to help develop his skills and knowledge. By his early thirties Chris was spending about three days a week teaching people how to play the guitar and the rest of the week honing his guitar making skills.

11 years ago Chris decided he wanted to share his passion for acoustic guitar building by teaching them. He placed an ad in his local paper inviting people to his workshop open day in the Yarra Valley. A steady flow of people turned up and four people booked into the acoustic guitar building course, and Thomas Lloyd Guitars was under way.

Since then Chris has taught over 600 people to custom build acoustic guitars and has had students from all over the world attend his school. Many of the people who have come from overseas came primarily because they wanted to use Australian timbers to build their guitars. Chris moved to his new workshop at "Montsalvat" in Eltham, Victoria 6 years ago and has never looked back.

One of Chris' recent students is Michael Cannon a graphic artist and musician who attended the Stanley workshop in September last year. Michael had no background in woodworking but had long held a desire to build a guitar himself and when he enrolled for the course had little idea what was in store for him. "My thoughts were that this would be a 'paint by numbers' scenario, where the task of the student would be to assemble the prepared components" Michael said "the reality was far from it, as I realised when I arrived at the workshop and was confronted by a pile of assorted timber and asked to select from these".

Michael went on to explain that from this 'raw' timber the students then handmade all the components for the guitar, learnt how to assemble the back, sides and soundboard, shape and place the ribs, fit the neck and fret board, bridge and saddle and machine heads. For Michael and the others on the course the outcome was a quality, handmade acoustic guitar with a value in excess of the course cost.

Thomas Lloyd Guitars hold acoustic guitar building courses primarily at Montsalvat an artist enclave approximately 25kms from the Melbourne CBD. Other courses are held at Highfield House in Stanley, a small fishing village in north western Tasmania and at Villa San Rocco in the beautiful village of Benabbio near Lucca in Italy.



Chris' approach to teaching is very flexible, his acoustic guitar making course can be delivered over a two week block, or by attendance once a week for 10 weeks. The courses run in Italy and Tasmania are taught over a two week period. The acoustic guitar building course includes;

- 80 hours of instruction, students complete every step of the building process themselves, students take home a fully-playable custom acoustic guitar with solid-body guitar case.
- Personalised guidance as classes are limited to a maximum of five to six students.
- All necessary tools and protective equipment are provided
- Previous experience in woodworking and machine handling, while an advantage, is not required
- As well as building an instrument students also learn how and why various Australian timbers work for guitar construction.



Thomas Lloyd Guitars also delivers a luthier course which is a much more intensive course during which participants complete two guitars and receive specialist input in the areas of sound physics, tuning sound boards and backs, inlay work as well as a lecture from a tool specialist about purchasing, using and caring for hand tools. The luthier course is delivered over an intensive five-week period or over a twelve-week period with of two classes per week, each providing 220 hours of expert tuition.

For those who are time challenged, or would find it difficult to attend a course Chris has compiled a 10 disc DVD boxed set 'A Master Class In Acoustic Guitar Making' which includes a sixty page luthier's handbook and a steel conversion ruler and provides exclusive access to the 'Luthier's Forum'. This package is available online at www.thomasloydguitars.com.au



Despite being an extremely busy man running the school, Chris still custom builds guitars from time to time. One of the many testaments to Chris' skill and the quality of his guitars comes from a young Canadian guitarist, Dylan Ryche, winner of the 2012 Canadian Fingerstyle Guitar award. Dylan recently took delivery of his new guitar and was moved to send the following to Chris "Your beautiful guitar arrived safely today. I haven't had much time to give it a proper, serious play...but from my limited playing time I can tell it has a lovely tone and it looks fantastic. That tiger myrtle really stands out, what a great looking wood. Nice job! All my other guitars are factory made, and you can really feel and see the human touch in this guitar".

Yet despite the kudos and recognition that custom building can provide, for Chris the greatest satisfaction is in passing on to others his love and passion for making beautiful instruments from high quality Australian timber. ■

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Diamond tooling suppliers require both technical know-how and most of all an affordable reliable support centre for this. DTA has established a new PCD sharpening centre in Sydney using the latest advanced German electrical erosion grinding machinery with other advanced technical equipment.



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Lobbying a strategic industry plan



THE MAJOR trade associations in the furniture, cabinetmaking and joinery industries decided two years ago that they would create an umbrella organisation, the Furniture Cabinets Joinery Alliance or FCJA, to pursue issues of common interest to participants in these industries. Readers of AWISA – The Magazine may be interested in reading the summary of the strategic plan that has been produced by the FCJA.

The furniture, cabinets and joinery industry strategic plan – a summary

The Australian furniture, cabinets and joinery (FCJ) industry is a significant sector of Australian manufacturing, employing around 113,000 persons across the country and contributing \$31 billion per annum to the domestic economy.

However, similar to Australian manufacturing generally, the local FCJ industry is an economically fragmented sector characterised by a preponderance of small, family-owned businesses. Less than one per cent of businesses in the sector employ more than 200 employees with the majority employing less than 20 workers. Over 80 per cent of businesses are based on the Eastern Seaboard with 55 per cent located in the traditional manufacturing states of Victoria and New South Wales and hence away from the growth states of Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory.

Activities within the sector comprise domestic and commercial, free standing and built in furniture; wooden doors; roof trusses, wall and window frames; other wooden builders' joinery and carpentry, parquetry strips; wooden industrial products and on-site installation.

The industry is currently under considerable restructuring pressure, competing against low cost imports in a high cost environment. This is further compounded by the high Australian Dollar coupled with contracting market demand as both, new house starts and renovation activity (traditionally key drivers for the industry), continue to decline.

Over 2010/11 FCJ manufacturing revenue grew by only three per cent; imports grew by five per cent; exports fell by six per cent and wages and salaries grew by two per cent despite the employment level remaining relatively stable.

Thus, recognising the critical turning point now confronting the industry, the 7 core industry associations representing the key sub-sectors of the industry across Australia, have formed the FCJ Alliance (FCJA).

Currently, the FCJ industry can be characterised as being:

- At a mature lifestyle stage;
- With negligible industry assistance;
- Subject to medium to low barriers to entry;
- In a highly globalised industry confronting significant low cost import competition; and
- Susceptible to revenue volatility.

However, the FCJA's vision is to turn the Australian furniture, cabinets and joinery industry into one that is globally recognised as a vibrant, design focussed industry sector, with world-class management, attracting the best workforce producing high value add, professionally crafted, highly innovative furniture, cabinet and joinery products.

To help achieve this vision the FCJA has identified the following strategic objectives to underscore the industry's ongoing development:

- Embrace design and innovation as a core characteristic for future growth
- Maximise its share of the domestic market
- Develop an export culture and progressively grow export markets
- Capitalise on and adopt latest technological developments
- Attract highly skilled, highly trained workers
- Embody the latest management practices, reflecting world's best practice in business management
- Be an integral player in the global FCJ supply chain.



This Strategic Industry Plan has been developed by the FCJA to help determine the most appropriate strategies that should be pursued to help realise the above objectives. While the prime intention of the Plan is to identify strategies and actions that the industry, and its representative associations, should focus upon, it is clearly evident that there is a real role for government to play – both in ensuring that there are no unnecessary impediments to the industry's growth path and in supporting/encouraging the priority development activities for the industry.

While many of the issues confronting the FCJ sector are ones that impact on all manufacturing businesses, there are also many unique challenges that must be addressed by the industry that require special attention, and these are highlighted below. Nonetheless, much of the commentary on manufacturing to date, and the focus of government

FCJ's vision: a vibrant, globally recognised, design focussed industry with world-class management

policy and policy measures, seems to be driven by "big" manufacturing business. But there are very few big businesses remaining in manufacturing in Australia, and those that are can successfully straddle between local and offshore manufacture. As far as the FCJ sector is concerned, it is predominantly epitomised by small business, albeit it is a sector that collectively represents the major employment base in Australian manufacturing.

Consequently, there needs to be a significant rethink to determine what strategies are necessary for such a sector of industry. In developing this Strategic Industry Plan it was soon evident that there are four critical areas of success for the Australian FCJ sector, and that strategies and action plans would need to be developed for each of these – being 'Design and Innovation', 'Regulation and Compliance', 'Skills Development and Training', and finally 'Supply Chain.'

However, while priority action plans have been developed to address the industry's needs in each critical success area, it is vital to recognise enhanced development in all 4 critical areas must be progressed concurrently, and that no recommended action should be considered in isolation from the others. It is crucial to pursue all strategies as a collective whole, and only in that way can the industry's future viability be truly ensured.



The reality is that in the high cost environment now faced by Australian FCJ producers, competing on price is no longer a sustainable model. For Australian businesses to be sustainable long-term they need to be actively seeking to enhance their operational efficiencies through enhanced capital productivity (which means adopting the latest technologies) and labour productivity (by upgrading skills at both management and operational level), and they need

to differentiate their product as a premium offering based on superior quality, design and innovation.

The first and foremost critical success factor for the industry must therefore be the development of a widespread and deeply ingrained design / innovation culture within the industry. Numerous companies in Australia but predominantly overseas have successfully grown their markets through incorporation of technologies and functionality (Herman Miller), quality ground breaking design (Carl Hansen & Son) and customer tailored design and development for both commercial and residential customers (Schiavello, Sealy). Very often this has been done in conjunction with recognised designers as a means of providing a unique, valued and sought after product.

Of course, a design and innovation focus is more than just enhanced product design, and embraces the whole operational process, from production through packaging to ultimate marketing and customer service, and even encompasses the overall business model. It is crucial that the FCJ industry of tomorrow has an inherent Design Culture which encompasses design and innovation in all these facets.

Underscoring this design focus is a need to enhance productivity within the industry. Research conducted by the FCJA, Manufacturing Skills Australia and numerous government departments shows that the FCJ sector suffers from a profound shortage of skilled workers across all disciplines necessary for its operation. Since 2007 the number of apprenticeship commencements has fallen each year. This lack of new entrants is compounded by an aging workforce meaning that approximately an additional 15,000 workers will be needed in the next five years to just maintain business as usual.

A core focus identified by the FCJA will be to work with governments, tertiary education providers and individual enterprises to develop strategies which maximise entrants to the workforce from non-traditional pathways such as up-skilling of staff, greater engagement with secondary school leavers and ways of increasing the participation of women into the sector.

Compounding the issue of a skills shortage is also the lack of structured training at management and owner levels in the FCJ organisations. Further training in the areas of finance, marketing, competitive manufacturing, employee/subcontractor management and project management have been particularly identified as needing to be addressed. Without development and training in these areas business owners or managers will not have the necessary skills to fully capitalise on emerging growth opportunities.



- Greater focus will also be required in engaging in high end technical skills related to computer aided manufacturing and design, production scheduling and costing and pricing. Greater understanding on the potential of the internet and other approaches direct to customers is also required.

To help achieve this, the FCJA will need to be more actively engaged in the identification and development of training needs than it has in the past. Currently the nature and delivery mode of training is simply not delivering what the industry needs and the industry is united in its views that the training package must be developed through the Forestworks Skills Council.

Another critical success factor identified by the FCJA is that of regulation and compliance. In many ways this factor above all others has the greatest potential to stifle the development of a sustainable, world class design and innovation focused FCJ sector in Australia. While it is understood that governments must make regulations to address market deficiencies or achieve a common goal very often there are unintended consequences of these actions.

Regulation and compliance a critical success factor

However, the FCJA accepts that many regulations and standards are necessary, to ensure the appropriate quality and performance requirements are being fully met, and to safeguard consumers through the various product safety standards. The FCJA supports the implementation of such standards where they are clearly necessary, but is dismayed at the extent to which imported product is able to breach such standards and regulations. It is vital that where such legislative requirements exist, all imported products must be monitored to the same extent as domestic product to ensure compliance, and where it is non-compliant then necessary corrective action must be taken, including strict enforcement of meaningful penalties.

The FCJA will seek to work with governments to ensure that the industry's uniqueness is considered in the development of new legislation and guidelines while also working through an identified list of regulations that are either inhibiting growth, or are being applied inequitably with compliance only enforced upon local manufacturers. The FCJA has undertaken a comprehensive review of all legislation that impacts the sector (included as an Appendix to the

Strategic Plan) and believes that a pro-active cooperative approach with governments is required to ensure the industry can achieve its aims, and is not being treated in a discriminatory fashion.

For this reason, the FCJA is strongly of the view that a single body should be tasked specifically with monitoring compliance by all products with existing standards and regulations, and enforcing strict penalties where non-compliance is clearly evident.

Indeed, the reverse discrimination that appears to be applied by government agencies against Australian produced product is also evident in the areas of border control and government procurement. In particular, the FCJA contends that anti-dumping provisions should be strengthened to transfer the onus of proof to the importer rather than the local manufacturer, and Australian Customs (or another appropriate government agency) should be properly resourced to ensure that product entering Australia is properly classified to ensure it is subject to the requisite tariff duties (too much product is being imported either falsely classified to avoid duty or undervalued to minimise duty).

Moreover, government procurement officers, in assessing tenders need to take account of the full impact of overall government policy in the decision-making process. It is entirely appropriate that a country with a high standard of living such as Australia should have demanding social, workplace, safety and environmental policies in place. However, implementation of these policies imposes significant costs on local industry and it is therefore inappropriate for Government agencies to then purchase product from offshore when it is simply cheaper because the same expectations have not been placed on the offshore suppliers.

Finally, due to the fragmented nature of the industry and the relative small size of the individual enterprises, effective supply chain management is also a critical issue for the industry. To help overcome the vulnerability induced by these industry characteristics, strategies are necessary to encourage the industry to collaborate more effectively to improve the supply chain relationships and to help enhance the industry's profile and sales on the global market. ■

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When designing Tandembox Intivo, great care was taken to achieve a balance between drawer side and design element. There is no gap between drawer side and Boxcap or Boxcover making the transition seamless. The Intivo programme offers a wide variety of pull-out solutions including inner drawers, under-sink drawers and corner drawer solutions in three colours, silk white, terra black and stainless steel.

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Detailed design and Gabbett machinery win awards

Panache Kitchens has earned itself a distinctive niche in the Sydney cabinet making market specialising in detailed, architect prescribed kitchens and other home joinery.

A standout feature at Panache Kitchens is their impressive trophy cabinet bristling with industry awards. More recent awards have included the Housing Industry Association (NSW) 2011 Kitchen of the Year and Cabinet Maker of the Year.

A small family-owned and operated business located in the outer Sydney suburb of Seven Hills Panache Kitchens consists of a team of well-respected craftsmen and offers the very highest quality cabinetry and fittings, from design through manufacture to installation and after sales maintenance.

Panache Kitchens' modern creative design is coupled with the use of the latest advances in material and hardware technology.

"We pride ourselves on quality cabinetry and fittings and on our diversity, kitchens bathrooms, walk-in robes, home libraries – you name it we can do it," says director John Little.

John describes designing and manufacturing the Cabinet Maker of the Year kitchen in 2011 as "particularly enjoyable".

"Opportunities rarely arise to design a kitchen in such a large space complimenting a charming home with classic details required to encapsulate the authenticity of craftsmanship of past times."

"Winning the award also allows me to share the thrill with factory tradesmen as all are involved in the project. Such awards certainly help motivation and satisfaction on the shop floor."

Of the 2011 winning design John adds that this particular kitchen is the focal point of the house displaying a sense of graciousness with timeless classic features blending with the client's Federation style home.

"Even though the kitchen is quite large it is still practical and very functional and caters to the family's day-to-day requirements," he says.

The characteristic feature of the work at Panache Kitchens is certainly the immense amount of detail in some cabinet making projects.

"We work in extremely closely with architects and designers. Frequently that means entire house fit-outs that can run up to around \$400,000."

John says flatly he just does not chase work. "We have more than enough from our referrals and the architects that are part of our extended network."

Pretty much all the wood working equipment at Panache Kitchens has been supplied by Gabbett Machinery. Asked about his relationship with Gabbetts John says he brought his first second-hand machine from Barry Gabbett shortly after Barry started out.

"I was 16 at the time – so our relationship stretches back over more than forty years. Yes – it has been a critical part of our business success. And anyway, now after all this time I don't think Barry would let us buy from anyone else – even if he has to sharpen his pencil a bit!"

"Gabbett has looked after us very well with servicing and support over the years – always prompt, efficient and an essential part of our business formula," says John.

Lee Gabbett describes Panache Kitchens as a long standing and valuable customer. "John, his wife Linda and team are very well respected in the cabinetmaking industry at the high-end of the market."

In more recent times Panache Kitchens machinery purchases from Gabbett Machinery have included a wide belt sander, thicknesser and SCM Vanguard S1400 panel saw. The most recent purchase has been a Morbidelli CNC flat bed router with auto load and unloading tables.

John says that in terms of routers, about twelve months ago he made the decision to upgrade his routing centre from a pod and rail style drilling system to a fully automated nesting line with multi-function work table. "Certainly I put a fair bit of thought into the purchase and examined various options. Finally I settled on the Morbidelli Universal 3615 router – and again Barry Gabbett came good."

"The Morbidelli router has had a real impact on our

Part of the Panache team ... Clinton Little, John Little, whose relationship with Gabbett stretches back over more than forty years, Luke Charlton-Bayer with Jason Cutler in the background.





HIA Cabinet Maker of the Year award winning kitchen – displaying a sense of graciousness with the timeless classic features blending in with the client’s Federation style home.

throughput and efficiency. It has great versatility, so in addition to the things you would expect with a CNC router, it particularly suits the detailed nature of much of our work and finishing,” says John.

“For example the tool changer set up allows us to change tooling frequently with no fuss and that is a feature that is especially important to us.”

The Morbidelli Universal 3615 router offers a high quality solution for any nested based CNC routing application. Its versatility makes it an ideal machine for production of cabinet parts, MDF doors, store fixtures and components. A sturdy gantry frame assures the maximum rigidity and balance under dynamic loads.

The boring unit has twelve vertical spindles able to cover the full length of the working area. This greatly increases processing times and assures wide flexibility of use the Morbidelli Universal router can hold up to 20 tools, including John’s aggregate head used for various horizontal routing work making the Morbidelli a true CNC machining centre.



Panache Kitchens distinctive niche in the joinery and cabinet making market is their architect prescribed detailed design.

Hideaway Bins are an innovative storage solution for use in retail environments.

Clean lines and efficient use of space is ever more important within a retail environment and Hideaway Bins have the solution. Hideaway Bins are an innovative storage solution for hiding away waste or key items when the shop floor gets busy. With the bins sliding away out of sight when they are not needed, they help to keep the shop floor clean and clear of clutter.

Hideaway Bins are designed with quality materials to ensure the units withstand the challenges posed in a commercial environment. The framework is made from high grade steel for strength, powder-coated for durability. The runners are robust and are designed to hold upwards of 40kgs, the over extension ensures the bucket can be easily removed from beneath the bench top. The

buckets are made from polypropylene and come complete with a liner holder designed to hold a bin liner in place.

For those looking for a multiple bin solution within a retail environment, alternate bucket sizes are available and come as single or double 15, 20, 40 litre buckets and a single 50 litre bucket. Hideaway Bins are designed to be mounted at bench height and pull out towards the user making the units both ergonomic and functional.

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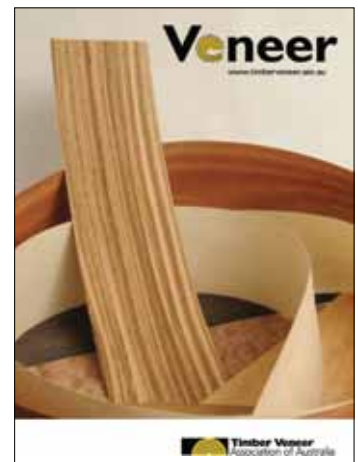


New veneer product manual

THE TIMBER VENEER ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA (TVAA) has prepared a completely new edition of the popular veneer product information manual.

The new 28-page manual simply titled *Veneer* is not just an update, but has been expanded to include the latest information on a range of issues including:

- Chain of custody certification.
- Explanation of veneer production from tree to veneer.
- Detailed advice on sequence matching for continuity.
- Guidelines on coatings and finishes.



Information about Building Code of Australia material groups applicable to veneered panels will be of particular interest to specifiers, since fire hazard properties are sometimes a limiting factor in the wider use of veneered panels for wall and ceiling linings.

According to its technical representative Peter Llewellyn, fire tests initiated by the TVAA have shown that veneer species in general use meet Building Code of Australia Group 2 requirements when applied to a flame-retardant treated MDF substrate.

"The new manual demystifies some of the terms used in the veneer industry such as G2S (Good Two Sides), and references the Australian Standards relevant to the production of veneered board," says Peter.

Also illustrated in the revised and expanded manual are different matching techniques, such as book matching and slip matching together with examples of the many beautiful grain patterns available, such as 'burl', 'birdseye', and 'fiddleback'.

TVAA president Rod Sharp says he expects the manual to be a help to architects and interior designers when it came to specifying veneered panels.

"Terms that we use every day in the industry aren't necessarily familiar to specifiers. A section in the manual titled *How to Specify Wood Veneer* will help with specification writing, and the many illustrations show what can be achieved with this renewable and sustainable resource," says Rod.

Copies of the new manual can now be downloaded from the TVAA website: www.timber veneer.asn.au. Hard copies can be obtained free of charge through the TVAA Information line 1300 303 982, or a copy can be ordered by email from info@timber veneer.asn.au. ■

by Simon Hodgson

Appliances – what the experts say

Working in the retail and wholesale appliance industry many years ago, we used to get quite excited when someone ordered anything but a 600 wide upright stove!

Today's array of appliance choices can at times be daunting for the consumer, but equally the avid kitchen designer. Without guidance and advice from the consumer on their appliance choices, today's kitchen designer has an enormous task in determining the shape and outline for their client – it's a chicken and egg situation – right in the heart of the kitchen.

But equally, appliance retailers are confronted with more choices, more appliances to display, to be educated about, and then there's the question of financial returns, pro forma or purchase – it's complicated!

To get an insight into the appliance sector and the challenges they face, I spoke to two respected personalities but from different sides of the appliance fence. Tamara Buchanan is the brand communication manager in Australia for iconic Italian appliance manufacturer, Smeg and Patrick Avenall is the editor for the renowned publication, Appliance Retailer Magazine and online daily emag, current.com.au.

Smeg denim fridge – one of the stand out product releases at Eurocucina.



Last year's show I Salone in Milan attracted 300,000 people from across the world. In addition to hosting the International Bathroom Exhibition, part of the larger Eurocucina exhibition is entirely allocated to new and exciting appliances from the world's best manufacturers. I started by asking both Patrick and Tamara their overall impressions, the trending and some stand out appliances. "Environmental concerns are becoming very important, especially in wet products, as suppliers compete to increase water efficiency without compromising performance" said Patrick.

"Although there are incremental improvements in appliance functionality, most advances are focused on style — suppliers are ensuring all their models match and can be integrated together. This serves several purposes: more attractive for the user, easier to specify for the designer and more profitable for the supplier."

And from Tamara on her overall impression – "I saw the trends in kitchen design at Eurocucina heading away from the impersonal lines and hidden functionality of minimalism toward a softer, more personalised palette of design and function, in what was clearly a move by the kitchen to reassert its place as the multifunctional hub of the family home. Warmth, texture, contrasting colour and greenery added welcome punctuation to the latest swathes of modern surfaces and the trend toward brain-teasing 'now you see it, now you don't' tables, nooks and crannies."

She continues, "These themes of self-expression, personalised functionality and embracing the environment were amply expressed in Smeg's flagship products at Eurocucina, where distinctive style, personalised functionality and energy and water-saving technologies were the plat du jour."

"Several suppliers showcased smart appliance technology, such as Hoover with its iPad-controlled whitegoods, but this trend has a painfully slow gestation period and none of the suppliers have a clear strategy for how connectivity should be implemented into the kitchen. It seems unlikely that scanning barcodes on the fridge or pushing recipes to an oven will ever become commonplace." says Patrick, and he is correct in some respect, however, many manufacturers have been advocating and delivering "recipes" for some years in their oven technology.

And as for his favourite products, "products and ranges that impressed me included Neff's futuristic range hoods, Smeg's dedicated stone pizza oven, Miele's black and white chessboard collection and Kitchen Aid's integrated, dedicated Sous Vide cooker." And for Tamara's, well the answers were always going to be relatively obvious! "For an injection of personality, the product that captured the imagination of the whole Eurocucina fair was Smeg's Fab

self-expression, personalised functionality and embracing the environment

Retro fridge clad in denim – a design concept conceived by Smeg and Italia Independent, a design consortium devoted to the pro-generation of Italian design and fronted by the “world’s chicest man” Lapo Elkann. The most amazing feature about the Fab denim product however is microscopic. The plasma nano technology embedded into the denim fabric will keep the fridge free from dirt and stains – ingenious!”

Many observers, retailers included, are convinced there are too many brands, too many choices for the consumer. But Patrick has a slightly different take on the question of 90+ product brands. “It’s not that there are too many per se, it’s just that there are too many not offering anything new or investing enough money into improvement appliance technology. If we had 90 Bosch’s the world would be amazing, but instead we have a multitude of me-too brands selling cheap imitations of the real thing.”

“It will be a minor point for some, but having been to factories in China and Europe, I know that the extra dollars you pay for an Italian made appliance leads to a much better life for the person assembling it.”

Good news for Italian brand manufacturer Smeg, so what did Tamara Buchanan have to say about the multitude of brands? “Yes, there are a lot of brands and the Australian marketplace is a very competitive place, however most consumers would struggle to name more than just a few. BIS Shrapnel research tells us that 86% of consumers purchase the brands they have in mind when they set out, so the established brands with long-standing reputations are better placed.”

“I don’t think I can comment on the number of brands competing for the pie as it ultimately creates a democratic environment for the consumer, and natural attrition ensures only the fittest survive year-on-year. I think what’s more interesting is the number of brands that are starting to operate outside of their traditional market segments. There has recently been movement by some of the leading brands to aggressively target the volume areas of the market, to increase share and in order to do this, they have to move their traditional seat of manufacturing to places where manufacturing costs less. While this may lead to an initial drop in price for the consumer, it’s going to be interesting to see if the appliances in the long term live up to the marketed expectations of those brands.”

From a design perspective, and the overall aesthetic influence, refrigeration has been a thorn in the side of not only the consumer, but the designer alike. Due to our climate, we are by world standards, users of larger than most refrigerated items so I was interested to hear Patrick’s view on what can be the “eyesore” in the kitchen. “French door fridges are showing strong growth as consumers



Smeg pizza oven – the result of talking to the best chefs.

rationalise the benefit of paying a little bit more than for a side by side for a considerable size and aesthetic advantage. There has been little talk of growth in the dedicated energy efficient refrigerator sub-category, though this could grow as the marketing from these brands, Panasonic foremost, confluences with rising energy prices. One manufacturer recently told me that 900mm French door models were killing it in the market.”

As a cooking specialist you would think that the technology side of their products would focus on ovens and cooktops. “Not so” said Tamara, “Australia’s climate and penchant for everything to be chilled means large-capacity refrigeration is particularly important in this market. Stainless steel style, capacity, convenient access, temperature flexibility, and energy savings are the some of the features which attract buyers. Smeg’s latest French door model, FQ60XPA scores with all of these features including a Multi-Zone quadrant with a temperature range of -24°C to +10 °C that can be used as fridge/freezer or even wine compartment.”

Appliances have come a long way in the last twenty years, there are many that believe technology has outpaced aesthetic advancement however as Patrick stated, the biggest challenge that faces most manufacturers today is the constant need to reinvent, to bring to market new and exciting advancement in product (and get a financial return), something that appeals to the consumer whilst allowing the designer / appliance salesperson to initially understand and then run with.

With the European community in trouble, this might not change for a while, however a selected few continue to be at the forefront, they maintain their time honoured traditions of researching what can be done, talk to those who cook, and those who design and then deliver. However, far too many appear to roll out the same thing year after year with a few cosmetic changes and there’s no apparent desire to produce another exciting product – something the devoted designer craves.

Simon Hodgson writes for AWISA – The Magazine. He works as a marketing consultant and one of his clients is Smeg Australia Pty Ltd.

Häfele announces national tour of 'Clever Storage'

Most in the industry will have heard of the Häfele brand promise 'Clever Storage' – but do they know what it looks like? Or how it will work in their next project?

Wonder no longer. Häfele is taking its very best design and hardware solutions on the road, and they're coming 'to a town near you'. Just like its movie namesake at 4 metres high, 12.5 metres long and weighing in at 15 tonnes, Häfele's Kong mobile showroom is a real showstopper. But it's what's inside that really excites.

The tour will feature the latest and greatest in kitchen innovation on board; award-winning clever storage fittings by Kesseböhmer, brilliant

Loox lighting solutions, alongside designer accessories and stylish fittings from some of Europe's finest manufacturers – it will all be there.

Beginning in Victoria in March and concluding in Tasmania towards the end of the year, the Kong mobile showroom is the ideal form of inspiration for those who can't get to a fixed location Häfele Design Centre.

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Time... the most precious commodity

If a business succeeds, a funny thing tends to happen. Without even noticing, the owner wakes up one day to find themselves neck-deep in the daily grind of peripheral tasks that they don't even enjoy; things like paperwork, for instance; when they could be out there seeing new prospects, and making new sales.

Remember, it's never too late to start re-arranging and changing some of the ways that things used to be done when the business was new. It's always a good idea to learn new ways of working smarter, more efficiently, in order to free up time and increase profits.

One of the things business mentors advise is to figure out what the strengths are and focus more on opportunities. The owner should delegate those tasks they are weaker in or don't enjoy so much to others.

Most tasks can be simplified and optimised with the introduction of business management software. It's always best to use software that's industry specific, and designed to meet the needs and requirements of the business; software that will connect the business with its suppliers and can be easily adapted to the way the business is run.

"The first step in acquiring the proper business management software is to choose the right vendor. Select a vendor with experience in your firm's industry, with firms of the same size as yours and with a track record of excellent service after the installation" – source: WiseGeek.com

EQ Software, designed specifically for the kitchen, bedroom and bathroom industry, will meet the current needs of a business, and has

the ability to grow with the company's plans as well as with industry trends and future technologies, and offer high quality support

So business owners should start being proactive and shake things up a bit. This will allow an owner to get back to their core strengths and before they know it, the days will pass by quickly, they'll be enjoying themselves and the business again, and without even realising it they'll regain confidence, energy and focus.

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Wilson and Bradley is thrilled to reveal its brand new line of wardrobe fittings and accessories that includes: A variety of soft closing options, storage baskets, pant racks in different configurations, accessory boxes with a deluxe velvet interior as well as shoe racks, clothing racks and tie and belt racks.

Something extra special in this range is the selection of mirror pull out applications that fit into the wardrobe and decrease clutter.

As well as this, Wilson and Bradley has introduced battery operated lighting options that are perfectly suited to wardrobe applications, illuminating any new organised and attractive wardrobe.



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Hettich celebrates double milestone in 2013

Hettich, one of the world's leading cabinetry and fittings manufacturers, is this year celebrating its 125th anniversary as a global company, and 25th year of operation in Australia. From humble beginnings in the Black Forest in 1888, where Karl Hettich first developed a manual bending machine that revolutionised the production of the region's famous cuckoo clocks, to the multi-award winning global company with more than 6,000 staff members that it is today, Hettich has remained true to its core values of innovation, reliability, quality and customer care.

The management reins have been handed over just four times at Hettich in its 125 year history, with each changeover seeing a new generation of the Hettich family run and shape the company. 1930 saw brothers August, Paul and Franz Hettich establish the Paul Hettich GmbH sister company in the north west of Germany. After August developed a 16 metre long production line for piano hinges in 1928, the brothers decided to reduce the distance between their father's production factory in Schramberg (south west Germany) and the heart of the German furniture industry in East Westphalia (north west), hence the establishment of the second Hettich production site in Herford in 1930.

In 1959 Anton Hettich took the helm, representing the third generation of the Hettich family to manage the company. Shortly after, Anton brought his brother Dr Erwin Hettich into the management team, along with Helmut, Siegfried and Bruno Hettich as other partners. In 2005 Dr Andreas Hettich became the fourth generation to head Hettich management, and is the current chairman of the management board.

Hettich today has 38 subsidiaries in America, Europe and Asia, as well as production sites in six countries, so the global company is never far from its customers. 2013 marks another milestone for Hettich, with the Australian and New Zealand teams celebrating 25 years in the market as well.



"The strong roots of Hettich globally help us deliver the best products to our customers locally," says marketing manager for Hettich Australia and New Zealand, Dave Angus.

"Over the years Hettich has built itself as a brand that can be trusted through reliable and innovative products that are built to last – with a lifetime warranty on all drawer and hinge systems, consumers can be confident their Hettich products will be around for longer than we have been so far!" adds Dave.

Hettich's 25th year in Australia is going to be a big one, with the team launching Hettich's biggest ever \$20,000 consumer promotion in partnership with leading whitegoods company Fisher & Paykel. Hettich Australia also plans to expand its already impressive network of more than 200 Hettich Endorsed Showrooms, as well as launch a premium new drawer offering mid-year – the ArciTech drawer system.

"We have a great team here in Australia and we're excited to be able to bring Europe's finest furniture fittings to our growing customer base. Globally and locally we all have the same goal here at Hettich – to make living spaces work beautifully," says Dave.

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AWISA The Association



AWISA was formed in 1986 by the principal suppliers to the Australian woodworking industry. The main aims of the association are to present industry exhibitions, publish industry magazines, co-operate with other organisations, and to uphold the highest ethical standards and encourage members to do the same.

Membership applications are welcome from Australian based companies, and from overseas companies with Australian agents or distributors that are also members of AWISA. Membership of AWISA includes suppliers of woodworking machinery, cabinet and furniture hardware, panel products and surface materials, portable tools, computer software, materials handling equipment, dust extraction equipment, components, and general plant and safety equipment.

AWISA The Exhibition



The exhibition has been held regularly since 1988, and attracts furniture manufacturers, cabinet makers, kitchen manufacturers, joiners, shop and office fitters, and other wood, timber and panel processing industries. Architects and interior designers also attend.

The next AWISA exhibition will take place in Brisbane from 6-9 August 2014 at the Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre. For more information visit www.awisa.com or phone Geoff Holland on 0412 361 580.

AWISA The Magazine



AWISA's magazine is published quarterly and is distributed free to a database of over 15,000 end users in the industry. AWISA's editorial policy is to produce quality editorial about business and technical issues that affect the woodworking industry, and to provide members with a means of disseminating information about their products. The association welcomes input from both members and end users about subjects that should be written about in the magazine.

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