

Australia takes second place in medal tally

At the 2026 WorldStar Student Awards, Australia was placed second in the medal tally behind China.

Author Nerida Kelton FAIP, Executive Director – AIP – vice president Sustainability & Save Food – WPO

With 246 entries entering the 2026 round of the WorldStar Student Awards from 90 educational institutions across 23 countries, the competition this year was fierce.

Twenty-one Australian university students from the Industrial Design School at UNSW and the Master of Food Science and Agribusiness program at Monash University took on the competition and received two gold, two bronze and 16 WorldStar Certificates. Australia also placed second in the medal tally behind China which is an incredible feat for such a small country.

Mint Recyclable Toothpaste Tube receives gold and bronze

The standout student from Australia was Robin Luo from the Industrial Design School, UNSW, who received a gold award in the Health and Personal Care category and a bronze award in the inaugural Accessible Packaging category for his project Mint Recyclable Toothpaste Tube.

The Mint toothpaste tube was designed in response to the waste and environmental impact caused



Robin Luo received a gold award for the Mint Recyclable Toothpaste Tube.



The Mint toothpaste tube is made entirely from polypropylene.

by traditional toothpaste tubes. The mixed-media composition renders them unrecyclable through standard kerbside recycling programs and Mint aims to offer a more sustainable packaging solution.

Additionally, toothpaste residue often remains trapped inside, making recycling more difficult where product waste is an issue. To address these issues, Luo designed the Mint toothpaste tube entirely from polypropylene. This rigid, mono-material construction allows the tube to be easily recycled through standard kerbside programs.

The design, inspired by a glue stick mechanism, features an auger and plunger system. This innovation ensures users can extract nearly all the toothpaste, reducing product waste, leaving the tube

cleaner for recycling. The result is a user-friendly and environmentally responsible solution.

"It was such an honour to receive gold in the Health & Personal Care category and bronze in the Accessible Packaging category at the WorldStar Student Packaging Awards for my Mint toothpaste tube, amongst so many strong entries this year," said Luo. "Mint is a fully recyclable toothpaste tube made from polypropylene and was inspired by my experience working in the waste industry, where I often saw large numbers of toothpaste tubes being 'wish-cycled' despite not being recyclable."

"A big thank you to the Australasian Institute of Packaging for submitting my work and supporting the project."

Chun Accessible Water Bottle- Inaugural gold winner of the Accessible Design category

A team of students from the Master of Food Science and Agribusiness program at Monash University, Chun Ming Tsang, Queenie Wu and Keith James received a gold in the inaugural Accessible & Inclusive Packaging Design category for the Chun Accessible Water Bottle.

The water bottle was designed to support individuals with neurological impairments, particularly post-stroke users who experience limited mobility. Chun Ming Tsang personally suffered a stroke in childhood, which caused a loss of mobility. Through the daily experiences, he realised how challenging it can be to perform simple tasks like opening a water



Chun Ming Tsang, Queenie Wu and Keith James received a gold award for the Chun Accessible Water Bottle.

bottle, which typically requires twisting the lid with two hands. The design aims to address that barrier by enabling single-handed and even hands-free operation, empowering users with limited mobility to drink water independently.

The bottle was developed under the inclusive design and accessibility category, guided by criteria such as ease of use, ergonomic function, and sensory guidance. Key innovative features include a spring-loaded, mouth-activated opening that allows users to push down with their top lip to drink. Once released, it automatically seals to prevent leakage. A bayonet-style twist mechanism replaces the traditional multi-turn cap, requiring only a short turn with one hand.

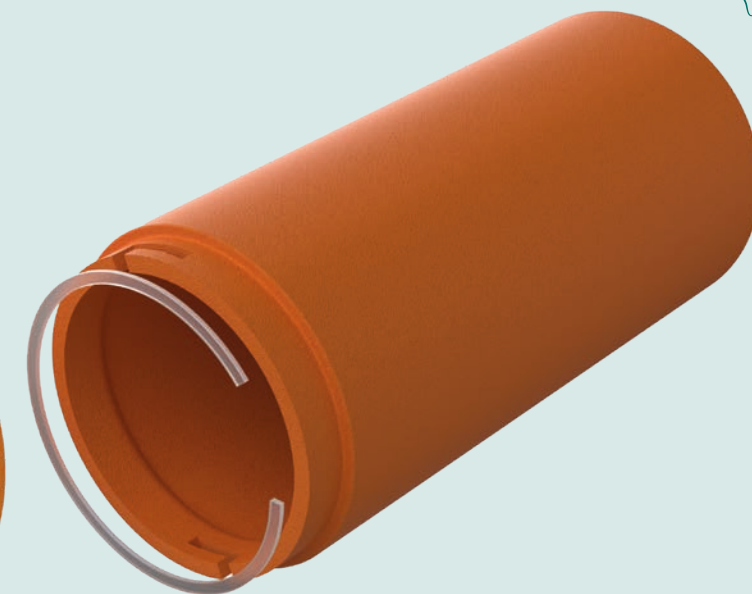
"Receiving the WorldStar Student Award is a tremendous honour," said Tsang. "The idea behind this innovation was inspired by my own stroke recovery journey and the challenges of using everyday packaging with reduced mobility."

"I hope this recognition encourages the industry to place greater focus on accessible and inclusive packaging design that supports a wider range of consumers."

James also provided his view on the global recognition.

"Winning a gold award for Accessible Packaging Design is incredibly meaningful to me, as it validates the importance of accessible design in everyday products," said James. "As I pursue a career in assistive technology design, focused on developing devices that

The Chun Accessible Water Bottle was designed to support individuals with neurological impairments.



support people with specific needs, this award reinforces my commitment to inclusive, human-centred design."

"It motivates me to continue creating thoughtful solutions that empower individuals and promote greater independence in their daily lives."

H2OLYTE – electrolyte packaging

Adriano Sturla Gomez, also from the Industrial Design School, UNSW, received a bronze award in the Beverage category for his project H2OLYTE. The redesigned electrolyte container prevents landfill waste by addressing sorting challenges at recycling facilities. Its optimised shape ensures compatibility with filtration systems, while reducing material usage by 30 per cent.



Adriano Sturla Gomez received a bronze award for H2OLYTE.

Enhanced stacking and accessibility features maximise transport efficiency and consumer usability making this a standout pack on the shelf.

"Winning a WorldStar Student award is a milestone I will never forget," said Gomez.

"This is a win for designing with

impact, not just aesthetics, and a reminder that small ideas, backed by good people and hard work, can travel a long way."

Only winners from the Australasian Packaging Innovation & Design (PIDA) Student Awards are eligible to enter the WorldStar Student awards from across Australia and New Zealand.

H2OLYTE is a redesigned electrolyte container that prevents landfill waste.

