

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.

packaging designs

Consumers refill their dispensers using reusable, refill spouted pouches made from post-manufacture recycled PET and recycled PE. The double spout access feature with anti-drip function enables easy pouring, while also allowing for easy re-filling by Zero Co once pouches are returned. Once the end consumer uses the spout pouches to refill their rigid containers at home, the pouches are returned to Zero Co. for sterilisation and re-filling, to then be sent out to another customer.

This closed loop re-use service for flexible spout packaging is a first in Australia. The pouch packaging, sans spout, can be recycled through soft plastic collection at the eventual end-of-life.

Consumers can also scan the QR code on their pouches to track and view how many times the pouch has been re-used.

"This product was launched last October, and since then it's had great success in the market. We've had numerous enquiries from customers around the globe looking to move from rigid containers into spout pouches just like Zero Co, using recycled material in the packaging," Foster says. "Certainly we believe sustainable solutions are the way forward for flexible packaging, which is where a lot of challenges lie.

"We have exciting sustainability projects in the pipeline that will continue to contribute positively to the industry," Foster says.

STRIKING GOLD IN THE OASIS

Taking home two golds for the design of the Oasis Bakery spice packaging was qDesign Enterprises, topping the Marketing Design and Sustainable Packaging Design – Closed Loop categories. Developed for Melbourne retailer Oasis Bakery, the packaging was commended for its circular design approach.

The concept sees the combination of two packaging formats, a refillable rigid shaker and a flexible refill pouch, linked by an Oasis Loop landmark which delivers key messaging around the refilling and recycling system.

Consumers can refill the shaker at home from the large format recycle-ready pouch, or return it to store for Oasis to recycle and receive a small discount on their next purchase. The returned package is de-labelled, cleaned and refilled for sale reducing the need for virgin packaging stock to be produced and shipped. Should the pack not be returned to store, it is kerbside recyclable, with all components made from polypropylene.

Director of qDesign Enterprises, Michael Grima, said: "It took three years to deliver this circular concept to market, it was a brief of constant evolution and growth.

"Initiated as a design focused primarily on brand blocking, it grew to take on improved usability in the kitchen, tamper evidence and smart engineering to minimise materials



ABOVE: Double Gold for Oasis Bakery's spice packaging designed by qDesign Enterprises.

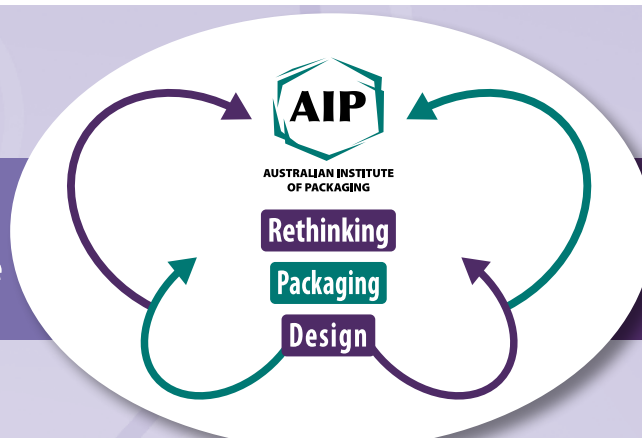
and maximising its performance in process and the supply chain. It was here we expanded the opportunity to explore a closed loop model and designed for durability and easy refilling with a larger recycle-ready PE refill bag."

TIP-TOP TUBE

In the Health Beauty & Wellness category, two golds were awarded. The first went to Impact International for its tubes for the Lovekins range of natural baby care products based on ingredients derived from Australian native flora.

The new tube packaging makes it easier for parents to squeeze the product out, providing on-the-go convenience and preventing waste at the same time. Lovekins wanted tubes that were more sustainable and locally manufactured, and the Impact

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BELOW: Cyclpac's Melbourne Coffee bag took Gold in the Sustainable Packaging Design



International range, containing both sugar cane derived PE and recycled PE ticked all the boxes.

Impact has also reduced the thickness of the tube's EVOH layer by more than 25 per cent, without altering the barrier properties, and making it easier for recycling companies to process the tubes. Used tubes can be recycled through Impact International as it is a registered collection point for the tubes and has an established closed-loop collection program.

Receiving the award, managing director of Impact International, Aleks Lajovic, said: "We are delighted and humbled to win this prestigious gold award. This is fantastic recognition of our efforts to make packaging more consumer friendly and sustainable. Thank you to our customer Lovekins for their support and for working with us in a positive and collaborative way. Without the support of our customers, we could not do what we do."

PROTECTING PRECIOUS CARGO

In a fitting award for the pandemic times in which we live, Planet Protector Packaging's Vaccine Protector, featured in-depth in the PKN May-June 2021 edition, also scored gold in the Health Beauty & Wellness Category.

Vaccine Protector is a sustainable alternative to EPS for the transport of frozen vaccines, with all components fully recyclable or compostable. The packaging design consists of three key components: a wool knop liner, encased in a metallised PE film, and a corrugated carton.

Receiving the award, sustainability manager at Planet Protector Packaging, Lars Ljung, said: "The world is changing rapidly and it is up to us as good stewards to be constantly looking for solutions to the world's most pressing problems."

SQUEEZE ON SUSTAINABILITY

Wellman Packaging's SqueezePak squeeze sauce bottle won Gold in the Sustainable Packaging Design – Recycled Content category. The bottle, made with 100 per cent food grade recycled PE is believed to be a first-of-its-kind in the region and is part of Wellman Packaging's over-arching strategy to becoming 'better than carbon neutral' and convert all feedstocks to 100 per cent recycled or renewable content by 2025.

In addition, Wellman has addressed other bottle performance improvements through the new design features and processes. For example, the bottle delivers improved hot filling performance and bottle stability due to a proprietary reinforced convex

ABOVE: Gold in Beverage went to SIPP Instant's coffee packaging with compostable inner film and recyclable outer carton.

BELOW: Wellman Packaging's SqueezePak 100% rPE sauce bottle took Gold for Sustainable Packaging Design – Recycled Content.



base design resulting in reduced panning of side walls due to negative internal pressures after filling.

Top load strength has been increased; it allows for a 10 per cent larger brimful volume for easier filling; and there's a larger label panel area for improved on-shelf presence.

The use of multi-layer extrusion technology has seen a reduction in pigment use by 50 per cent and concentration of pigment in the outer layer away from the contents.

The SqueezePak squeeze sauce bottle can be produced in a translucent format with reasonable contact clarity bottle, that is, without colourant, to expand the reuse of recovered raw materials.

Receiving the award, CEO of Wellman Packaging, Craig Wellman, said: "It's been about two years worth of work with our team and our brand owners to bring this one to a head. It has been a great growing process and the key thing here is that sustainability is no longer a nice to have, it is a baseline, and we're all doing such a wonderful job embracing it."

COFFEE CONTAINERS TO THE FORE

Coffee packaging innovation saw SIPP Instant win gold in the Beverage Packaging Design category, and Cyclpac take top honours in the Sustainable Packaging Design – Recycle category.





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The new SIPP Instant coffee packaging features an ABA-certified home compostable internal cellulose film made from a renewable raw material derived from eucalyptus trees in South America. The cardboard exterior packaging is made of 100 per cent recycled cardboard and non-toxic inks. The cardboard box features a window to show the product and the compostable film inside. Each panel of the box has a communications purpose: instructions/process of making the product; health benefits and ingredients; and the brand's sustainable effort.

The Melbourne Coffee concept by Cyclpac is a recyclable, sustainable pouch for coffee that also offers barrier to oxygen and vapour.

The packaging is 90 per cent LDPE, a mono-structure lamination, BOPE, seven-layer high barrier coextrusion with EVOH, and can be reverse or surface printed. Producing the sealant layer to hold the release valve internally was essential to the development and required some variant testing. When producing a 90 per cent PE monostructure, the resistance to heat offered by the BOPE was critical to product performance.

The packaging is recyclable under both the Australasian Recycling Label (ARL) program and the UK-based OPRL scheme.



LEFT: Refill, Reuse: Nature's Organics Cove makes the circle go round.

BELOW: Top form from ZipForm: Gold for RPump.

SUSTAINABILITY THE BIG WINNER

Across the board, sustainability is a strong selling point in the winning designs. In the final three golds we cover here, this is clear to see.

In Sustainable Packaging Design – Industrial category, Omni Group won for VentX Unico stretch wrap. It is 100 per cent recyclable and the 15um film can be dispensed through Unico Ropers reducing stretch wrap usage by over 50 per cent. The solution requires fewer wrapping rotations and significantly decreases pallet wrapping costs by halving film usage.



Gold in the The Outside of the Box Design design category went to winner Zipform Packaging for its rPump, a world-first in combining a recyclable composite paperboard pack with a reusable closure and pump in response to the recyclability and reusability challenge presented by existing wellness products.

Winning in the Sustainable Packaging Design – Reuse category was Cove's reusable packaging for Nature's Organics cleaning materials, comprising reusable bottles and refillable pouches.

The Cove refill pouches use at least 80 per cent less soft plastic compared to conventional cleaning products. The pouches are compact, recyclable and made from soft plastic that is readily recyclable through the REDcycle program.

What the Cove concept illustrates is a bigger picture approach that was resonant in many of the entries this year: changing consumer behaviour through good packaging design will be key to achieving sustainable packaging targets. ■



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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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