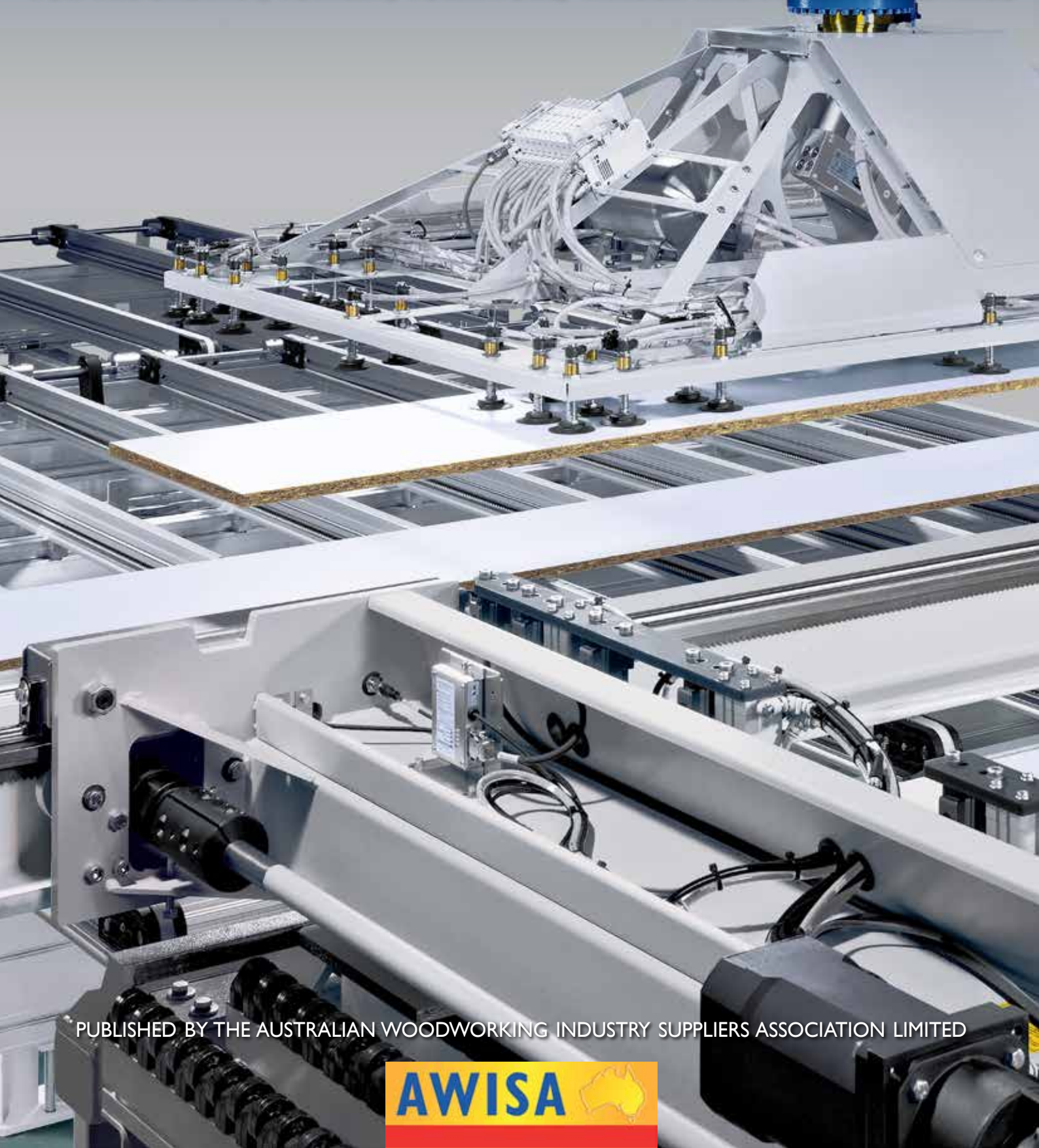


# AWISA THE MAGAZINE

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



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# AWISA THE MAGAZINE

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## EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

Geoff Holland  
General manager, AWISA Ltd  
Phone 02 4861 7040  
Email: [info@awisa.com](mailto:info@awisa.com)

## CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Jim Bowden, Rob Ditessa,  
Simon Hodgson, Pam Kershaw,  
Rick Lee, Michael Smith and  
Selina Swolsman.

## DESIGN

Felicity Carruthers

## PRINTER

Major Graphics Printers Pty Ltd

Post all correspondence to:  
AWISA Ltd  
P.O. Box 895  
Bowral NSW 2576

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## DEAR READER,

As this issue of AWISA the Magazine goes to press, we are starting to receive industry feedback from overseas trade shows, the first to be held since Covid arrived and borders closed to international travel. First impressions are that things are still far from normal, with shows held out of sync with their usual time slots. Some nations are still unable to travel, and those that can, face the complexities of Covid travel and all that's required to keep safe. Attendance figures reflect the difficulties of returning to a stable routine.

Notwithstanding the complications, I know we all feel eager to hear of industry advances, to see what's new and talk to experts about trends in the market. This was clearly evident at this year's, i Salone/EuroCucina exhibition in Milan, where the very latest ideas were showcased for visitors from around the world, delighted to be back on their travels. With more international exhibitions now on the way, we will be looking forward to bringing the world to our own shores for AWISA 2024, and it won't be a moment too soon. Until then, there will be an opportunity to re-connect at the upcoming ACFA conference in Melbourne this October. Set yourself up for success by joining in on the sessions designed for our industry.

Finally, as someone who's 'been around a while', I thoroughly enjoyed the article in this issue about the Great AWISA Fire of 1992. There have been many dramas surrounding the show over the years, but this one was certainly a hot topic for exhibitors at the time. You'll find lots more enjoyable reading in this quarter's publication. Thank you to all our contributors and for making this another interesting AWISA magazine.

Brett Ambrose  
Chairman  
Australian Woodworking Industry  
Suppliers Association Limited

FRONT COVER: Fully automated panel  
dividing cells set new standards in flexibility  
and performance.  
Photo courtesy of Homag.

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# Close collaboration

**NICK COYLE AND SUNNY WILDER** explain that they transitioned the business name from The Timber Trip to WilderCoyle in order to formalise their working relationship. In conversation with AWISA Magazine, they say Nick set up The Timber Trip in 1993, a furniture and joinery business, and Sunny had been practicing as a sole architect in her firm, Wilder Architecture. Sunny began working with Nick at The Timber Trip in the mid-2000s when their children were little, but she got tired of people assuming that she just did the books and quotes as she is involved in all aspects of the business from client liaison and design to construction.

"I don't think I can describe it easily", says Sunny, pondering on how to explain the workings of their close creative collaboration. After a moment's reflection, she describes how working on a project, one will sketch an idea, one will elaborate, then they will go back and forth to add or subtract. Nick lends his wealth of knowledge of timber itself, and of timber construction, engineering and joinery solutions from western and oriental traditions. Sunny lends her insights from architecture. "But in the end, we work with a natural product, and often the design is informed by the material we use. As we use a lot of recycled timbers, we have to evolve the design to suit the timbers we are working with at the time. Our approach has long been one of design minimalism, to let the form be as simple as possible, and let the timber be the focus of the piece."

The collaboration extends into the workshop. Design is only five percent of the job and the rest is hard yakka in getting the piece made, Nick and Sunny explain. While Nick works on most of the actual construction, Sunny will do the morticing while Nick is preparing the tenons for example. They underline that finishing a piece is as important as the rest of the work. Sunny adds, "The sanding and polishing really brings out the lustre of the timber. I do a fair amount of this work but Nick is very particular about the dining table tops, and he likes to do them. I like preparing the material for making, running it through the jointer and thicknesser. It is incredibly satisfying seeing grey old recycled timber machined back to reveal its original beauty. I also love the Japanese chisel set that Nick gave me last year. I use these almost daily."

The business is a success with the pair working, as they say, at a considerable pace fulfilling the long list of orders. They describe their work as simple, practical and uncomplicated. No, they say, they do not have the time to enter competitions,

adding modestly they are not award-winning furniture makers. "The commendations that we have are the many clients that love and appreciate our work. We expand and evolve our repertoire by fulfilling our commission list and working with our clients to make pieces for their homes."

With a different view to money than most, they say the reality is you would not be a furniture maker if you wanted to get rich quick. Doing the fit-out for Gerald's Bar in North Carlton is an example. Nick's friend Gerald asked them to fit-out his wine bar so it would have a timber and hand-crafted feel. Nick and Gerald did the design but Nick worked within the tiny budget, using offcuts and remnants from other projects. The bar face is made from woven strips of timber which are offcuts from trimming boards. Their innovative work has helped make Gerald's Bar an institution in Melbourne. There is another example, a project in Narrabundah (Canberra, ACT). In order to improve the amenity of an older style art-deco house, Nick and Sunny installed several timber insertions "including a new kitchen island bench, a banquettes seating and storage unit, a combined bookshelf and linen store in the entry, and a vanity in the bathroom."

Wanting to reference the deco-era style by using curves, they workshopped a solution by using vertical peaked lengths of timber to create the curve. They did not buy material off the shelf but milled their own profile with rebated tongue and groove. Another example of putting time into work for the outcome and not putting a dollar value on it. The finished outcome is the most important result - not the profit, they say.

Typical of the challenges they like to take on, was a commission last year for a long standing client. This was for a large piece to house and display a collection of mostly glass art. The piece would sit in an architect designed living room. The client wanted the piece to sit and feel as if it were a part of the room but not to dominate it, or the collection, and at the same time to be sculpturally pleasing. Lighting the collection was important, to show it off. And it had to be solid and stable. The project tested all the approaches they practice in executing a job. "We presented developed sketches and models to the client. Once that was approved, Nick really took on the basic sketch and figurative form and added layers to it. We needed to work out how this thing was going to stand up, how we were going to get the lighting in and have no wiring showing, and everything concealed. Nick took that on and then we decided ►





Photo by Michelle Petigrove

Photo by Henry Evans

Kitchen island bench photos by  
Tess Godkin Photography





► that it needed a beautiful ebonised finish. As that's one of my skills, I did all the ebonising and finishing, and over the making of the whole piece from inspiration to conception, we went back and forth between us to work things out."

Before finding their niche and settling into their preferred way of living and working, the business, operating with half a dozen staff, made wholesale beds, bedside tables, and dining room tables, for retailers. They found themselves sourcing work to be able to pay the staff and keep the business ticking over. They were getting stressed from having to make creative compromises and making product that was not at the standard they wanted to achieve. "We decided to keep our business very lean with just the two of us, and it worked well. Our son and daughter can come in and help if we've got a lot of sanding or oiling to do. They've developed very good skills. There are people we can call on occasionally, if a piece is very heavy or an installation is going to be tricky."

All of that is not to say that the calculator does not come out when it is time for a quote. They are very efficient and realise that as this is the only source of income for the family, the business has to be generating income all the time. Sunny, who looks after the quotes, says she looks back at similar jobs to get

an idea of costs, admitting that sometimes they could charge a higher price, make a greater profit, but they do not want their prices to be exorbitant, or accessible only to wealthy patrons, and they want to be working all the time. Intriguingly, they say that if they have a bad feeling about a project, or can see that something is not going to work, they will not take it on. "Most of the time clients come to us because they know we've got the expertise. We can talk with them and offer another solution, and usually that's the outcome, we modify the original concept to something that will actually work," says Nick.

In their projects, they prefer as much as possible to use Australian recycled and salvaged timber. They sum up their philosophy, "We have a love of Australian timber because of that connection to place, and this country, and that's what we limit ourselves to. If it comes from here in Australia, we'll use it."

While decrying the amount of good timber from suburban demolitions going to landfill, they acknowledge that there are more recyclers out there now than when they started out, and they can get enough material from their reliable suppliers. Sometimes they have to scout further afield to find suitable timber for specific jobs. Prices are increasing, but then so are all prices, they say. The follow on from this approach in the use

of materials is that they have a policy of using as much of the timber as possible in the vein of the Japanese philosophy of wabi-sabi. There is beauty to be found in things that are not perfect or permanent. They will not reject a piece of timber because it has a knot hole, but try to use it in a well-crafted and finished fashion.

In their workshop they have a range of equipment and machinery, as expected, including a jointer, thicknesser, dovetailer, one small and one large morticer, tenoner, spindle moulder, lathe, band saw, and a wide belt drum sander. Their favourite is a 1983 Martin panel saw. They say it is the one machine that is used continuously on a project from beginning to end, and it has been square and accurate since the day Nick bought it second-hand just over 20 years ago. At the end of a big project Nick, who has fine mechanical skills, will service all the equipment, spending a lot of time making sure the saw blades are sharp, that all the blades on the jointer, and the thicknesser, are set right.

"We use Japanese-crafted hand tools. Nick has a beautiful set of hand-forged Japanese chisels in every size imaginable, and I've got machine-made Japanese chisels. He's the master craftsman, so he's got the better quality ones. I do notice the difference if I ever use his chisels. The chisels are a beautiful thing. Because you use them with your hands, they need to be sharpened every couple of weeks, and that's a dedicated process where we put all the water stones on the bench and just sharpen everything, usually after the completion of a project. The chisels are probably my favourite hand tools," says Sunny.

Nick and Sunny's biggest collaboration was the House of Cupboards, an innovation which deserves the renewed attention of the housing industry, given prevailing concerns about housing. The House of Cupboards was a prototype for a flat-pack affordable house, their attempt to develop a new model of housing that is affordable, quick to build using few materials, and can be put together predominately by a carpenter or joiner. The house got its name from the fact that the storage and cupboards would be part of the load bearing structure. The project won the Best Small Budget Project Award, the Best Use of Certified Timber Award, as well as being the runner up in the Judges Innovation Award, at the 2015 Australian Timber Design Awards.

Reflecting on their business career, they say, "It's just our way of life, really. We just keep doing what we do and enjoy it." ■





# ACFA Conference to help plan for success

The ACFA 2022 Industry Conference is set to be an invigorating opportunity for the industry. The conference is taking place in Melbourne at the Crowne Plaza, on Friday the 21st of October 2022.

The Australian Cabinet and Furniture Association team have set the theme for the one-day conference upon the phrase Sessions for Success. The conference will bring a series of presentations that are relevant, support your business, reduce risks, and provide information to better plan for future success in an ever-changing market.

With face-to-face events now returning, the industry conference will be a welcome opportunity to network with other businesses from across Australia. Delegates will benefit from the refreshing effects of being able to come together and move forward as a more connected and informed industry.

Session topics have begun to be announced, with presentations on the latest in colour trends, key industry insights and updates, how to use contracts to make your business more successful, and unpacking the latest influences shaping business finance. More information on the topics and presenters can be found on the ACFA Website.

For businesses travelling from interstate, why not turn a visit to the conference into a weekend away? Melbourne is a great destination to stay on and enjoy, with plenty to see, eat and experience.

Alongside Premium Partner, Polytec, a number of industry suppliers will be in attendance showcasing their products and services, and able to discuss how they too can help your business plan for the future.

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# NZIA Awards recognise advances in engineered wood technology

**THE NEW ZEALAND INSTITUTE** of Architects (NZIA) seeks to raise the standards of the country's architecture and foster a stronger design culture - in part by administering annual, peer-reviewed regional awards in a number of categories, which culminate in a national awards programme held later in the year.

Among this year's nominees are several projects that highlight the advances in engineered wood technology - including HomeGround, by Stevens Lawson Architects, New Zealand's tallest cross-laminated timber (CLT) building.

HomeGround is Auckland City Mission's new central-city facility - part of the organisation's commitment "to provide pathways to permanent housing" for rough sleepers and those on the social housing register.

The building features 80 apartments and support services, which include a medical centre (with a pharmacy and detox unit), a dining room/commercial kitchen, community rooms, and commercial spaces offering social enterprise opportunities.

Architect Gary Lawson says the project had its challenges, "but nothing that's put us off the potential of CLT. The floor-to-floor turnaround, once up and going, was fantastic - and the construction site had a very different 'feel' about it. To build at scale very accurately and quickly was a great experience."

Lawson's main concerns were "getting local councils up to speed with the technology - and having a deeper well of accepted design standards and tested solutions on which design consultants and teams could base decisions.

"Beyond this, the biggest barrier we found was a lack of construction experience to 'feed back' into design. Sensible assumptions by the design team were made, and then often found resistance or a different approach on-site, which could be disruptive and costly.

"The contractors on HomeGround were excellent and open-minded to the team approach, but there's a huge amount of valuable experience that could be used to the collective advantage on future projects."

Constructing a mid-rise, mass-timber building in New Zealand - a seismic zone - involved some unique challenges... and opportunities. "Unlike many overseas examples, our cores are CLT, not concrete, so bracing the building was challenging, while allowing for the dimensional movement the building faced during construction - and will face over time.

"There are some really interesting and novel slip joints and connections that enable the expressed diagrid to brace the building yet allow for movement."

Lawson adds that the approach to fire design was necessarily conservative, "given there's a very limited tested product range and solutions to point to, making things much harder than traditional construction. It's an area I expect will improve quite quickly as the market broadens."

But he is still keen to emphasise the on-site and structural advantages of building with wood - most notably the speed of construction following prefabrication, a safer site with smaller cranes and fewer hazards, and reduced foundational requirements.

Also important was the significantly smaller carbon footprint... "some 80 per cent less over a 60-year life cycle than a steel and concrete equivalent".

A highlight of the Nelson/Marlborough shortlist is Waimea College (new teaching blocks), by Arthouse Architects and Sheppard & Rout Architects.

The eight-classroom block - commissioned in response to demand created by new residential developments - showcases the region's extensive experience with timber construction. It features locally sourced LVL and ply hybrid walls, timber floors/decking, and exposed LVL beams - highlighting the structural integrity of the build.

Architect Jasper van der Lingen (a director at Sheppard & Rout) says his firm has previously designed with engineered wood. "For example, in 2014 we completed a three-level office building in Christchurch that used an LVL structure - columns, beams and floor joists - which employed an innovative post-tensioning system to resist seismic forces.

"But the use of engineered timber in large-scale commercial/educational projects is still relatively new. Unlike steel there are no standard sizes or details that have become industry norms. This tends to mean most designs are more bespoke, which can add to cost and design time.

"In addition, the capacity of the engineered timber industry is stretched at times to meet the increasing demand."

Nevertheless, he was pleased with the significant carbon sequestration achieved; and the speed of construction - as

HomeGround: The architects highlighted the on-site and structural advantages of building in wood.

Photo Mark Smith







Left: Kohinga St Albans Community Centre: prefabrication off-site required extensive coordination of all aspects of design.  
Photo: Crispin Schurr



Right: Waimea College (new teaching blocks): showcases the region's extensive experience with timber construction.  
Photo: Virginia Woolf

► most of the LVL components were manufactured nearby (at Nelson Pine) from locally sourced timber.

The project's state-of-the-art floor and roof panels, provided by Potius Building Systems, were also produced locally. Structural engineer Gavin Robertson says, "they are our 'Box Beam' configuration. All components work in composite, like a stressed skin panel. The sides of the box are webs, while the ply on top and LVL on the bottom act as flanges. The flooring also provides a diaphragm for wind/seismic actions.

"Fire-rated GIB ceilings provide protection to the flooring above and the sides of the boxes. The bottom portion of the box panel is exposed to the fire and protects the rest of the panel above through timber charring."

Worthy of mention in the Canterbury region is Kohinga St Albans Community Centre by Christchurch City Council - a winner in the public architecture category.

As the first permanent facility to replace the previous resource centre (which was damaged in the 2011 earthquakes), the all-timber build features a large hall, several meeting rooms, and an open-plan kitchen.

The judges were particularly taken with the centre's beauty and warmth... "gained throughout from the radiata cladding, spruce glulam beams, and cross-laminated timber walls, ceilings and floors".

Brent Smith, Head of Vertical Delivery, says the centre is the council's first completed design involving the extensive use of engineered wood as both the structure and finish.

Smith emphasises that prefabrication off-site "required early and extensive coordination of all aspects of design, including consenting, acoustics, fire safety and services penetrations - as well as thorough shop drawing checks". That initial integration meant engineered timber costs became comparable with other structural systems.

"Once the prefabricated timber arrived on site, the installation was seamless, which minimised crane time, and reduced overall construction time and exposure to health and safety risks."

He notes that a general lack of experience working with CLT when it's intended to be exposed as the finish was challenging. "And sourcing a reasonably priced local supply of CLT at the time was also difficult. In the end, it had to be imported, which had a small impact on the project's carbon footprint."

Smith says that, overall, there was much to like about designing with engineered wood. "There was no specific fire resistance requirement due to CLT's stable and predictable charring rate. All beams and panels had sufficient strength to resist a fire as prescribed by the building code.

"Intumescent coatings were required on the ceilings to prevent the spread of flame - but this would have been the case for any timber used as ceiling finish."

Using wood reduced the complexity and cost of the foundations; and increased seismic resilience due to the lightweight nature of the structure, negating the poor ground conditions encountered by the structural engineers.

Additionally, the designers were able "to expose the structural elements, making the most of the tactile nature of timber". ■

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# Australian households have been quietly building their resilience

**ANY NEWS PAGE** will tell you that Australian households and the economy are under assault from shocks and risks: inflation and falling real wages, supply chain shocks, fresh waves of COVID-19, government responses to new outbreaks, rising interest rates, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, rising costs, household debt levels, etc.

What matters is how households and businesses respond to these new events.

The good news is that Australians have been building their financial resilience to the uncertainty created by COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic. Today, households are in a very solid financial position to weather the effects of forthcoming shocks, including inflation, rising interest rates and further virus outbreaks.

Firstly, households have built up their savings. Households have saved around 14 per cent of their income so far during the pandemic. This is up from 5 per cent before the pandemic. Households have saved over \$300 billion more during the pandemic than they did in equivalent pre-pandemic period.

Secondly, many buyers have elected to leave renting (or living with parents and parents-in-law) and have purchased their first home. There have been around 330,000 home loans issued to first homebuyers during the 27 months of the pandemic. This well above the 225,000 loans issued during the equivalent 27 months before the pandemic. It is true that many of these buyers have had to take out substantial mortgages and some may be vulnerable to large interest rate increases. However, all borrowers are assessed by the banks at an interest rate that is 3 per cent higher than prevailing rates. Moreover, there is almost nowhere to rent: rental vacancies have collapsed to very low levels. It is likely that most of these newly minted homeowners feel more secure, and look to the future with more confidence, than renters.

In April 2022, the RBA estimated that only 0.5 per cent of Australian households were in negative equity. This is a significant improvement since January 2020 (when around 2.5 per cent of households were in negative equity).



Another 'problem' is soaring debt levels. According to the RBA, the debts of Australian households are almost two hundred per cent of income. But this compares to housing assets equivalent to more than six hundred per cent of income, and financial assets worth more than four hundred per cent of income. The net wealth of Australian households is over nine hundred per cent of income. This net wealth figure has increased (not decreased!) during the pandemic, as payments into mortgage offset accounts have grown, and home values have risen. A sober look at their balance sheets reveals that Australian households do not have a debt problem.

Yes - falling real wages, supply chain shocks, and more COVID, are all significant challenges but Australian households have changed. They, and the national economy, are in a good position to stare down these challenges. ■





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# Sustainability the name of the game, says young architect

"Opportunities exist for architects to put into action resource-conscious design by thinking regeneratively to achieve a far greater impact on projects and their communities," insists young Gottstein fellowship recipient Harry Mills.

An architectural designer and researcher with a passion for environmental and climatic responsible design, Harry undertook an international study with a Gottstein fellowship in conjunction with his PhD research at the Future Timber Hub at the School of Civil Engineering at the University of Queensland. The nub of his work is lifting recovery rates of timber across the building product supply chain.

Harry was awarded the fellowship to investigate the state-of-the-art timber supply chains through North America, Scandinavia, Europe and the UK. His study tour was directly relevant to the Australian domestic timber industry ... "which is exactly what the Gottstein Trust wants to encourage and support," he said.

His meetings with leading professionals were diverse, ranging from foresters, millers and manufacturers, architects, engineers, builders, artisans, educators, researchers and policymakers. Harry's focus was on the building product supply chain of plantation softwood species *Pinus caribaea* and *P. elliottii*, or slash pine, which grows throughout southeast Queensland and the Fraser Coast region.

As a result of the tour, he identified several pathways for underutilised timber uptake and resource-conscious design strategies for using timber in construction. Speaking from his new workplace at the University of Cambridge in the UK, Harry said the opportunities he had to engage, participate and learn were unique.

"I regularly draw on the experience of my fellowship," he said. Harry's interest in architecture and timber began at an early age. "I grew up in a worker's cottage in Brisbane surrounded by native pine and eucalyptus trees. The materiality of the houses, nature and fauna all had an impact on my journey into architecture."

Gottstein fellow Harry Mills (wearing hat centre) with fellow summer students at the front of Wakeford Hall at the Architectural Association's satellite campus Hooke Park in Dorset, southwest England.

He began training with a Bachelor of Design (Architecture) at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT), and immediately looked to put the real-world training into practice. "I managed to get my foot in the door early on and have been fortunate to work at some great firms abroad in Budapest, Hungary, São Paulo in Brazil and Beijing, China.

Harry has developed a digital tool that loads up practising architects and engineers with information on specific timber products for residential and mass timber building design. It links products back to the tree through supply-chain mapping, structural design analysis, and volumetric estimation per building.

"In addition to the tool, my research contains practical recommendations for architects, engineers, and builders to absorb more significant 'unit-under-test' volumes," Harry said. For more information about the Gottstein Trust visit <https://gottsteintrust.org/grants-courses> ■

Harry Mills... resource-conscious design strategies for using timber in construction.





# The return to i Salone

It was Xmas 2019, i Salone was to be on in April 2020, we were ready to go taking 40 designers to view everything that the design communities of Europe has to offer - and then - Covid. Two years later and three cancelled shows, the unseasonal timing of the show (June rather than April) meant that whilst wardrobes had to be adjusted, the hype surrounding the fair was palpable.

i Salone is more than just a furniture fair, it is the largest cross branding platform in the world, showcasing brands that want to immerse themselves in the theme of design. Given well documented circumstances in various parts of the world, the numbers were staggering. Over 262,000 visitors, 2175 exhibitors and over 3,500 journalists attended the show over the six days. On the social media side of things 13.5 million accounts were reached, 600,000 video views and 25 million impressions demonstrating a highly positive reaction to the show itself.

"This edition has confirmed the international scope of the event and the cohesion of the design community," commented Maria Porro, President of the Salone del Mobile Milano. "An important result that confirms the state of health and the value content of the Salone del Mobile, and it shows how teamwork across a whole sector and its creative and productive fabric can produce excellence, achieving great results even in the most complex moments. The ICE's contribution has been precious and essential in its support in opening up new markets, with digital offerings that, this week as in previous months, have enabled us to get in touch with new countries."

In this the first of two parts, we look at kitchens, bathrooms, appliances and other interesting aspects to a show that mesmerizes everyone that attends, be it for the first time or an attendee returning for their fifth show. Post pandemic, designers had a desire to return to the elements as evergreen themes of nature and sustainability were blended with traditional methods and the latest technology to create a very noticeable eco vibe.

The overwhelming theme this year was "calm" and "safe". Every major European design house was focused on creating nurturing kitchen spaces into which we could retreat from the chaos of the outside world. Quite possibly as an antidote to the past two years of pandemics, lockdowns, restrictions, missing family and friends, and the associated trauma of the event no one saw coming, all the kitchens this year were dressed in neutrals and understated shades. There were very

few bright tones or gloss surfaces, with all designers choosing predominantly matte finishes, natural tones and reserved colour palettes. The emphasis was on finding value in spending time at home and investing in family time and family space. The kitchen was presented as a space of nourishment and nurture.

In looking at a couple of kitchens that drew real attention, this was a stand out. The "All-aroundD" from Doimo Cucine showed true modernism. A room without walls, walls replaced with a range of cabinetry with infinite opportunities. Naturally you need the room space, but this kitchen (and Butler's pantry) was created by featuring the tall units, pocket doors conceal the appliances, food storage disappears behind doors and the pantry becomes the heart and soul of the project. Natural light floods through to the front of the kitchen from the tropical exterior, whilst key ceiling and shelf lighting internally provides warmth into the preparation area.

Elegance in abundance the monolithic look of the island created by doors that reach the floor, yet lightened by clever details such as the diagonal counter cutting across the island.

Rossana's core values are design, materials and design contents. This brand has been a pioneer of style and technology for over 60 years and were certainly highlighted at i Salone. Art Director at Rossana, Simona Tagliaferri focussed on the natural strengths of wood, stone and metal all enhanced by light. Walnuts, Larice Silk, Coal Chestnut wood and stone such as Breccia Imperiale green leather all combined to deliver unique works of contemporary design, with this one standing out from the crowd.

The HT50 (not the most elegant of names I have to admit) uses some fairly rigorous block islands with the heart of the kitchen conceived as a niche, closed when not in use but when open the doors are disguised behind small fold back doors either side of the niche.

An innovative and refined handle free design, the Ht50 has a high degree of customisation and adaptation (something not normally seen in the "small catalogue" market that is the majority of Europe). Servo assisted technologies for all large scale openings really find their place in this kitchen. There's a very apparent strong balance of tones, coupled with stage and calm, yet the level of complexity was a true masterpiece.

As part of i Salone, and now in its second edition, S.Project is a diverse mix of ideas ranging from indoor and outdoor ►

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*international scope  
and the cohesion of the  
design community*

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► furnishings, lighting, acoustic solutions, wellness products and textiles. A curated exhibition, S.Project recognises that the interior space is in constant evolution. In tandem with the rest that i Salone has to offer (The Salone Internazionale del Mobile, The International Furnishing Accessories Exhibition, EuroCucina, International Bathroom Exhibition, Workplace3.0 and SaloneSatellite), S.Project selects, collects and exhibits manufacturers' proposals, providing a 360-degree perspective on interior architecture and responding to the latest market demands.

S.Project's distinctive feature is its multi sector focus - a multidimensional space with a heterogeneous selection of goods, with products ranging from interior to outdoor furnishing, from wellness products to fabrics, from lighting to acoustic solutions, from coverings to finishes.

S.Project is a business-to-business platform that underpins the alliance between retail, designers and companies, providing an inclusive experience and the ultimate networking environment. It is the ideal place for showcasing manufacturing excellence, new concepts and innovative solutions to professionals within the sector and national and international buyers.

But what makes this part of i Salone special is not only the fact that exhibitors have to be invited by the organisers (90 of them spread out over 13,000 sqm), but S.Project aims to pick up on trends showcasing the most contemporary design research with a special focus on how these companies demonstrate their efforts in sustainable and carbon neutral manufacturing.

For example, one company focused on the rehabilitation of a disused quarry and forgotten species of timber. Furniture boasted a very natural look demonstrating the balance between nature and art and furnishing accessories no longer played second fiddle to spaces but became a fundamental statement of taste and culture in tandem with the main project.

Finally, although some would say that whilst the nonappearance (or exclusion as some prefer to say) of certain countries and their exhibitors was a blessing (mainly due to style and taste - or lack thereof), i Salone is back. After years of setback and restrictions, the crowds of smiling faces returned to Milan and really cut loose, making for one of the most successful (and enjoyable) Salone Del Mobile editions in recent memory. ■

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HOMAG, with its suite of management software applications and digital tools, aims to partner with its manufacturing customers in adopting the Industry 4.0 model. HOMAG's solutions can be integrated into the workflow to optimize and streamline factory processes.

## MMR Mobile

The MMR Mobile application provides manufacturers with an overview of their machinery's performance without being physically present at the factory. Using a smartphone or tablet, users can remotely view key performance metrics such as the main utilisation level, parts performance, as well as the condition of the machines.

With MMR Mobile, companies are able to check the performance of machines from anywhere in the world, at any time. With clearly arranged graphics and a user-friendly interface, the MMR Mobile application is easy to use. Depending on the size of the company, little to no training is required. MMR Mobile can be connected to "tapio-ready" HOMAG machinery with a powerControl V2 control system. The tapio cloud system serves as the digital backbone of HOMAG's digital platforms and tools. As an open digital ecosystem that powers the woodworking industry, tapio can connect machinery and applications across different manufacturers and brands. Besides providing an overview of the machines in operation, MMR Mobile also allows users to select different evaluation periods for the identification of performance trends and potential areas of improvement, to continually maximise machine capabilities. This provides a competitive advantage.

The operating status of the equipment can be tracked clearly on an hourly, two-week, three-month or yearly basis. From a sales point of view, this data will be an indicator of capital investment, and a "weapon" for a company's growth.

## Sorting Production Set

HOMAG's sorting assistant, the Sorting Production Set, aims to help manufacturers reduce the time-consuming process of searching for the right parts for assembly, packaging or further processing. Using a barcode-scanning system, the Sorting Production Set can automatically sort workshop components into respective racks and compartments and, via a tablet, provide operators with an overview of the components needed for each order.

When companies manually sort parts by workers on the floor, it can take up a lot of space. It also makes it difficult for workers to identify missing parts and increases the chance of damage to panels due to excessive handling. Especially when multiple batch-size-one orders run concurrently, it can be difficult to keep track of all the parts and tell each order apart. By integrating the Sorting Production Set into the workflow, an intelligent, standardized sorting method can be developed that minimizes prolonged assembly time and any delayed fulfilment of orders.

A benefit: The Sorting Production Set also completely removes the chance of human error in the workflow, as workers now sort the parts based on a barcode scan instead of manually reading the barcodes and figuring out which panel belongs to which compartment.



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## *engineering expertise, service and software will be key*

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The digital assistant and digital job folder Production Manager can be connected to the existing HOMAG iX 3D design and production software and are fully operational by employees within a very short time. From implementation, employees have an overview of ongoing orders, the bill of materials of each order, the sorting progress, as well as where each component had been sorted to at all times. The Sorting Production Set is an extension of HOMAG iX's integration in production, and provides an assembly team with the additional help to perform their job accurately and efficiently.

### Levering Technology For Growth

Amid this era of digital transformation, the combination of engineering expertise, service and software will be key to accelerating how data is harnessed to make the manufacturing process faster and more reliable than before.

The digitalisation of manufacturing processes and the application of an open digital ecosystem can translate to better operational stability, the ability to scale and adapt to industry demands, as well as ensure consistent product quality. By positioning themselves to take advantage of the latest developments and leveraging the expertise of technology partners with integrated solutions, woodworking companies will be able to reap various benefits and open up new growth opportunities.

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## The smart home

Lighting can be more than just a necessary addition to a room with the right lighting playing on our moods and emotions to create a tone for any space.

Hettich's lighting solutions by Halemeier Lighting feature the latest in European design excellence and are the perfect touch to complement and complete any living space from the kitchen to the bathroom and everywhere in between. The Magic range has a wide variety of products to suit any application, from mood to task lighting, and includes a range of low voltage LED lights that give off virtually no heat and use limited energy but now with more power.

One of the newest features to the lighting range is the new wireless system Touch Link functionality. This means that almost all Halemeier Lighting products are now smart home capable. The idea behind a smart home is to have everything talking to everything. This could be lighting, security cameras, airconditioning or smart appliances. All of these devices are connected and handled by automatic systems over a single network. What does this result in? A smart home!

As many companies make different devices this can become problematic, to connect and have them working together on one network using a single common language. That is where Zigbee assists, it is a complete solution which uses a universal language that allows Zigbee certified devices to connect and communicate with each other on a secure low power network. Zigbee also allows for forwards and backwards compatibility.

A mesh network is used, so every time an extra lighting device is added like a S-Mitter basic MultiWhite2 controller the strength of the network improves and allows you to add further devices to the home with no hard wired connections required. As long as the next controller is in range the connection will be successful.

Some of the big users of Zigbee in the smart home are: Amazon, Comcast, Honeywell, Huawei, Philips, SmartThings, Texas Instruments, Belkin, Ikea, Lutron, Nokia, Osram, Bosch, Indesit, Samsung, Velux, Humax, Panasonic, Miele, plus more. Zigbee is also being used by the NASA mars mission.

To view the Hettich lighting range by Halemeier visit the Hettich website [www.hettich.com.au](http://www.hettich.com.au)



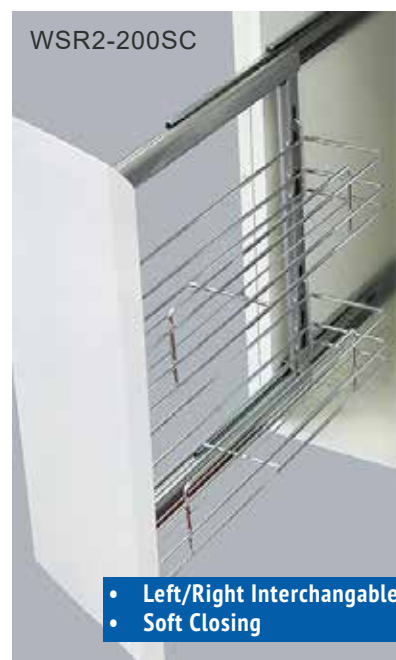
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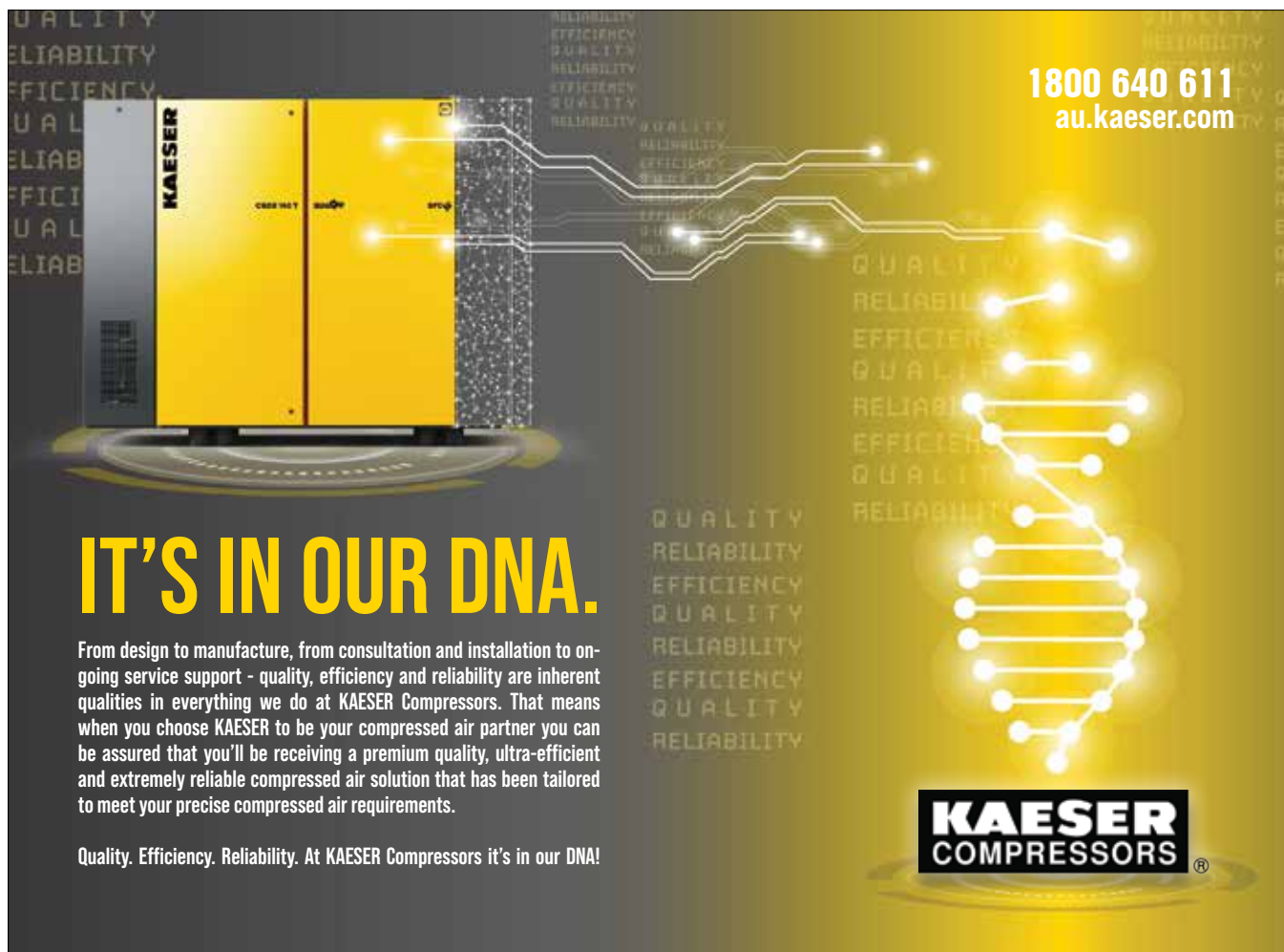
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by Pam Kershaw

# Unregistered Victorian cabinet makers

## may be working illegally on many jobs

There are up to 2500 cabinet makers in Victoria and, according to industry estimates, the vast majority are not registered with the Victorian Building Authority (VBA) and may therefore be working illegally on many jobs.

If they are caught – which can happen when a complaint is lodged with the VBA – they could end up before the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT), face significant fines of up to \$30,000, be required to refund the cost of the project and find themselves banned from working in the building industry for three years.

Geoff Sonnichsen, the Australian Cabinet and Furniture Association (ACFA) Business Development Representative in Victoria, mentors cabinet makers during their registration process and estimates that a vast majority are unregistered.

"I wonder if many don't register because either they don't think they will get caught or, perhaps more likely, they do not understand the risks and penalties involved in not being registered," says Sonnichsen, who has provided mentoring services for eight years.

"Under the Building Act 1993, any building practitioner – including cabinet makers – must be registered with the VBA to sign contracts for works or renovations valued at more than \$10,000. An exception to this would be if they are a subcontracted to a Registered Builder and the builder has the contract with the client and invoices the client directly.

"If a cabinet maker has a Domestic Builder (Limited) Registration for Kitchens, Bathrooms and Laundry Renovations, the cabinet maker can only undertake work within those areas. The practitioner must have a Domestic Builder (Unlimited), or Carpentry Registration and a contract before the cabinet maker can provide, as a subcontractor, works such as bedroom wardrobes, an entertainment unit in the lounge room or a staircase."

### Consumer awareness of the issue is increasing

Consumers are more informed than ever and are aware of the requirement to be registered. In previous years the VBA ran an awareness campaign based around the theme "Is your builder a registered builder?"

Some consumers have also threatened to take cabinet makers to the VBA if they are dissatisfied with their work.

"As soon as the client complains, an unregistered cabinet maker is in a whole mess of trouble," Sonnichsen says.

"I've had a few people in this situation, and the cabinet maker decides at a significant cost to themselves to appease the client and rectify the works, which in many cases may not be due to workmanship but more about dealing with a picky client, or refund the money. Otherwise, they have an even bigger problem with the VBA or VCAT and their lack of insurance."

From a legal perspective, there is currently legislation before the Victorian parliament that aims to have all trades within the building industry either registered or licensed. The criteria for a licence have not yet been set.

### Register and sleep soundly

So what's involved in becoming registered?

Firstly, Sonnichsen suggests if cabinet makers want to sleep soundly, they should apply for a Domestic Builder (Limited) Registration in the Cabinetmaking, Joinery and Stair Construction class, allowing them to legally provide cabinetry and joinery in any area of a house.

Carrying out works including framing and moving load-bearing internal walls requires the higher registration of Domestic Builder (Limited) Carpentry or Domestic Builder (Unlimited).

A registered practitioner can also legally sign a contract for works over \$10,000 – and if works are over \$16,000 they must





also apply Domestic Building Insurance to the contract. This is taken out by the builder/cabinet maker on behalf of the client to protect the client from the builder's death, disappearance or insolvency.

Surprisingly, this is relatively modest at around \$200 for a \$40,000 kitchen, and the cabinet maker can legally make this an additional charge in the contract.

The registration process is somewhat complicated, but its purpose is to maintain standards and protect the consumer. ACFA's mentoring program is an investment to help you along the way.

Using his wealth of experience, Sonnichsen guides applicants through the 30-odd pages of the application form, clarifies the tick boxes appropriate for their experience and assists with the police check and other processes. Mentoring also includes provision of five sets of the 50 questions and answers commonly used by the VBA, two meetings of two hours each, assistance with completing the forms and assembling material required for the application.

There is also an additional fee from the VBA of \$736. Applicants need access to the National Construction Code, Victoria's Building Act 1993, Domestic Building Contracts Act 1995, Security of Payments Act 2002, OH&S Act 2004 and possibly knowledge of the timber framing manual.

Three project examples of the cabinet maker's work, ideally under a registered builder who will become the Technical Referee, are required for the application. Documentation including drawings and plans of their projects is also required.

#### Exam pass rate of 70%

Once the VBA accepts the application, the applicant would then sit an exam comprising 50 multiple choice questions. A 70% pass rate is required, so allocating yourself study time is encouraged by Sonnichsen. Following the exam, an assessor contacts the cabinet maker to discuss their application and evidence and will recommend approval if satisfied with the assessment.

It is a big commitment, however ACFA are known for their personal service and Geoff is no exception. From assisting you with completing the forms, assembling material required for the application to questions and answers commonly used by the VBA, Geoff will guide you through the process. The threat of not being registered could prove far more costly to the cabinet maker. ■

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by Rick Lee

# 30 years ago - the fire across the road from AWISA 1992



Photos courtesy of  
The Daily Telegraph,  
July 1992.

**THIRTY YEARS AGO**, mid-day on the 6 July 1992, Australia's premier woodworking supply exhibition, AWISA 92, was in full preparation mode. The move-in, as always with large shows in those early days, a scene of organised chaos. It was my first AWISA Exhibition after arriving from Canada that same month and I recall my anxiety as we worked to achieve our move-in deadline. The loading docks were full and trucks lined the street below in wait for a spot to unload. Cranes were hired for precise schedules and forklifts strictly allocated and controlled. It would be safe to say that stress levels were high amongst exhibitors and organisers alike. Arguments flared over minor issues as each exhibitor jockeyed for the services of electricians and drivers, stand builders and technicians. AWISA General Manager, Geoff Holland remembers the day well. "It was a move-in day like any other," says Geoff. "Coordinating and looking after the needs of exhibitors as they moved into place was always eventful. For me it was business as usual. I had no idea just how eventful it would come to be on that day." Geoff says that in 1992, the processes surrounding major exhibitions were nowhere near as refined as they are today. "We always had queues of trucks, impatient drivers and exhibitors alike. Forklifts were at a premium and back in those days, well, let's just say the workforce operating the exhibition services were a little more rigid than they are now."

And so it was that the scene was set for the catastrophe to follow and stress levels were about to go through the roof. It was around lunch time, when the first signs of fire appeared across the road and smoke started to pour from windows and doors of an enormous warehouse. The attraction brought everyone in the exhibition centre to the loading dock as alarms began to sound. I remember the speed of the fire most. Work came to halt and I joined colleagues to watch the drama rapidly unfold before us. Within minutes, engulfed in flames, the warehouse became an inferno. The disused Australian Mercantile Land &



Finance Co wool store had been in use for almost one hundred years. Lanolin-soaked timbers and floors exploded into flames, racing through the warehouse at astonishing speed, super heating the surrounding air so that we had to retreat inside to avoid being scorched. "It was a coolish winter day," says Geoff Holland. "But within minutes, the temperature inside the exhibition centre had risen to 45 degrees."

100 firefighters from 20 stations came to fight the blaze. We watched from the exhibition as woolstore walls buckled and threatened to collapse. Geoff recalls how a policeman rushed to try and stop a determined woman from retrieving her car at the foot of the building. "The policemen jumped into the car beside her as she pulled away only minutes before the walls came tumbling down, crushing cars in the process. I can only imagine what that policeman said to her as they raced away to safety. It was no laughing matter; they were both very lucky to survive."

When exploding bricks and rubble began raining down on our loading dock, it was time for the exhibition centre to evacuate. Over 800 people were eventually evacuated as a result of the fire. Preparations for AWISA were delayed by a day and a half, but Geoff recalls proudly that the exhibition opened on time, a remarkable achievement given the circumstances. The wool store continued to smoulder for days during and after the exhibition and so much water had been pumped into the fire that it had drained into and flooded part of the venue's underground carpark, causing exhibitors and visitors to find alternative parking.

When they told me Australia gets hot even in winter, I didn't have that first AWISA in mind. It was a dramatic introduction to Australia and the exhibition. 30 years later and I'm glad to say that I've experienced several more serene move-ins since. ■

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# High rewards

**I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT** of sales as the business equivalent of competitive sports, salesmen and saleswomen, the athletes. Like in sport, there's always a support team working behind the scenes to achieve success, but it's usually frontline sales people who take the glory. Top sales performers are an elite group in the business world, and just like their sporting counterparts, they command high rewards.

In my previous two columns - The Long, long lunch and Let's face it, it's a digital world - I discussed the changing face of sales in relation to digital advances and online marketing tools. Business success now comes from relationships between the company and the customer on many levels rather than that of a single representative as the only point of contact. The consensus amongst sales organisations seems to be that teamwork now plays a leading role in achieving sales budgets. Success relies on CRM managers, data analysts, product managers and technicians. In addition, the line between sales and marketing has been blurred by the use of online resources that often do all the heavy lifting when convincing clients to invest.

So, how does this effect the way in which sales teams are rewarded, and does the 'closer' still deserve the accolades along with the high income?

When I decided to put away my trade tools and enter sales - 35 years ago - I received a modest retainer and a hefty promise of commission. A standard compensation package at the time, it came with a lot of uncertainty and stress. With a family to support, no sales meant no food on the table. As it happened, I made a good living and the low base salary did not become an issue. What is more, the thrill of big commission pay-outs at the end of every month proved a primary motivator in my success. Nevertheless, as time went on, I wanted more certainty and was able to negotiate higher and higher base salaries because of a successful sales record. I've seen many salespeople follow the same path to a higher ratio of fixed salaries after showing what they can do, and this can put a strain on the wage bill.

So, is it wise to break the sales structure to accommodate a top performer and is it still necessary to drive sales through commission incentives? With changes in sales structure, should commissions and bonuses be based on the performance of the entire sales team rather than individual performances?

Back to that sporting analogy; I'm a huge football fan - round ball game - and have followed my team since childhood. I've seen the game change from a locally focused sport to an international multi-billion-dollar industry. The stars of the game - the strikers - now demand incomes in the millions of dollars. Keeping the very best players at the end of their contracts often means owners giving in to excessive wage demands and offering huge performance bonuses. The trouble with this is that others in the team then feel under-valued and they demand more in turn. It's not long before the budget is thrown into chaos.

As I moved into sales management, I soon recognised this same predicament. Top sales people naturally wanted rewards to reflect their success. It's human nature to push the limits when negotiating from a





Rick Lee has over 40 years experience in the woodworking industry. He now works as a writer and consultant and can be contacted on 0412 237 456

position of strength. In this competitive world, there was always an opposition team willing to poach the best professionals, given half a chance. So, retaining top performers often meant throwing away the wage structure.

Wage demands usually come in the form of increases to base salary, the ratio shifting away from incentives. There is an obvious downside to changing the wage structure in this way. Come the inevitable downturns, fixed wages can become a problem for budgets that cannot adapt to slower sales income. Also, as representatives get more and more comfortable on base salary, results can, and often do, suffer as a consequence.

I asked John Scutt, Founder and Managing Director of Lindfield Partners, business advisory services, how sales compensation has kept pace with the changes to sales organisations. "There's no doubt that the world of sales has become much more of a collaborative business. Specialists work together to achieve overall success. Technology has also changed the way sales potential is identified and AI (Artificial intelligence) has become one of the most powerful sales tools. Algorithms analyse data in order to find opportunities and these are managed by inside sales teams." John says that there are no one-size-fits-all solutions to sales structure. "Broadly speaking, there are three categories of business to consider, Product based, Services, and Projects. While product sales might base remuneration on units sold, services are evaluated on outcomes, projects on the final profit achieved at completion." John went on to say that top sales performers still command high base salaries and a greater share of rewards. "It's a case of supply and demand," says John. "In Australia, we are experiencing staff shortages, so when an organisation has a high performer, they are willing to pay a premium to keep them. This inevitably means a higher base for salespeople."

Technology has certainly changed the sales landscape, but, while customer relationships might be more of a collaborative team effort, businesses still rely on the skills of individual performers for their sales success. And while inside teams are slowly being recognised for their part in the process, just like their sporting counterparts, the 'closers', the professionals who kick the goals and bring sales through the door, will continue to command high rewards and take most of the glory. ■

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The Cosma Cubo is a modular, versatile and flexible midway rail system ideal for providing easy access to cooking utensils, canisters, paper towel and other useful aids in the kitchen. The Cubo is available in both matt black and anodised aluminium and can also be easily colour matched with the rangehood. Cubo can also be paired with L&S lighting to add another layer of style and function to the design.

Interna is the wardrobe system that Cosma offers to complete its range of aluminium products. It features an anti-slip insert that prevents clothes from sliding and scratching the rail. Interna is available in both matt black and anodised aluminium finish to stylishly match any design.

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# Three simple steps to better manufacturing productivity

## How can a manufacturing business improve productivity?

In 2022, productivity is more important than ever as manufacturers face new challenges and a changing market. Global material shortages, national labour shortages and the increasing cost of transport have caused a dramatic shift in what's important to the modern consumer. They're no longer interested in trying to maximise their value for money, but instead, want things done as soon as possible - and they're willing to pay for it.

Lead times for many furniture, manufacturing and specifically cabinet-making businesses are approaching - even exceeding - 12 months. Getting things done faster and increasing your company's output is more important than ever. There's money on the table and whoever can produce most efficiently, wins.

In this article, we'll explore how improving workplace culture is the key to staff productivity, and how to improve processes in a scientific, data-driven way. We'll also touch on the unique challenges facing the modern manufacturing business, how to overcome them using modern tools and systems, and why focussing on time and material waste reduction is far more important than chasing raw speed.

## The connection between culture, accountability, and employee productivity.

With the understanding that productivity can be defined as your company's output for a given period of time, the obvious solution to improving it is to simply work faster or more efficiently, thereby getting more done in that timeframe. However, simply demanding staff work faster, harder, take

shorter breaks and make fewer mistakes is likely to damage your workplace culture - resulting in more mistakes, employee churn and low morale.

Great workplace culture is the key to employee productivity, and it starts with accountability. When staff time is logged against what they're meant to be doing, and this data is prominently available to the wider team - extended toilet breaks, idle chatting and gossiping, foot-dragging and slacking magically start to disappear.

Implementing systems to monitor employee performance is not only a time-saver, removing the need for managers to look over shoulders but a much more fair and transparent system. Measuring staff against the same standards removes any ideas of favouritism and builds a united team.

There are many great tools on the market specifically designed for manufacturing to monitor employee time, and this is a staple feature of a great Enterprise Resource Planner (ERP).

Equally as important as time-tracking, is clear goal-setting. Generally, staff want to be good at their jobs. They want to take pride in their work but to do this they need the appropriate tools, systems and measures of success. By ensuring staff know exactly what tasks are coming, what their goals are, and how they're currently performing, they can be focused, driven and productive.

When employees are invested in their work and driven to succeed, they will look for ways to organise themselves more optimally and suggest ways to achieve goals more effectively. Fostering this and providing employees with the tools they



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need is the key to building a great culture that innovates, strives for efficiency and embraces "the company's" vision.

### **Take a transparent, data-driven approach to process improvement.**

We talked about time tracking for accountability but having that information readily available has far more uses than just improving workplace culture. Reporting is a pivotal function of quality workplace process improvement, whereby you evaluate estimated time against the actual time taken for a particular job or process. To achieve better productivity, start by comparing your quoted time per stage of a job, against how long it took, then find out why it has differed.

The goal of process improvement is to minimise waste, not simply shaving time off existing processes without a good reason. To do this effectively, you must have quality data and reporting to identify where waste is occurring. The goal is to make your employees' workflow smoother, eliminate unnecessary steps and understand how to do things faster.

Use reporting to analyse your processes and reveal wastage in the form of over-allocated resources, mistakes, and unnecessary movement and identify where you've underquoted or undercharged.

Mistakes are one of the costliest factors when it comes to waste, and are particularly unaffordable in the modern, time-sensitive market. They normally happen when employees are under pressure, which of course is a time when you can least afford them. Time spent fixing mistakes can't be recaptured and have a compounding effect due to the lost time, lost resources, the time needed to catch up and work that could have been done if the mistake never happened at all.

Lack of processes and information, poor adherence to those processes and haste due to poor planning, scheduling, or trying to fulfil unrealistic promises are the three leading factors of mistakes. With the right workplace systems and tools, all of these factors can be eliminated. Logged time, clearly documented processes, centralised information, and a culture that fosters learning and self-improvement are the key to preventing mistake wastage.

In 2022, good use of software is helping manufacturing businesses get ahead. A good ERP can not only log time, make information readily available to employees and streamline



your processes, but also help to find more hours in a day. ERP software with advanced job scheduling can help to organise tasks and priorities in time-saving ways. This can reveal that a team previously thought to be 'at capacity' is, in fact, not at capacity at all.

Efficiency is about small gains in many areas, and by utilising tools that help you look at individual functions and the broader day-to-day system, these gains will compound into massive improvements to your bottom line.

Taking a data-driven approach to processes could reveal that your senior cabinet maker James is losing hours every week looking for the correct material, walking back and forth from different machines, or constantly having to answer questions like "what's the ETA on Job #4576?" or "have you got enough Jarrah to finish this week's allotment?". With the right processes and software, you could have the answers to those questions without James having to take out his earplugs.

If you're employing world-class cabinet makers, get the most value from their time, skills and experience by having them do world-class cabinet making. This leads to the third step of this simple process.

### **Better use your workforce skills and talents with software automation.**

The majority of workplace systems have evolved organically and consist of numerous smaller systems that have been jury-rigged to work together. This approach often leads to double data entry, which not only wastes time but causes mistakes and a lack of accountability. A cobbled-together system approach often leads to communication breakdown between departments, steps in a process and the end customer. These mistakes can negatively affect your entire operation, cause undue stress to your employees and damage your reputation in the market.

By implementing a business-wide software system, know in real time where jobs are at, make fast adjustments to estimated

► delivery times, and keep everyone involved in a project updated when unforeseen delays occur. Company-wide software can also allow you to automate steps of the process, saving time and wasted motion. Push updates, reschedule and inventory requests to the relevant points of contact faster than ever before.

When you're investing in your team, training, and hiring talented employees, it should be your focus to use their time as effectively as possible. If skilled tradesmen are spending time communicating with stakeholders on where projects are at, searching the warehouse for materials or filling out resource & inventory requests, their talents are being wasted. ERP software can help to understand just how much of this talent-wastage your business is suffering from, and you might find you don't need to hire another cabinet maker after all.

In closing, make smart, data-driven decisions to improve workplace culture, processes and ultimately, productivity and profitability.

The market today has terrific options that manufacturing companies all around the world are using to reach higher productivity levels through reduced wastage, a more motivated and involved workplace, more accurate quoting and streamlined inventory management.

Jobman is a cloud-based ERP with local training and support that enables lean manufacturing without ever having to attend a seminar, workshop or spend countless dollars on a business consultant. Its core feature set includes time tracking, job management and scheduling, quoting and customer relationship management. Maybe, more importantly, it can also help make going to work more pleasant for all and pave the way to a more profitable business.

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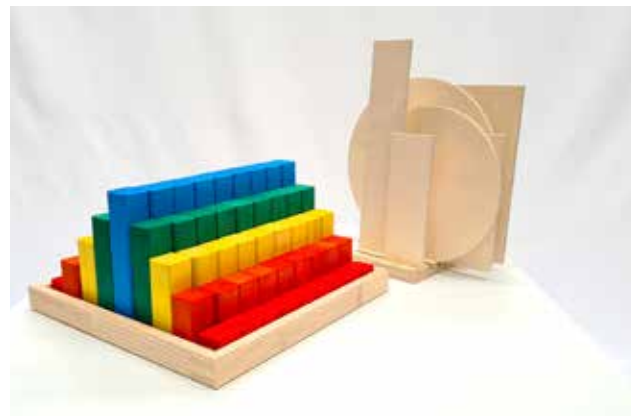
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# Business success for creative wooden toys



**AGAINST THE HUGE** backdrop of plastic toy products readily available on the shelf, a number of Australian businesses have developed a niche market and found success by making toys today using a material that was once traditionally used in making them - wood.

Shannon Ley from Milton Ashy says his customers buy his wooden toys as gifts for someone close, something unique and of high quality. "They want a timeless keepsake, so they tend towards more traditional designs and colours. In our range, the rocking horse and aeroplane are the most popular designs. The vast majority of customers choose the personalisation option," he tells AWISA Magazine.

Chloe Mortimer from the Wooden Toy Company tells AWISA Magazine, "We pride ourselves on quality. We use quality timber where available and we have refined our manufacturing process, always looking to improve our toys and our process. When we create new toys, we consider the overall development of children and where our toys can help progress their development. The most popular toys are the climbing range which includes the Climbing Cube, Large Pikler and Climbing Ramp. It is great for families with children of different ages as you can use the Cube with the Large Pikler put them together."

Chloe and husband Leon established their wooden toy business when the imposition of the Covid health restrictions effectively shut down their exhibition stands business that comprised a full workshop and qualified tradespeople. While taking time out to consider what to do, they noticed their own desire for locally made wooden open-ended toys. As they already had the machinery and had made toys for their children before, they started to look at the concept of supplying quality wooden toys to consumers, retailers, and childcare centres across Australia.

"When we decided to create the business, our team worked incredibly hard to move from initial concept to building stock and a functioning website within four weeks. It was a journey that all our staff were onboard with, which made the whole process of pivoting easier," says Chloe.

Using the same principles as they did for making exhibition stands, they have adapted multiple manufacturing methods to creating wooden toys. "The biggest challenge in our manufacturing process has been standardising materials. We've used trial and error when purchasing materials to ensure that we can achieve consistent results in our toys. Unlike overseas toy makers, we don't have a large scale operation where we can complete a process perfectly with high labour usage. To mitigate this, we will pay for a higher quality timber that requires less handling and labour to process it. We then use this material across multiple products to ensure that we can standardise the manufacturing of the timber and achieve consistently high quality toys."

Shannon Ley's business has a longer story. When he went shopping for gifts for his friends' children, he noticed the lack of premium quality baby gifts. Having had an itch to get into business on his own for a long time, and a desire for a career change at that moment, he "connected the dots", and started to make prototypes in his brother's shed. With on-going success, he moved to a shared workspace and then his own workshop. Because of the high cost of local manufacturing, he decided against wholesale, and developed the business around selling direct to the customer online. His customers understand that if he did not care about quality and service, he would just outsource to the lowest international bidder of acceptable quality. He says proudly, "The amount of positive customer feedback we get, it blows me away."

The Wooden Toy  
Company

## high-quality, labour-intensive toys

► Drawing on his knowledge from working in automotive engineering, has helped Shannon in 3D CAD modelling, implementing lean manufacturing principles, navigating Australian Standards compliance through to robust design principles. Without the engineering experience, it would have been harder, he points out, to achieve the successful combination of aesthetic and technical requirements in a way that does not compromise either.

The manufacturing process started off pretty rudimentary and has evolved a lot over the years, he says. "I think getting to this point has been down to two things. Firstly, as cliché as it sounds, always trying to find a better way of doing everything, and secondly, developing our own jigs, fixtures and even a few machines in-house. Most of the secret sauce lies in the latter, 99% of which cannot be bought off the shelf. One key criterion for improvement has always been that it must improve both quality and also efficiency, without compromising safety."

His manufacturing process closely adheres to lean manufacturing principles. "While components are made in small, frequent batches, we hold no completed inventory. Instead, we paint, personalise and assemble every toy to order. This enables us to have well over 100 design and colour combinations, while typically holding less than 100 toys worth of inventory. We ship over 99% of orders within two business days, and do almost no production scheduling or inventory projections."

Echoing Chloe's sentiments about employing quality staff, Shannon says that in making products that are special to customers, he can attract staff "who care about their work, rather than people who have unwillingly submitted themselves to being human robots. The quality of the product is very dependent on the people making it, so this helps enormously."

The workshop, says Shannon, is definitely not a general-purpose woodworking shop but is laid out and set up to do one job only. He describes how the layout follows the flow of material from planks to blank bodies, to toys packed and ready to ship. "A lot of effort has gone into minimising unproductive work, such as time-consuming tool changes, so we have three table routers with different bits for edge finishing, two drill presses set at different heights and two spindle sanders for different diameters. Much of the quality and efficiency comes from custom jigs and fixtures, for example for holding work pieces while drilling. I have also had to custom make a few machines where something off the shelf didn't exist exactly as we needed it. This has largely been an iterative process, the result of always trying to find a better way. Our tools and equipment tend to fall into two categories, very common, easy to get equipment from the major brands, or completely custom-made in-house. Spare parts or replacements are easily available if something breaks, or if we made it in-house, we can easily fix it or make replacements."

In describing their workshop, Chloe points to the flatbed CNC machinery. It is a KDT 2 series production flatbed CNC with a 9 drill head and V12 tool spindle with auto load and unload features. There is a panel saw, a KDT KS132K, and a Makita brand drop saw. For sanders, there are Carbatec horizontal and vertical belt sanders. She adds, "We have made some of our own tools, our own double bevelled sanders for finishing blocks. We sourced specialised sanding equipment for finishing from the US such as the Quickwood Sanding Flap Wheel. The Quickwood is a favourite because it does a great job and it saves so much time."

### Are any of the toys or components handmade?

There are components that are hand-made and other



Shannon Ley



Milton Ashby toys





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components are made using computerised equipment, says Chloe. "Any toys we make that have panels are designed in a CAD program on our computer, and then cut out on our CNC and hand finished. Everything is designed in CAD, and we design everything ourselves. We then make jigs from the CAD designs to create the toys. Using jigs ensures that everything is made to a high standard even when it is a handmade component. The flatbed CNC machine is used to cut out the components for products, like the Pikler triangles or Climbing Cubes."

Shannon says that while there is a lot of hand-work that goes into each of the toys, 'handmade' can be a dubious claim. "Not much gets made these days without significant involvement of machines. So, my approach is to show how they're made and let the customer define it as they wish." Yes, he uses a CNC router to cut the bodies and some small parts, adding, "It not only helps overcome the labour cost disadvantage of local manufacturing, but is a lot safer than having someone operate a bandsaw. Quality is more consistent and enables us to make shapes we couldn't otherwise make. Manufacturing locally would be a lot harder without our CNC router."

European Beech is Shannon's wood of choice. "I searched long and hard, and it's the only timber I could find that is readily available and which has the right physical and mechanical properties for making toys. I love it because it is strong, relatively easy to work with and doesn't splinter too easily. I would love to use an Australian timber, but unfortunately we cannot find one that has the right mechanical properties. We mainly use the one supplier of timber. They are the closest and have never run out of Beech, so we keep going back. Reliability of supply is super important for us, so we have a couple of backups if need be."

Chloe and Leon gave a lot of consideration to finding timber that met the right price point to keep the toys affordable, and

was good quality timber that would not splinter. The Redgum they wanted to use made the bigger blocks too heavy for the children, and in the first batch of toys made from Radiata Pine plywood, the grain was prone to opening up and the timber would splinter. "We found when using plywood, particularly for our climbing range, that we need to use hardwood plywood like Birch ply, that is a dense timber. We use good quality Birch ply and Victorian Ash, so long as there are no wounds in the grain. Once processed, the short grain will become brittle and any small splinters brush off and don't appear again. Along with the practical needs for children's toys, we also take the environmental impact of our timber into consideration. The Birch ply that we use is FSC certified and the Victorian Ash is PEFC certified. We have to go through this trial and error again at the moment due to the war in Ukraine, because some of our current timbers come from Russia and supply has been affected."

Looking to the future, Chloe says, their business in terms of Australian made toys is quite competitive in pricing. "When we first started the business, the toys were initially aimed at the high-end of the domestic market and commercial markets, so were priced accordingly. We also set up a wholesale and retail market, in the first few months. In order to keep retail costs under control we have had to remove the wholesale market. This has forced us to go to a direct-to-consumer model for our next range of toys."

Shannon says manufacturing high-quality, labour-intensive toys locally is definitely not cheap. "We overcome this in three ways. Firstly, we're priced at a premium relative to mass market offerings, and we give our customers much more. Secondly, we sell largely direct to the customer online - cutting out the middleperson helps a lot, albeit it does introduce its own challenges. And lastly, high costs force us to be super-efficient on the shop floor." ■

The Wooden Toy  
Company



# Sinks and taps by HÄFELE

Häfele's renowned attention to detail, quality and innovation is clearly defined in their extensive range of sinks and taps.

The updated range for 2022 includes a new range of stainless-steel tapware and sinks in a variety of colour options that are on trend in today's market. With over 60 models plus additional accessories to choose from, this makes Häfele's range a versatile offer to compliment your kitchen design.

The Squareline Linen Sink range is not only available in its natural classic Stainless-steel colour but also gunmetal, which is coloured by high pressure vacuum deposition (PVD) and is three times harder than standard stainless-steel finishes.

The addition of Squareline Plus sinks is a contemporary range of stylish and affordable top mounted and undermount sinks displaying the qualities of Squareline with a softer look.

Häfele's Quartz Composite sinks are made in Germany and come complete with push pull watermarked wastes, connections, and

clips for lay on or under mounting. The rigours of everyday use vanish with hardly a trace.

Centre stage, just like in your kitchen, the new range of Stainless-steel Gooseneck tapware made of the finest quality 1.5mm SUS 304 stainless steel is available in a variety of colours, gunmetal, gold and black. With more than 20 tap styles and finishes to choose from, Häfele is sure that you will find the best match for your kitchen.

With Häfele's Assisted Living range of extensive hardware options they also have a range of sinks and taps to suit the SDA standards.

For more information or a product demonstration don't hesitate to contact your nearest Häfele representative.

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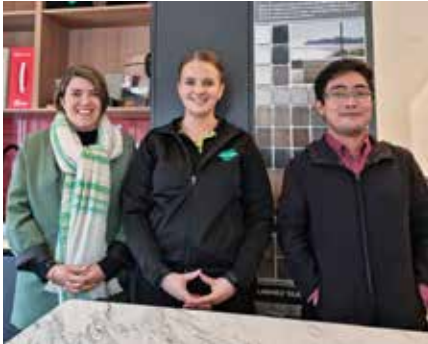
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**FORMAT 4**



by Judy White

# It's like hiring another person



"That's how I'd sell it to potential Cabinetry.Online customers," says Kevin Jacobs, owner of Tassie Cabinets. "I'd say it's just like hiring another person, but you're not paying their wages. I reckon it's an excellent system."

In 2014, Kevin took the big step and moved from being a sole proprietor making kitchen cabinets (then KevJake Enterprises), to establishing Tassie Cabinets, which is now the leading cut-to-size manufacturer in Tasmania.

## Accelerating growth

Prior to Tassie Cabinets whilst installing cabinets, Kevin realised there was potential to do more. "I just wanted to cut for other people," explained Kevin, "I thought there was a market." So he moved from the shed at home into a factory. He took the leap and invested in a CNC machine and came on board with Cabinetry.Online. "I wanted to cut for other people and Cabinetry.Online gave me that opportunity. It is an easy ordering system and works like a treat."

"It's been an awesome experience and an awesome opportunity," says Kevin. "I walked into my shed 10 years ago by myself. Now I've got 16 people on my books!" A milestone for Tassie Cabinets was opening a display shop in central Launceston. "It's pretty good for a little shop. People thought we were crazy having a shopfront in the city," laughs Kevin, "because there's no parking or anything like that, but it's worked out quite well."

Not only has Tassie Cabinets' premises and staff count grown, but their turnover has also experienced impressive growth. "It's grown substantially, Cabinetry.Online has really helped with that." When asked to give an indication on their increase in turnover, Kevin replies, "Since I've started, it's been exponential growth - year on year!"

## Streamlining processes

"Cabinetry.Online really helped with the online ordering. It made quoting and the whole process a lot quicker," explains Kevin. "It's fantastic! You can put fields where you want

anything, like the drawers, whatever size you want, whatever hardware you want to use - it's all there. It's like hiring another person without hiring them."

When chatting about his customers' experience with Cabinetry.Online, Kevin says, "It's a no brainer. They can draw something up, put it through my Cabinetry.Online portal. Made to measure. The data they input is what they get. It's a great process!"

## Support and after-sales service

"Another reason why Cabinetry.Online is so good for us is because it's local," explains Kevin. "You can call someone any time of the day and the help and assistance is there when you need it, it's fantastic!"

"It's been exceptional. The help and support we get from the team is great. The staff are well-trained and knowledgeable. If they can't sort it out or answer the question, they'll get whoever can onto it and learn something from it themselves," says Kevin.

"They've got a good team and they all try to help you out as much as they can."

## Advice to those considering their next big step

"It's an easy process. It's a great process. More people should be on board," says Kevin. "I'd say go for it, it will certainly help increase your production and increase your sales!"

Are you ready to take the next step with your cut-to-size business? Join the Cabinetry.Online team to streamline and grow your business. Go to [cabinetryonline.co](http://cabinetryonline.co) or contact 1300 783 997 to chat to a sales consultant.

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# Acting today - with a thought for tomorrow

As a family business with a history spanning over 130 years, the long-term aim of Hettich's corporate strategy is to link business success with environmental and social responsibility.

Sustainability principles were implemented at Hettich back in the early 1990s. These are based on the aspects of sustainable business management, long lasting products and conserving resources for the next generation. But for the Hettich Group, sustainability not only means managing the environment.

## **Sustainable business management - the commitment: being better than the standard**

Besides responsibility for social welfare and society, Hettich's strategy additionally focuses on consistently investing in safe, environmentally friendly and resource saving technologies and processes in its own production activities, infrastructure and logistics. Targeted basic and further training as well as company health management are also among the central measures. Over time, however, these have been joined by new aspects, such

as sustainable mobility management, environmentally friendly travel planning and a changed corporate culture.

## **Long lasting products for customers, consumers and the environment**

Hettich develops long lasting product solutions that not only meet demands on quality and safety but also on environmental compatibility and energy efficiency. This supports our customers across the globe and also helps to improve sustainability. Statutory regulations and standards, are only seen as 'minimum requirements' at Hettich, e.g. in 'Chemical Compliance' for over 15 years now, the company has voluntarily regulated environmentally relevant product constituents much more stringently than demanded by the requirements set out in international law.

## **Conserving resources for the next generation**

From 1996 to 2019, the Hettich Group reduced its specific CO<sub>2</sub> emissions worldwide by 55 per cent, with several Hettich




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operating bases getting all their electricity from renewable energy sources. Using solar energy, the Kirchzellern based headquarters generates almost 190 megawatt hours of electricity a year from its own photovoltaic systems, and Hettich's German sites are also investing in the expansion of combined heat and power generation and the use of waste heat.

#### Personal responsibility within the Hettich team

"As a family business, our strategies are not aimed at short term success but at sustained existence. At Hettich, we are gradually implementing a process of thinking and acting that focuses on sustainability in our activities without losing sight of cost effectiveness and operating efficiency. In doing so, we actively involve all colleagues in our sustainability strategy," says Sascha Gross, Managing Director.

"Added to this, we engage in transparent dialogue with our customers, suppliers, partners and many other stakeholders in an effort to promote these standards of quality as consistently as we can. Because we at Hettich take responsibility for the world we live in, for preserving natural resources and for protecting the health of our fellow human beings," adds Ute Schulz from the Corporate Responsibility Team.

Hettich's detailed Sustainability Report is available for downloading from our website: <https://www.hettich.com/sustainability>

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# Commercial waste solutions

## with new Concelo<sup>®</sup> bin

As workforces return to the office, companies are demanding more sophisticated solutions to manage waste generated in staff kitchens and cafeterias. These corporate customers are often striving towards zero waste and are looking for ways to increase the amount of waste that is successfully diverted for recycling or composting.

The new Concelo 1 x 35L waste bin provides a smart solution for sorting waste and recycling in office kitchens. The single CR350-135D can be used for each type of waste stream such as using three bins for recycling, green waste and landfill. If recycling is not comingled, then additional bins can be used for paper or glass recycling for example.

Commercial environments are high use and very demanding. Bin systems in office kitchens are used as much as 50,000 times per year, so durability and ease of servicing are an important consideration. To this end, Concelo uses premium German-made soft close runners that are rated to 45kg and use an innovative mounting system to make runner servicing easier. All Concelo plastic components are made using virgin polypropylene for maximum durability. While using virgin material is more expensive, it means the strength of the

components are not compromised by using fillers. At the end of life, all polypropylene parts are all fully recyclable to ensure minimal environmental impact.

Being built on the award winning Concelo platform means the CR350-135D has all the unique features that have made Concelo so popular. The Active Lid system controls odours and is hands free. And because bins get dirty, components like the Clip'n'Clean trays and removable Active Lid make it so easy and simple to clean and keep hygienic.

The new Concelo CR350-135D comes in White and Cinder colour options and full technical information and CAD details can be downloaded from [hideawaybins.com.au](http://hideawaybins.com.au)

Hideaway Bins are distributed throughout Australia by Hideaway's distribution partners Nover, Hafele and Galvin Hardware.

---

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New waste bin provides a smart solution for sorting waste and recycling in office kitchens.



# Moving your business to the next level

## with CABINET VISION and Vortek Spaces

### The Back Story – Wood Marble and White – Leighton Ward

"I started my career as an apprentice carpenter / joiner in the UK when I was 16 - I always knew it was what I wanted to do. I had worked on some amazing projects and loved creating beautiful pieces in wood and pushing myself to learn how to do intricate and creative projects. When I came to Australia, I started out working for a company that installed wardrobes, and it was from there that I moved into the area of cabinet making."

### Where did it all start for Wood Marble and White?

"Wood Marble & White originally started life as Totally Kitchens seven years ago. We were a much smaller outfit, in a much smaller factory. I always felt the name wasn't synonymous with the brand we had created - I pride myself on producing high-end, high-quality cabinetry, and felt the name did not reflect that, so we rebranded 4 years ago and Wood Marble & White's name was created."

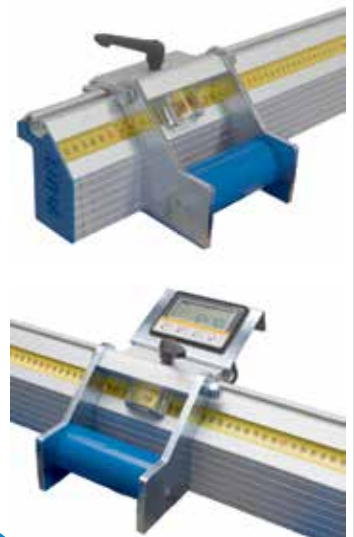
"When we moved into our first factory, it felt huge and I remember thinking it was a great place, somewhere we could stay and grow. 4 years later we have grown so quickly, we needed a bigger space."

"The showroom was always a dream of mine. I felt it was an area that was a missed opportunity on the Gold Coast, people can go to franchise kitchen companies, but these companies do not make the cabinetry. I wanted people to really see and feel the quality of our work and felt it was incredibly important for us to be able to showcase our beautiful design and work. Our main issue was finding the perfect location, so when we found the space on Brisbane Road, we knew it was perfect!"

### Planit Australia and Wood, Marble & White

"I was introduced to CABINET VISION by a fellow cabinet maker, and I remember at the time thinking this will really help bring together the design and the manufacturing. To have such a professional program we can draw in that also talks to the

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CNC was amazing, and we were never disappointed. When Vortek Spaces was shown to us by Planit we were blown away and we knew this would be an amazing value add for our clients, and they have loved it."

"One of the main issues we had was programs that could draw but they were slow and clunky and the interaction between the program and the machinery was just as clunky and not user friendly. CABINET VISION completely changed this and provided a complete, seamless solution. When I look back at the machinery and software we had when we started to what we have now it blows me away, in terms of both ourselves and the technology that is available."

#### Looking to the future

"We've got big plans for the business and the future looks bright for Wood Marble & White!



Left: Leighton Ward.

Right: Leighton with Planit Australia team members.

"There are plans for another showroom in the not-too-distant future, with another one planned for Brisbane down the track. The business will keep expanding and will continue to offer a gold standard service, to ensure the needs of our valued customers are met.

"Most importantly, we will continue to partner with the team at Planit Australia, to help us achieve a best in class result for our customers and the business alike."

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# Leitz WeCare - sustainability in practice



For generations, long-term thinking and sustainability have been at the forefront of the values of Leitz Tooling Systems. With the recent launch of the global WeCare initiative, Leitz brings social responsibility to life by combining community based, charitable and sustainability focused activities in all our subsidiaries worldwide.

In April 2022, all employees of the Leitz, Boehlerit and Bilz companies were encouraged to volunteer to take part in different heart projects focused on environmental conservation or community involvement for the launch of WeCare.

## Think globally, act locally

Over 110 projects were completed throughout the two week launch program. In 31 countries, approximately 1500 employees contributed over 2600 volunteer hours collectively across a wide range of projects; more the 6000 trees were planted, over 3500kg of waste was collected and 1400kg of clothing was donated. Some teams opted to set up nesting boxes and bee colonies to support the biodiversity in their areas. In addition, a total of 40,000 euros was raised to be donated to charities in Leitz communities.

In Australia and New Zealand, Leitz Tooling Systems has been making strides in community engagement and environmental sustainability, taking the WeCare ethos and integrating it into every part of our operations.

Leitz ANZ has recently launched a carbide tool recycling program, ensuring guardianship of our tools throughout their entire life cycle. Customers can submit their used tools to Leitz representatives or directly to our service centres, at no additional cost. Of the collected carbide, 95% can be recycled into new tools, conserving natural raw materials and protecting our environment. All proceeds received from the submission of carbide for recycling are donated directly to partner charity Backpacks 4 VIC Kids, providing material aid to children entering emergency care. This program allows Leitz and our customers to work sustainably while supporting the welfare of displaced children in our community.

Our partnership with Backpacks 4 VIC Kids has shown great progress, with over \$6,000 raised by Leitz so far in 2022 through carbide recycling and generous donations from our colleagues and customers. This has aided over 90 children for the year to

date. Our team also spent a day volunteering at Backpacks 4 VIC Kids HQ, packing essentials and sorting donated items.

In April, our Auckland team undertook a clean-up on the Onehunga Taumanu Reserve foreshore, collecting over 37kg rubbish.

Since his commencement with Leitz in 2019 Sam Czczelis, Managing Director of Leitz ANZ, has ensured investment within the company to increase Leitz sustainability. A voltage optimizer and solar panel installation was recently completed in the Melbourne head office and workshop, providing quality power and almost removing reliance on the grid. Installation of green cooling systems in our Sydney and Brisbane workshops reduces electricity consumption by 80% compared to conventional air conditioning. Solar panels are also envisaged for the Sydney offices and workshop in 2022.

In today's environment, customers are more aware than ever of the sustainability of their businesses, including those they associate with. With implementation of these initiatives through Leitz globally, and continual focus locally, customers in Australia and New Zealand can be assured that the tools they use support sustainability from manufacture, all the way through to the end of the tool life cycle.

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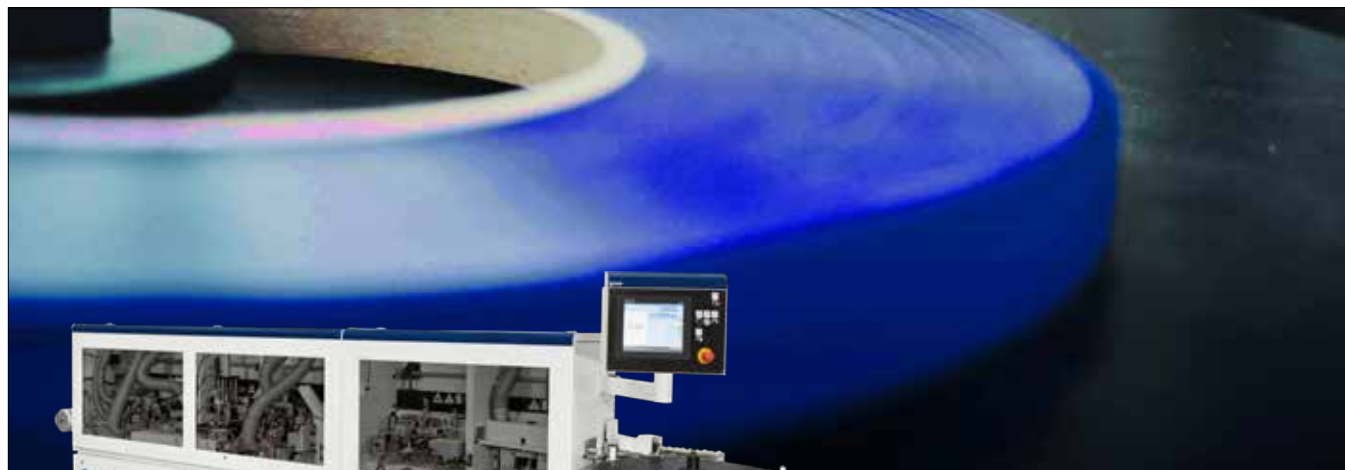
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### Contact our Sales Team

[sales@leitz.com.au](mailto:sales@leitz.com.au)

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# Servicing customers in all the right ways

What a challenging time for all businesses! Rising interest rates, increasing raw material costs, disruption to transport and logistics, just to name a few. Despite these challenges, Lek Supply has continued to grow and thrive, ensuring customers' needs are first priority by focusing all efforts to provide a seamless multi-channel customer experience. Lek Supply is 100% Australian owned and operated distributor of hardware and joinery with over 15 years' experience with leading brands such as Hettich, DTC, Tensorgrip and others in their range.

In line with evolving customer expectations, convenience and speed has been a key factor to their digital investment when launching their new ecommerce website in January 2022 which has proven to be a success. General Manager, Tina Dao added "We've been so pleased to see increasing month-on-month growth and engagement from our customers ordering online. The enhanced interface and improved navigation system allows customers to order items for upcoming projects with as fast as next-day delivery to selected areas. Mrs Dao highlights their digital success by stating "One of our best-selling drawer systems that is exclusive to Lek Supply is the DTC Magic Pro Drawer System which has performed over 50% of its revenue through our online store last financial year." Its clear digitalisation is part of a long-term growth plan with more exciting digital improvements to come soon.

For those who prefer in-person service, customers are welcome to visit trade counters across Australia in VIC, NSW, QLD and SA. There is also a national team of dedicated business development specialists dedicated to delivering tailored service based on their customer's project requirements.



To keep up with demand, Lek Supply have recently transitioned to premises with larger warehouse capacity. General Manager, Mrs Dao stated, "Paired with our exceptional customer experience, we are heavily committed to delivering high quality products that are readily available. Our new NSW premises also come with improved parking spaces and a much bigger trade room, all of which help us to further improve the customer experience."

Lek Supply has had a successful year, achieving a steady increase in revenue, results of a strong customer-centric organisation. Ms Dao claimed, "Our service-driven team online and offline was a driving factor to improvements last financial year. It has also been rewarding to see our planned efforts to maintain inventory of key products in conjunction with our digital growth strategy resulting in financial achievements."

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Michael Ryan  
Finlease

# Interest rate increases

## - the real effect on equipment finance

**WITH SO MUCH** press focussing on the significant increases in home loan rates and interest rates in general, it is timely to have a look at what this means for businesses.

Where the 5-year fixed home loan rate increased to around 6.5%, it isn't surprising that motor vehicle and equipment finance interest rates have also moved into the 7%+ range.

As recently as one year ago, home loan rates and equipment and motor vehicle finance rates were around 3% or lower. So, what is the effect of these interest rate increases in real terms?

### Home loans versus equipment loans - \$500k comparison

The effect of these interest-rate increases is markedly different when comparing home loans to equipment and vehicle loans.

A \$500,000 interest only home loan at 3% costs \$15,000 per year. This same \$500,000 interest only loan at 6% effectively doubles the annual cost to service that debt to \$30,000 a year.

A \$500,000 equipment finance loan being fully repaid over five years, at 3% costs \$8,962 per month. At 6% that same loan costs \$9,618 per month.

Unlike the home loan which saw a 100% increase in the monthly payment, the equivalent equipment finance loan saw an increase of only 7% (or \$656 per month or \$22 per day).

This is simply due to the shorter term and accelerated 'paying down' of the debt over 5 years.

It is important to note that most businesses are in the 'same boat' when it comes to the increased cost of equipment and motor vehicle finance.

In a world where businesses are seeing increased costs across the board in such areas as labour and materials as well as the actual purchase cost of vehicles and machinery, the cost of debt (interest rates) is also one of these increasing costs.

Staying with the view that all businesses are essentially in the same boat, it is very reasonable to expect that they in turn will need to charge higher prices for their products and services as a function of covering these additional overheads.

Westpac chief economist Bill Evans said he now expected the cash rate to reach 3.1 per cent by December and 3.35 per cent by February 2023 and hopefully we will see rates stabilise in the 2023 year ahead. That being said, hopefully the major international influences on our inflation rate have settled down and the cost of money sits at an affordable level and meets the RBA's purpose to control inflation.

In the meantime businesses can:

- Run some simple calculations to project for future purchases, allowing for increased interest rates.
- Review costs of doing business and adjust pricing accordingly.
- Invest and review where productivity improvements can be achieved through automation.
- Use the expertise of an accountant or finance broker to seek out the most favourable equipment finance solutions. ■



# Australian Woodworking Industry Suppliers Association Limited

## 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 is planned to take place in Sydney in July 2024 at ICC Sydney, Darling Harbour. For more information visit [www.awisa.com/exhibition](http://www.awisa.com/exhibition) 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 13,000 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.

## AWISA The Board

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[www.awisa.com](http://www.awisa.com)

### DISTRIBUTION

AWISA - The Magazine is distributed free to a list made up of companies that attended the last three AWISA exhibitions, plus the client databases of some major AWISA members. To be added to the distribution list send an email to [info@awisa.com](mailto:info@awisa.com). (AWISA Ltd may at some time in the future charge a subscription for personally addressed magazines)



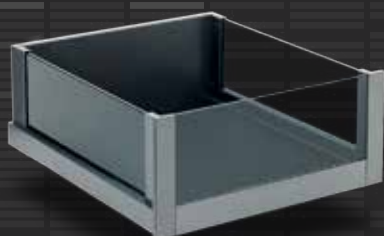
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