

There's gold in them thar hills

The pinnacle design awards for the Australasian packaging industry once again highlighted the breadth and depth of innovation expertise in our region. PKN takes a closer look at the packs which struck gold.

THE 2021 Packaging Innovation & Design Awards (PIDA) showcased the region's top innovation, with sustainability emerging as an overarching theme in most designs, and Sustainable Packaging Design as the most hotly contested category by far.

In a year which saw an unprecedented number of entries across all PIDA categories, it was hardly surprising that the virtual ceremony in May, coordinated by the awards program organiser Australian Institute of Packaging (AIP), was well attended, with over 300 participants across the two-day event.

Extended reports on all award winners are available at packagingnews.com.au (search PIDA 2021); in this report we're focusing on the winners who took home gold.

OF PACKAGING HAT TRICK

Claiming the most gold was Melbourne flexible packaging company OF Packaging, headed by managing director and well-known industry figure Joe Foster. The company took top honours for the Brookfarm flexible pouch in the Food Packaging Design and the Labelling & Decoration Design categories, and for Zero Co spouted pouch refill packs in the Domestic & Household Packaging Design.

The Brookfarm pack is a stand-out development. The high-barrier mono-polymer pouch was developed by OF Packaging as a more sustainable alternative to the company's previous metallised multi-laminate structure, while maintaining Brookfarm's existing brand heritage and pack style.

Foster explains that the main benefit of the new design revolves around its 'recycle-ready' feature – called Roll 'n' Recycle. This packaging is the first to market not only for the Roll 'n' Recycle program, but for any type of kerbside recyclable flexible packaging format made from soft plastics.

The pouch has a label affixed to it, with clear instructions to the consumer to roll the empty pack up and secure it with the peel back label. The adhesive is strong enough to hold the rolled pouch in place and maintain its semi-rigid structure as it moves through the kerbside recycling infrastructure.

Foster says these packs can be recycled with other mono-polymer packaging like plastic bottles, rather than mixed soft plastics.

"Sustainability is our number one project here at OF Packaging and this is just proof to see that we're actually making some good headway in the marketplace," he says.

The company's win in the Domestic & Household category with its recyclable and reusable pouches for Zero Co is another example of the 'headway' Foster refers to.

Start-up Zero Co has created an innovative reuse and refill packaging for household products made from reclaimed and recycled plastic.



CLOCKWISE FROM MAIN: Planet Protector's Vaccine Protector; Zero Co's re-usable refill pouches made from recycled material by OF Packaging; Lovekins sugar-cane based sustainable PE tube by Impact International; Brookfarm's new monomer pouch with Roll 'n' Recycle feature by OF Packaging.

Two at the top

At this year's PIDAs, the industry professional awards saw a high calibre of nominees who had each earned a rightful place in the finalists' list. The winners this year outranked their peers. PKN tells you why.



LEFT: Nina Nguyen, CEO of Pakko.

ABOVE: Alan Adams, sustainability director – APAC at Sealed Air.

THE 2021 Industry Packaging Professional of the Year for 2021 is **Alan Adams**, sustainability director – APAC at Sealed Air.

Just shy of three decades working in the packaging industry, Adams is a recognised and long-term contributor to education around sustainability. His key interests include sustainable packaging design and the positive impact the packaging industry has on preventing food waste, damage reduction and how packaging can mitigate climate change impact of the food and e-commerce industries.

His passion in this area has not gone unnoticed and he regularly steps up to provide invaluable expertise to help guide the industry associations that work in this area. Through the Australian Institute of Packaging, Adams is part of an expert team that has taken the discussion around circularity and sustainable design, food waste and save food packaging to a whole new level in Australasia.

He leads many of the Sealed Air sustainability programs that have resulted in seven gold PIDA awards, including Gold in the inaugural and two more years of the Save Food Packaging Design award category. Two of these designs went on to win WorldStar Global Packaging awards; one of which was

the 2020 World Star special Save Food Packaging Design award.

Adams' contribution to educating and positioning the packaging industry, more specifically the plastic packaging industry in the APAC region, on sustainability is a credit to his passion and commitment.

He believes that it is important to promote the great value that this industry delivers in underpinning the lifestyles we all lead through food security and supply chain and e-commerce efficiency. He also strongly advocates that packaging has a broader, whole of life-cycle impact based on the capability to protect valuable products.

Nina Nguyen was named 2021 Young Packaging Professional of the Year. She is CEO of cardboard packaging company Pakko.

Her career in cardboard packaging began over 10 years ago when she was working on her parents produce farm in regional Queensland. It was here she identified a need for high quality packaging that could withstand different weather conditions and long distance transportation to deliver fresh, undamaged produce to all parts of the country. She was quick to act, and working closely with the horticultural industry, farmers, papermills and manufacturers, her first business was born.

Pakko was established with a vision to create an Australian packaging house that will compete with global standards at every level. All the materials used to create the packaging are sustainably sourced and certified by the FSC and FDA. Every single Pakko employee is part of the company recycle program and every offcut is given new life as alternate packaging. Pakko endeavours to tread lightly on the earth and is continually working towards new technology that enables great eco-efficiency.

As a young professional, Nguyen says she is always learning and seeking out experiences for her own personal and professional growth. She believes that agility, quick-thinking and people drive success and is an advocate for surrounding herself with positive, experienced and professional teams of people who share her values of honesty, respect and transparency ■

You can hear more from both winners on The PKN Podcast – Alan Adams, Episode 12 and Nina Nguyen Episode 26.

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