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Sports star and former Young Australian of the Year Ash Barty is ambassador for Australian Made Week.

15–21 May

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Flying the flag and reaping the benefits

Amid economic uncertainty, the Australian Made logo brings a raft of benefits to buyers and sellers alike, writes Anders Furze.

As Australians navigate the rising cost of living and increasing economic uncertainty, research shows that they are more committed to seeking out the iconic green-and-gold Australian Made logo and buying local products than ever before.

“We now have over 4500 businesses that are licensed to carry the Australian Made logo,” says Ben Lazzaro, chief executive of the Australian Made campaign. “It’s the highest that’s been in the 35-plus years that the logo has existed.”

Trust in the brand, Australia’s most recognised and widely used country-of-origin symbol, has grown to 93 per cent of Australians, according to market research by Roy Morgan.

Respondents said that it conveyed attributes including supporting local

jobs and employment, safety, high quality and reliability.

More than four in five (86 per cent) of people said buying Australian-made products was important to them. By contrast, only 2 per cent said it was not important to them.

“As we continue to emerge from the initial crisis of COVID-19, over a third of Australians say that they’re buying more Australian made products than before the pandemic,” Lazzaro says. “It’s right at the front of a lot of peoples’ awareness now.

“It sometimes takes a significant event to give us the shot in the arm to actually go, ‘Hang on, this is serious. We probably should focus on our sovereign manufacturing capability and things like that.’”

While rising cost-of-living pressures mean Australian consumers are as price conscious as ever, Lazzaro notes the growing interest in buying Australian-made shows they also understand the fundamental difference between price and value.

“I think consumers are being a bit more discerning and looking at that value proposition versus the one-off cost,” he says. “There’s the purchase price and then there’s the lifetime cost of that product. Consumers understand they’re buying a better-



If every household spent an extra \$10 a week on Australian-made products, \$5 billion would be injected into the economy.

quality product, that needs less after-sales service or whatever it might be. They’re also a bit more ethically and environmentally minded.

“Given the environment we all find ourselves in, it’s pleasing that people are still looking to support Australian-made when they can.”

This year, tennis superstar and former Young Australian of the Year Ash Barty has signed up to be the ambassador for Australian Made Week, which will run from tomorrow until May 21.

Barty will represent Australia as she highlights how buying Australian-

made products supports local growers, producers and businesses, benefitting the Australian economy.

“There are so many benefits to buying Australian-made, including creating and supporting local jobs and boosting the economies of cities and towns where the goods are produced,” Barty says.

“There’s a huge amount of choice when it comes to local goods, plus you can buy with confidence knowing that goods carrying the Australian Made logo have been grown and manufactured locally to Australia’s high standards.”

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'On all fronts, it's been an encouraging and exciting 12 months.'

Ben Lazzaro

the economy. We really try to get that into the minds of consumers."

As well as promoting the benefits of buying Australian-made in the domestic market, the Australian Made Campaign is also pushing into overseas territories. In the lead up to the Ashes cricket Test series, Adam Gilchrist has come onboard to help promote buying Australian products in the UK.

"It's fantastic that notable Australians want to help us push the Australian-made message," Lazzaro says. "On all fronts, it's been an encouraging and exciting 12 months."

This year's Australian Made Week runs from May 15-21. For further information, visit www.australianmade.com.au.

Lazzaro says the Australian Made Campaign team was excited to welcome Barty, who has excelled at tennis, golf and cricket, and as an author, role model and proud Ngarigo woman. Because she is "the genuine article", he says, she aligns well with what the Australian Made Campaign is all about.

"Ash Barty is an icon of Australian sport. You read her list of achievements which is amazing for someone in her 20s. We couldn't be happier that Ash has joined us this year. She epitomises what we all think is the pinnacle of Australian

achievement. She exceeds in everything she does."

While the Australian Made Campaign works around the clock to promote the benefits of buying Australian-made, having a milestone event such as Australian Made Week helps shine a light that can have ongoing effects for the movement across the rest of the year.

"It enables us to really explain the benefits in depth, the positive impacts and economic activity," Lazzaro says. "If every household just spent an extra 10 bucks a week on Australian-made products, you'd generate \$5 billion into

Green-and-gold kangaroo brings big benefits

Four in five

shoppers believe buying Australian-made is important.

99%

of Australians recognise the green-and-gold Australian Made logo.

73%

of Australians are willing to pay more for Australian-made products.

67%

of Australians "often" or "always" buy Australian-made products, citing supporting local jobs and the economy as their reason for doing so, followed by the quality or reliability of Australian-made products.

Over a third (35%)

of Aussies say they buy more Australian-made products now than before the pandemic.

93%

of Australians are confident products displaying the mark are made or grown in Australia.

Consumers associated the following attributes with the Australian Made logo: supporting local jobs and employment (97%), safe (94%), high quality (94%), reliable (93%), use of ethical labour (90%), good value (85%), sustainable (80%), expensive (80%) and environmentally friendly (80%).

Source: Roy Morgan 2023.

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Energy made the Australian way

This award-winning Australian energy company is giving back to the community.

The nation's most trusted electricity provider, Red Energy, delivers power to homes and businesses across the nation, but there's much more to the Australian company than first meets the eye.

Red Energy's pride in being 100 per cent Australian is not only reflected in the multiple awards it has received for the way it treats its customers, but also in its actions on important issues like climate change, endangered native animals and breast cancer.

The company's roots go back generations to the legendary Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Scheme, with Snowy Hydro Limited acquiring Red Energy in 2004.

Back then, Red Energy's goal was to shake up the electricity and gas industry by offering customers exceptional Australian service.

Chief executive Iain Graham's strategy was simple: "Treat people decently." It's a philosophy of building trust that has underpinned everything the company has done since.

"You can't demand trust, it has to be given," Graham says. "It arrives on a snail and can leave on horseback. You can never take it for granted or rest on your laurels. Customer service is a devotion, not a transaction."

As a result, Red Energy has won a host of state and national awards for customer trust, satisfaction and outstanding value, including prestigious Canstar Blue Awards for Most Satisfied Customers (National dual fuel, 2023), Most Trusted Electricity Provider (National, 2023), and Most Outstanding Value (ACT, 2022), to name just a few.

"The company employs more than 1200 people, with its customer solutions team all based here in Australia," Graham says. "We strive to give our customers the best service possible by empowering our team to solve problems and manage requests."

"Customers also appreciate our Australian ownership and onshore contact centre, and many feel proud to support a company owned by Snowy Hydro, which has been a leader in renewable energy for generations, long before green energy became a 'thing'."



Above: Red Energy's roots go back generations to the Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Scheme.

Right: The customer solutions team is based in Australia.



Red Energy was recently recognised as the largest energy retailer in Australia to have its business operations certified carbon neutral by Climate Active.

This means that the carbon footprint of Red Energy's offices, vehicle fleet, staff travel, professional services and working-from-home arrangements are all offset.

The company has also just launched a new opt-in natural gas product that is certified carbon neutral by Climate Active, offsetting the emissions of its customers' natural gas usage with Australian Carbon Credit Units.

"We know customers are looking for ways to offset their own carbon

footprint; we're all in this together and every small step counts," Graham says.

Red also supports a number of causes across the community that seek to make a difference.

"It's important we team up with like-minded people and businesses that share our values, especially that of decency," Graham says. "Our support ranges from small, grassroots sporting sponsorships to significant support for organisations doing important work."

"For example, we have supported Breast Cancer Network Australia (BCNA) since 2015 and, in addition to our sponsorship, in 2020 we launched the Red BCNA Saver product, which contributes up to \$120 per year on

'We're all in this together and every small step counts.'

Iain Graham

behalf of each residential customer who signs up for electricity and gas.

"That product has already provided more than \$350,000 to BCNA to help support people diagnosed with breast cancer and their families. Our goal is to raise awareness of the work BCNA does, so nobody has to go through breast cancer alone."

Taronga Conservation Society Australia benefits from a Red Energy sponsorship to support its work to save endangered native animals, including koalas and platypuses and their threatened habitat. Red Energy has also developed a plan to help support Taronga's work.

"When you sign up as a residential electricity customer to our Red Wildlife Saver plan, we will contribute \$5 a month to Taronga Conservation Society Australia," Graham says.

"That \$5 will be contributed to Taronga for each month you remain on the plan up to the value of \$60 a year. The plan comes with a renewable matching promise that means for every unit of electricity you buy from Red Energy, Snowy Hydro Limited will match it by generating one unit of electricity from a renewable source".

Red Energy is also a principal partner of Taronga Zoo Sydney and Taronga Western Plains Zoo Dubbo and powers their operations, including Taronga Sydney's Seals for the Wild presentation, with 100 per cent renewable electricity.

"We are also proud to sponsor Australian paratriathlete Lauren Parker, who is a Red Energy ambassador," Graham says. "In 2017, Lauren was training for an Ironman event when a terrible accident on her bike left her a paraplegic."

"Less than a year later, she returned to competitive sport and won a bronze medal at the Brisbane Commonwealth Games, then went on to win the world championships and a silver medal at the 2020 Paralympics in Japan. That kind of amazing spirit can make us all proud to be Australian."

"People interested in finding out more can call Red Energy's team on 131 806. Basic plan information, documents and facts sheets are available at redenergy.com.au/bpid."




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Promoting full body health, feet first

Podiatrist Rachael Ferguson's SynxBody provides high-quality footcare products.

There's an ancient saying that a journey of 1000 miles begins with a single step. Modern technology has ensured that anyone using a step counter on their phone or smartwatch has the hard data to measure those travels.

We might not be traversing 1000 miles in a day, but our generally sedentary lifestyles require us to be more conscious about getting active, and walking is one of the best ways to maintain our wellbeing.

Just as important as counting our steps, though, is looking after our feet. "Our feet carry us everywhere, it's actually a huge number of kilometres we go with our feet, and yet we only usually think about them when we have a problem," says Rachael Ferguson, who, as a podiatrist, understands how fundamental our feet are to our overall health and wellbeing.

For over a decade, Ferguson's company SynxBody has been providing a full range of affordable, high-quality footcare products to the Australian and global markets.

"Our focus at SynxBody is full body health, feet first," says the award-winning chief executive.

From blisters and bunions to corns and cracked heels and more persistent conditions such as plantar fasciitis, Achilles tendonitis and sesamoiditis, SynxBody has a solution.

As a result, this Aussie juggernaut just keeps on expanding. "We've had more than a 50 per cent growth rate in the last quarter," Ferguson says proudly.

Already stocked nationally in Chemist Warehouse, it has also recently signed with PharmaBroker, a brokerage company that manages the biggest brands in Australia, which will expand its sales force even further.

"We are continually growing the range and have so many more products now," Ferguson says, adding that its products are also stocked by the three biggest Australian wholesalers: Sigma, Symbion and API.

Among its latest releases is its Magnesium Recovery Spray. Made in Australia using premium Australian plant-based ingredients, such as arnica extract, menthol, peppermint and eucalyptus oils, plus magnesium



Rachael Ferguson's SynxBody range has won *Shark Tank* funding and many awards.

chloride, the spray is ideal for people who suffer muscle cramps.

As these cramps and spasms can intensify overnight, Ferguson says the company wanted to create a product people could use quickly and easily.

"Our magnesium spray is really fast-acting," she says. "People will feel relief within a few minutes and it's perfect to have on the bedside table".

With our hot climate meaning thongs and sandals are often our footwear of choice, cracked heels are often the consequence. SynxBody's new Heel Relief Balm comes in both a small tube and larger pump bottle.

"We're trying to change the conversation around why are people getting heel cracks and what can they do at home," Ferguson says.

The pump pack allows users to use the balm consistently to maintain healthy heel skin, rather than only reaching for it when they are suffering.

"Synxeaze Heel Balm will have your feet looking and feeling beautiful all year round, and it's got so many beautiful ingredients in it, including Australian papaya extract," Ferguson says of the plant-based formula containing AHAs and urea to naturally exfoliate and hydrate the heels, promoting healing. The balm also works well with Synxgeli Heel Socks.

Another addition to its ever-expanding range has been Synxplus knee compression sleeves.

"These have been super popular," Ferguson says, "and we're just about to expand the range even further again

'No longer is it something that we only worry about as we get older.'

Rachael Ferguson

into other body parts, looking to those other areas that affect foot pain."

When Ferguson co-launched SynxBody in 2011, the focus was on a super-slim insole, Synxsole, which she co-designed to fit modern shoes while providing optimal arch support.

The idea was podiatry-designed orthotics at an affordable price, the mainstream appeal of which appealed to the judges of *Shark Tank*.

Not only did Ferguson appear on the Network Ten show in 2015, she then returned in the second season, and also secured funding from one of the "sharks". Millionaire businessman Andrew Banks backed the idea and remains a major shareholder.

At last year's AusMumpreneur Awards, the Synxeaze range - which includes the Synxeaze Pain Relief Cream and Capsules - was a product innovation finalist and won silver for product design.

Ferguson, who is based in Western Australia, is no stranger to the winners' podium, having also been named the 2020 First Amongst Equals winner, the highest honour at the 40Under40 Awards, and is also a proud Perth ambassador of Women's Entrepreneurship Day Organization.

As SynxBody has gone from strength to strength, offering dozens of products including gel cushioning products, elastic no-tie shoelaces, shoe deodorisers, and a range of pain relief and compression products, Ferguson says it wants to drive the conversation around prevention, as much as providing cures.

"As a young, modern brand, our focus is on changing the conversation of how people think about their feet," she says.

"So no longer is it something that we only worry about as we get older, it is something that we want people to start to think about now, as a parent for their young children, or for themselves.

"Our aim is to optimise the biomechanics of your feet, ankles, knees and back to ensure your entire body is working efficiently," she says of her holistic approach. It's why SynxBody is the go-to name for professional footcare products.

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Australian makers embracing the benefits of local manufacturing



Australian businesses are bucking the offshoring trend and turning to local manufacturing, writes Elissa Doherty.

Whether it's crafting insta-pretty ceramics, or pumping out industrial machinery, there's a common reaction to businesses opting to manufacture in Australia: are you crazy?

For Mrs Tablescape and Packserv, the response is simple: it's crazy not to.

After thumbing their noses at the lure of offshore, both businesses are proof that calling Australia home can pay dividends.

The tableware queen and the packaging machinery specialist are among a new generation of businesses that are booming amid an influx of Australians seeking locally manufactured products.

Carolyn Dorrian, a commercial lawyer and the founder of Mrs Tablescape, switched career course during COVID-19 to set up a new business.

As dining rooms became the new restaurants, Dorrian launched the line of funky tablewares, from scalloped-edge ceramic plates to fairy bread napkins and hand-painted candles.

The bold products had locked-down online shoppers salivating, and Dan Murphy's soon came calling, ordering 14,000 bespoke orange napkins for an Aperol Spritz campaign through Shorty's Liquor.

Her "tablescaping" tips have since featured in the likes of *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*, and she's fielding



Mrs Tablescape sprung up in COVID-19 and embraces local manufacturing.

overseas interest including an upcoming collaboration with homeware brand Crane Living in Singapore.

"So many businesses are sending their manufacturing offshore and it seemed crazy to me, when we have so many raw materials right here," she says.

"I was told so many times that I couldn't do this or that here in Australia. It took a lot of trial and error but it is possible. I would love to see Australian manufacturing return. But we do need more government support." Dorrian admits to investigating



offshore options at the outset but was convinced she could succeed on home soil. She re-mortgaged her home to buy machinery and equipment, sought out local stitchers for tablecloths and placemats, and parlayed an inherited passion for decorating into a money-spinner.

"The one thing I was worried about was being competitive pricewise, but I've found a way to match prices overseas, mainly based on the quantity of the supplies I order," she says.

"We are not limited in terms of scale, the only issue for us is space."

'It took a lot of trial and error but it is possible.'

Carolyn Dorrian

The team of nine are moving to a larger factory in June to facilitate more machines and boost output, including increasing the product range to include ovenproof vessels and fire/gas-safe vessels.

She recently launched candle-painting workshops as another add-on and is now dreaming up an Indigenous range of tablewares.

"I'd like to give back, and teach Indigenous makers how to create these things," she says.

In another Aussie success story, Packserv pivoted from its traditional business model of renting and servicing machinery that packages the goods lining supermarket shelves, to designing and building the machines in-house in 2020.

"What happened was a key supplier of the packaging machines we rent out was being sold to an international investor, and that was going to be the end of that type of packaging machine being manufactured, distributed and supported here in Australia," says owner Nathan Wardell.

"A lot of people were surprised. We were at a trade show last year and people walking past our stand were in disbelief, saying 'There's no way you are manufacturing industrial machinery in Australia'."

The gamble paid off. There's now a three-month wait on equipment to fill customer orders, there's global interest and they are forming partnerships with universities as they innovate and digitise their fleet.

Demand is growing so quickly, the team of 25 moved to larger premises 18 months ago to scale up operations and is already "bursting at the seams" in its new home.

Wardell says he believes change is in the wind in the industry as more businesses buck the trend to offshore manufacturing. "In the early 2000s, when the trend was to go offshore, machinery was being imported that may have been cheaper but perhaps not build to the same standards and quality," he says.

"We were incredibly busy for a period as manufacturers were finding problems with packaging such as lids were loose, labels were wrong. And this was not just for small brands, but big brands with national distribution. A lot of these manufacturers learned a big lesson ... they needed to be in control of their production."

The turning point came during COVID-19, he believes, as supply chain issues highlighted the over-reliance on China.

"The only good thing to come out of COVID was the focus on local manufacturing, and attention towards being self-sufficient within Australia," he says. "Australia has such a strong reputation for our goods both domestically and internationally. For us not to be manufacturing locally actually seems crazy."

Markets crucial for small business success

Makers' markets offer local small businesses an important chance to connect with their customers, writes Elissa Doherty.



'The people who come to our markets are looking for something that they haven't seen before.'

Emma Morris

Gone are the days when the weekend market was overrun with tie-dyed tops, knock-off Chanel handbags and dreamcatchers.

The rise of the makers' market is paving a bunting-lined road to success for talented artisans, with original local wares muscling out tacky imported products.

Just ask Emma Morris, founder of the Makers and Shakers Market, which is staged quarterly in Melbourne and Sydney.

The mid-sized markets provide a platform for makers of Australian-only handmade homewares, ethical fashion and innovative food, and Morris says they can be a lucrative way for makers to get noticed.

In one of the biggest coups, a stallholder was approached to sell her handcrafted, glass-blown jewellery for the Art Gallery of NSW.

"I always love hearing those stories. We do have a nice reputation and so do our makers - their stuff is very good," Morris says.

"Another [stallholder] sells lamps fashioned from objects like vintage

Customers and makers come together at the Makers and Shakers Market, which promotes only Australian-made products.

telephones and was commissioned by a hotelier to deck out a new hotel. The people who come to our markets are looking for something that they haven't seen before."

A case in point is Li'l Gas, a stall dedicated to colour-popping planters and bowls upcycled from discarded gas bottles.

Owner Kerrie Burgess stumbled upon the quirky idea almost by accident, after puzzling over what to do with leftover gas bottles from a family caravanning trip.

The idea proved a hit, and she now sells 60 to 80 pieces each market, and has opened an online store.

"People just love them, from older people who are reminded of their campervanning days, to young people

who want to support locally made and sustainable businesses," Burgess said.

"I would say 90 per cent of my online sales are from people who have seen me at markets. That's how integral they are to small businesses like mine."

After Morris ditched her career as a publicist, she started the Makers and Shakers market at Melbourne's Coburg Town Hall in 2016, as an offshoot to a high-end secondhand fashion market she was running.

"It was building and building, and then COVID hit," Morris recalls. "There was a time when I was worried we'd never get back together in rooms again."

But people are craving experience-based outings after the pandemic, she says, and want to support local makers.

There are now four events a year in Sydney and Melbourne, with 100-120 stallholders and up to 6000 customers at each event.

As an Australian Made campaign partner, Morris says shoppers at Makers and Shakers know they can rely on quality goods. She knocks back many wannabe stallholders who don't meet the strict criteria, such as products that are designed here but made offshore.

The average sale is \$50-\$70 and she says makers can "do very well". Markets also offer businesses the chance to experience real-time feedback from customers, as well as the sales opportunity.

"[Businesses] can see what customers are ... picking up, and hear what they are saying about the products, which you don't necessarily get on social media or a website," Morris says.

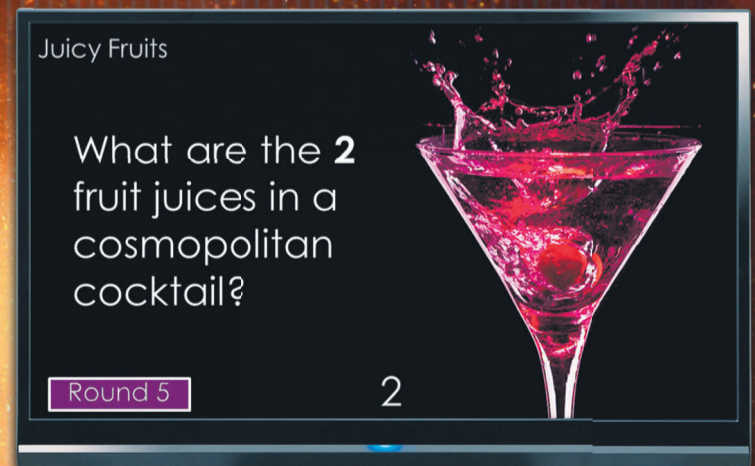
"They can also grow their customer base as a lot of small makers don't have the resources for things like online advertising."

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Making quality blinds more accessible

Innovative digital brands are disrupting industry norms to provide the highest quality, Australian-made goods and services at a lower price than legacy business models.

DIY Blinds was founded in 2016 and has reinvented how Australian customers purchase blinds, shutters and curtains, promising convenience and affordability without compromising on quality.

Chief executive and co-founder Evan Montero says the business is proud to play its role in protecting manufacturing in Australia.

“Our business model and how we’ve disrupted the industry is like Netflix versus Blockbuster,” he says. “We didn’t come into the industry to make curtains, blinds and shutters better as a product. We simply wanted to make the existing service and product more affordable and accessible to the Australian customer.”

Providing its products online means DIY Blinds has eliminated the bricks-and-mortar overheads of traditional suppliers, which ensures designer-quality, Australian-made window coverings are at prices consumers can afford.

Montero says this key differentiator has been particularly welcomed by customers who want affordable quality in a tough economic climate.

“What we’ve discovered by having an innovative retail model is we can provide efficient service and be price competitive, while still providing Australian-made superior products. The way a lot of companies operate to push price down is by importing goods that are made overseas, whether it’s furniture, flooring, or window furnishings.

“But, as well as quality it’s about Australian jobs. At the end of the day, we’re keeping jobs onshore, which is brilliant.”

Being made and designed in Australia also ensures products work with the local climate.

“We understand the unique weather here in terms of the harsh summers and winters and how each region has



DIY Blinds manufactures its products in Melbourne, dramatically improving turnaround times. While the products are designed to be installed by the customer, the company also offers an installation service.



different seasonal needs,” Montero says.

Materials ranging from fabrics to componentry are designed not to fade or rust. Plantation shutters, for example, have a 20-year warranty, and the material will not blister or peel with prolonged sun exposure.

Fabrics can be lined with thermal insulation to keep homes cooler in summer and warmer in winter, reducing household energy bills and the consumer’s carbon footprint.

DIY Blinds’ product range is manufactured at factories in Melbourne, ensuring it has the quality that Australian consumers expect. It also ensures efficient lead times, unlike imported products.

“Products don’t have to be put on a boat with seven to eight weeks’ lead time – we’re able to get plantation shutters made in seven days, curtains made in seven days, and roller blinds made in five days, which is phenomenal,” Montero says.

He says its business model also reflects a typically Australian attitude towards household improvements and maintenance.

“If you look at the success of things like Bunnings, a broad cross-section of Aussies have a real passion for DIY, and it’s important to note DIY isn’t a cost-cutting exercise. We have seen first-hand that our products and services resonate with the more affluent part of the market as well.

‘At the end of the day, we’re keeping jobs onshore, which is brilliant.’

Evan Montero

“It doesn’t matter if it’s Toorak or Double Bay, it’s amazing to see our products in increasing numbers of high-end homes as well.”

For customers who appreciate the quality and competitive cost of the window furnishings but do not feel confident installing their new curtains, blinds or shutters themselves, DIY Blinds provides online support and in-home installation services.

If requested, a DIY installer can visit in-person to check measurements. In-home services are offered in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

“The irony that we offer install is not lost on us but not everyone is comfortable with a self-install,” he says. “That said, it’s not that hard installing our window furnishings if you’re comfortable using an electric drill.”

DIY Blinds’ design consultants work remotely and can conduct online Zoom sessions for those who would like an expert opinion or additional support.

Customers can order free samples and receive them by Express Post to consider before purchasing, while the website features an online calculator providing a quick price guide.

Unlike other retailers that may offer an overall discounted price for purchasing more than one window furnishing, DIY Blinds always quotes according to the customer’s specific needs and measurements.

It gives customers the option to order in stages, such as room by room if they are renovating or building. It also helps customers plan and prioritise budget for their immediate needs.

“Our pricing is very transparent – you input the measurements on the website and we give you the itemised price. It’s not hidden behind a lot of ambiguity,” Montero says.

“The price is consistent whether you buy one blind or 100 blinds, whether you’re in Frankston or Lara, or if you’re in Kew or Toorak.”

Montero says the business is proud to play its role in protecting manufacturing in Australia and is looking forward to greater expansion in coming years.

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From cotton growers to sewers, SupaFit Seat Covers is keeping it all in our borders.

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SupaFit Seat Covers has 25 years of industry experience in making durable vehicle seat covers made to handle the country's toughest conditions.

The covers are made to fit almost all vehicles on the Australia market, from buses to cars, trucks and forklifts.

"The Australian-made, heavy-duty preventative damage product goes over the top of seats for mining, farming, trades people, recreational fishers, hunters, four-wheel-drivers and even more," explains business owner Peter Fenn.

The company has worked with top local material manufacturers to develop the military-grade canvas and denim seat covers.

The canvas is woven using industrial machines in Newcastle, using Australian-grown cotton.

The fabric is combined with polyester to make it stronger, and it's milled into a coarse-weave, medium-weight canvas.

The company says its seat covers are the strongest on the market in terms of military-grade toughness, durability and 100 per cent waterproofing.

The fabric is also resistant to mould, mildew and bacteria and has been UV treated, so the seats can withstand dirt, grease and Australia's harsh climate conditions.

The denim seat covers are also made with 100 per cent Australian-grown cotton and have a high-density foam backing, so they are durable and comfortable, as well as breathable, cool to touch and UV-treated.

"Whether it's covered in dirt, grease, water or whatever the heavy industrial industry can throw at it, these seat covers will take that stress," Fenn adds. "The average vehicle does 20,000 kilometres a year in normal driving, but in a mining field, they might do 20,000 kilometres in three months, so you've got four years worth of wear and tear on your vehicle happening in one year."

"And it's not only the four years worth of wear and tear, it's over-exaggerated wear and tear because



The company says its military-grade seat covers are the strongest and safest on the market.



everyone's covered in dirt and they're all wearing industrial clothing."

Even mums and dads have invested in the product.

"They basically want to prevent their seats from getting worn out, because a damaged seat is not legal on Australian roads," Fenn adds.

Eight qualified motor-trimming and vehicle upholstery trades workers design the covers to fit perfectly, and all covers are cut and hand-sewn in Western Australia.

The seat covers also feature a smart technology so airbags can deploy immediately through the seams.

The company believes its seat covers are Australia's safest, with specialist German sewing machines used to stitch the airbag seams.

Airbags that deploy late can be fatal, but it says consistent independent testing has shown the covers deploy within the required timeframes.

All seat covers are also uniquely documented and recorded before they are dispatched.

About 80 staff work across the company, from designers to repairers and manufacturers.

"Our aim is to try and make more Australian jobs available for

'Our aim is to try and make more Australian jobs available.'

Peter Fenn

everyone," Fenn says. "It also helps us out, because if there's any problems that we come across, or any improvements we want to make, we can do that pretty much immediately."

While other businesses make similar products in Australia, SupaFit products are made locally from start to completion using almost exclusively locally made components.

"There's got to be pressure that Australian-made actually means something," Fenn says.

"Our thread is from overseas, but the material, the weaving of material, colouring and cutting happens here."

Fenn says the pandemic revealed which companies were importing their product components.

"When COVID first hit, we found out really quickly which of our competitors were buying stuff from overseas, because they could not get their products from overseas, but claiming to be Australian-made," he says.

SupaFit Seat Covers sales and marketing manager Adam Power says it is difficult to discern what is truly Australian made.

"There are companies claiming to be Australian made material even though the material is imported, maybe touched up and rebagged," he says. "The freight, insurance, value adding and profit is deemed an Australian-made component."

"Or a canvas might be imported from overseas, then cut and stitched up here, or pre-cut, then brought into Australia and sewn up."

"There's a difference between value-adding a product and claiming it to be Australian-made."

SupaFit Seat Covers has distributors in New Zealand and Papua New Guinea and is in talks with South Africa and the US. It also sells to retailers in Japan and Europe.

The seat covers can be viewed online at www.supafitseatcovers.com.au and the product range is constantly growing.

Customers having difficulty finding the right seat cover for their vehicle are invited to get in touch to see how their needs can be met.

SupaFit
SEAT COVERS

supafitseatcovers.com.au

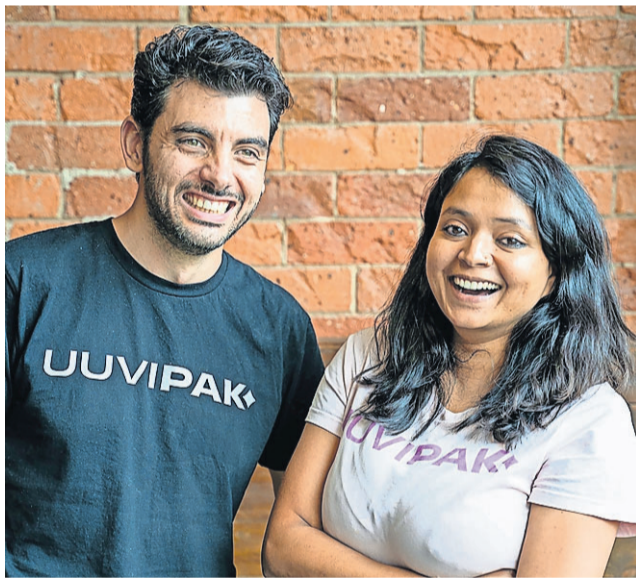
AUSTRALIA'S SAFEST

AUSTRALIAN MADE AND OWNED

Small Aussie businesses that are having a big impact

As awareness grows of the harmful effects of single-use plastics, these local entrepreneurs are making a difference, designing and manufacturing innovative products right here in Australia. By Anders Furze.

UUVIPAK



Andy Epifani and Dr Shafali Gupta make edible and compostable cups, bowls and plates.

Dr Shafali Gupta and Andy Epifani are the co-founders of Uuvipak, which has a mission of eliminating single-use plastic pollution. The business manufactures edible and compostable cups, bowls and plates that help create a zero-waste lifestyle.

“Like many people, during COVID-19 we would get takeaway food and encountered a lot of packaging,” Epifani says. “There was a lot that couldn’t be disposed of [sustainably]. So, we started researching plastic alternatives and ways we could improve the packaging alternatives on the market.”

The products are made from raw ingredients in Queensland and are designed to make the most of natural resources that would otherwise be discarded by farmers and food producers. Gupta notes Uuvipak tackles carbon emissions on multiple fronts.

“We’re upcycling material and reducing emissions both through our manufacturing process, and by reducing the use of plastic in the market,” she says. “We use grain waste from flour mills and factories, sourced directly from manufacturers.”

Abandoning secure careers for the world of entrepreneurship has been “a journey,” Epifani says. “We’re pivoting from week to week, even some days hour to hour!”

They are also big believers in supporting local manufacturing. “Australian Made is a great campaign. COVID-19 only emphasised the importance of having this capability at home,” Epifani adds.

WORTHY DRINK BOTTLES



Worthy drink bottles are made from sugarcane, which is carbon-negative and zero-waste.

When Angela Michel decided she wanted to design a drink bottle, she knew she wanted it to be the most sustainable product on the market. Her research led her to an unconventional but ideal material: sugarcane.

“When I started learning about how incredible sugarcane is, it was a no-brainer for me,” she says. “It’s not even a carbon-neutral material, it’s carbon negative. It’s also zero-waste. We use the stem of the sugarcane to create the bottle, then we use the waste from sugarcane to power the factory.”

Sugarcane is chemically identical to plastic, making it an ideal substitute for the synthetic material.

“It’s a great circular system,” Michel says. “The sugar cane is growing and releasing oxygen into the atmosphere, [it helps to] power the production processes, and if somebody wants to dispose of our bottles, it’s fully recyclable in the household recycling bins. We also have a facility where we can turn them into more sugarcane products.”

Worthy donates 10 per cent of each drink bottle sold to Vision Rescue, a not-for-profit organisation that supports and empowers people living in slums in India. Back in 2010, Michel and her husband spent time volunteering with the organisation.

“As soon as I started this business, I knew I wanted to support them,” she says.

Because mass-producing bottles from sugarcane had never been done in Australia when Worthy began, many of the manufacturers Michel spoke with doubted that they could use the material.

“The fact that I’m female probably played into it as well,” she says. “I had to step out and take a risk and convince them that yes, it can be done. But when I finally received the bottles, and saw them for the first time, it was genuinely incredible. It was like, ‘We did it! We did something new.’”

GREAT WRAP



Great Wrap is Australian-made cling-wrap manufactured from compostable material.

When Julia Kay worked as an architect, she became increasingly frustrated with a major issue: the use of petroleum-based plastic wrap encasing building materials. Alongside co-founder and husband Jordy Kay, she set about researching how to tackle the problem. The result is Great Wrap, cling-wrap made from compostable material and designed for both commercial and home use.

“We’ve been really lucky to work with some incredible partners,” she says. “We partnered with Monash University early on, in designing the formula we use to manufacture our products, for example. For us it’s all been about surrounding ourselves with the right people.”

Being Australian-made from the outset was important. “Initially, making the product itself, there was a big priority to have total oversight of what was going into it,” Kay says. “There’s a certain sense of pride that you see associated with the Australian Made logo. A sense of trust.”

Taking Australian stories to the world

Recent local success stories have underlined the importance of telling Australian tales on screen, writes Claire White.

Audiences have never had more access to screen content. With millions of film and television titles available literally at our fingertips, what we watch has powerful effects, both economically and culturally.

Uniting writers, directors, producers, actors and crew, the Make It Australian campaign aims to secure ongoing commitment by streaming platforms and the government to invest in Australian stories, made by Australians.

Commercial television and public broadcasters such as the ABC must meet a 55 per cent local content quota on air each day, incentivising investment in Australian television shows. However, streamers here are not subject to the same requirements.

“We’ve got a whole new way of delivering content to Australians [but] there hasn’t been a way, so far, that adapts that framework onto those new services which have entered [and] dominate the market,” explains Matthew Daener, chief executive of Screen Producers Australia.

“We’re talking in many ways a complete change to our industry



Matthew Daener is chief executive of Screen Producers Australia.

because of services like Netflix and Amazon,” he adds.

A study conducted in 2022 by Telsyte found that more than 70 per cent of households in Australia were connected to at least one streaming or video-on-demand service.

“An ongoing supply of content is really important for Australian consumers, and it also can provide a window to Australia across the world, given that many of these services are operating globally,” Daener says.

Recent investment by streamers in Australian content demonstrate such success. Netflix’s 2022 reboot of *Heartbreak High* reached the top 10 in

more than 43 countries. But it was also beloved here, spending weeks in the local top 10, rocketing its stars to fame on social media and earning eight AACTA nominations.

“It’s very modern and hit a kind of zeitgeist [that] became a conversation for its audiences,” Daener says. “It [also] worked ... to position Australia as an entertaining, funny but serious, diverse and interesting community for the generation ... being portrayed.”

ABC Kids show *Bluey* is another highlight. Available on ABC iView and internationally via Disney+, by 2021 the show had reached 480 million plays. It’s now all over TikTok and was even

‘The skills of our people, our talent base ... is second to none.’

Matthew Daener

referenced in the American sitcom *Abbott Elementary*.

Beyond demonstrating the commercial viability of distinctly Australian content in an international market, Make It Australian stresses the importance of homegrown stories for homegrown audiences.

“Given the power of the medium and the quantity of time we spend on screens, [representation] is a really important exercise,” Daener says. “So, what we’re really trying to do with Make It Australian is to make sure people are validated, really, and that they have a chance to connect to their own story as well as others.”

This year the federal government announced the “Revive” National Cultural Policy, outlining plans to revive the arts and entertainment sector, including local content quotas for streaming platforms they hope will be in place by mid-2024.

Ultimately, Make It Australian wants to see the local entertainment industry, a major employer of writers and directors, actors and crew, grow.

“The skills of our people, our talent base ... is second to none.”



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SCAN ME



SCAN ME

Helping you get the best night's sleep

Sleeptime mattresses are manufactured locally using medical-grade foam.

A good night's sleep can do wonders when it comes to your mental and physical health, and bracing you for the day ahead.

Australian-owned and -operated Sleeptime has been priding itself on making sure people get a decent night's shut-eye, since the company began four years ago.

The Sydney-based family-oriented firm has developed a range of high-quality bedtime products, from mattresses to adjustable beds, bamboo sheets and pillows, with the sole aim of ensuring a restful sleep.

The company's sleeptime Aussie mattresses are made locally, and feature a three-layer high density memory foam.

The mattresses are manufactured using medical-grade foam, setting them apart from others on the market.

They are also hypoallergenic and feature anti-slip material and breathable, gel-infused memory foam.

"Because it's medical grade, rather than your standard bedding grade, it's tougher, lasts longer, is more effective and more supportive," Sleeptime director Scott Ranger explains.

"It's a higher-quality product with a longer warranty period than the imports you can get from overseas, so it will give you that quality sleep for a longer period of time."

Unlike a standard mattress, Sleeptime mattresses are designed to support the entire body, rather than just certain areas.

"If you sleep on your side on a standard mattress, you put a lot of pressure on certain parts of the body," Ranger says. "But when you sleep on one of our mattresses, you're sleeping in a zero-gravity position and your whole body is supported."

As they are ergonomically designed, the mattresses ensure you sleep comfortably, and wake up feeling refreshed and rejuvenated.

Because they absorb and contain movement, they also eliminate the roll-over effect, helping to make sure your sleep isn't disturbed.

The mattresses are made with Ultra Fresh technology, a protective treatment that inhibits the growth of bacteria and keeps products fresh, hygienic and odour free.



The company's adjustable beds are its best sellers.



In contrast to other Australian businesses, Sleeptime cuts out the middleman, conveniently slashing customer waiting times.

"Our mattresses are manufactured directly for us, which we sell directly to the consumer," Ranger says.

"We tend to deliver in Sydney within the week if it's in stock and two to four weeks if it's not."

The company's adjustable beds are its best sellers. The therapeutic sleep system features a wireless remote that can adjust the bed to elevate the head and foot independently.

The bed is built from a high-quality steel frame and a German-designed motor and comes with a slew of features.

You can wake up to an inbuilt whole-body vibration massage, choose from four massage modes and take advantage of the customisable memory buttons to set a timer.

You can also use a zero-gravity pre-set position.

The adjustable beds are designed to fit inside your existing bed frame, and come in various sizes and fully assembled. The only user requirement

'It's a higher-quality product with a longer warranty period than the imports.'

Scott Ranger

is for the legs to be attached to the bottom of the base.

The beds are designed to provide proper comfort and support for all types of sleepers and, when used correctly, can help prevent asthma during sleep and reduce snoring.

Elevating the feet can also help relieve symptoms of back pain and other aches and pains, as well as sleep apnoea, poor circulation, arthritis and poor circulation.

Ranger says Sleeptime's adjustable beds are increasingly being sought by a younger demographic, keen to take advantage of their physical and mental health benefits.

"Whereas our clientele was previously mainly the older generation, a lot of younger people are buying them now because they can see the health benefits of an adjustable bed," he says.

Each Sleeptime product is carefully designed and manufactured to stringent quality standards.

To that end, the adjustable bases and luxury high-density gel memory foam mattresses are backed by a 10-year guarantee.

Sleeptime's range also includes Australian-designed adjustable memory-foam pillows and mattresses and toppers for caravans, which are designed to contour to the body and help support the entire body properly.

Bamboo sheets, which are soft with a luxurious feel, are hypoallergenic, and naturally permeable so they wick away moisture to keep you cool at night.

The company also offers dog beds, so your furry friends can be supported by a high-density memory foam mattress that is conveniently also waterproof and tear resistant.

Sleeptime boasts over 40 staff and serves the residential, commercial and hospitality sectors.

It is also an NDIS provider.

Consultants are available via phone or you can drop into the Sydney showroom at Prestons to find out how the product range can help you get the best night's sleep.

Opening hours are Monday to Friday 10am to 5pm and weekends by appointment.

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A U S T R A L I A N M A D E

Scents and sensibility

An Australian business celebrates the surprisingly strong science of smell, writes Joanne Brookfield.



Light + Glo candles are handcrafted in Melbourne from natural fragrances and soy wax.

We're all familiar with the power of scent. The way a certain smell can remind us of a person, place or time in our life can be quite visceral, stirring up long forgotten memories in a way that enables us to relive moments all over again.

Scent also has the power to influence our behaviour. It can make us feel calm, relaxed, or energised. Ever smell something delicious and suddenly feel hungry?

There's a world of science behind the way our olfactory system works, which is something the team behind Light + Glo know only too well.

Company founders Suji Sanjeevan and husband Jeeva both have high-level medical backgrounds, and they use their extensive scientific knowledge to create their boutique candles.

Founded in 2015, this multi award-winning fragrance house has a range of beautifully packaged candles that commingles art and scent to tell evocative stories.

Wanting to tell stories about the place the married couple now call home, Light + Glo pays respect and homage to First Nation artists. Their most popular range, Soul, features artwork by Melanie Hava and Chern'ee Sutton, Indigenous artists based in Far North Queensland.

"The scent itself tells a story," says company 'nose' and creative director Suji Sanjeevan.

If the artwork includes a coral reef, "then as you open it up, that's exactly the smell that you're going to experience and you almost feel like you're transported to that destination. If it's koalas, you're taken to the eucalyptus forest".

Sanjeevan explains how this works biologically. "Scent is the only sensory element that has a direct connection to the brain, via the limbic system. As a result it's quite impactful, because then it causes hormones to be released, depending on which scent you're exposed to, and that's where you have those reactions, for example, allowing one to feel relaxed.

"There's a real psychology in scents and behavioural science to it."

Stocked in 400 stores across Australia, the Soul range has been especially popular with international



tourists. "It's just that perfect little piece of Australia to take home with you or gift to a visitor," notes Sanjeevan, adding they were the first candle brand to be endorsed by the Indigenous Art Code.

Light + Glo candles are handcrafted in Melbourne, blending the highest quality natural fragrances with soy wax, they come with wood wicks in a variety of sizes. Other scent-based products include diffusers, travel tins and gift packs, and span five different aroma profiles.

"Each of our collections has a scent profile with science backing," she explains. Their Asana range, for instance, "is where we worked with yogis to create scents that induce relaxation, meditation and helps one feel energised".

The couple also runs a scent marketing business, Brand Scent. "That's where we work with leading brands creating custom scents, for both immersive experiences released through commercial diffusers and promotional items."

A custom-made unique scent is subtle, but powerful, she says. "The effect of this branded scent leaves a lasting impression and enhances the entire customer experience."

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10 WINTER WARMERS

With winter fast approaching, now is the time to think about getting warm and cosy. From Alpaca teddies to wood-fired pizza ovens, here are 10 products that will keep you warm over winter and are also proudly certified Australian Made. Compiled by Anders Furze



MINIJUMBUK WARM WOOL QUILT
Over 45 years ago, South Australian sheep shearer Don Wray produced MiniJumbuk's first quilt. From there the business has grown to produce handcrafted and sewn products made with sheep wool. The flagship Limestone Coast wool range celebrates top quality wool grown on the Limestone Coast.



MR STOVES WOOD HEATER
Nothing says winter has arrived more than the smell of wood fires and sight of smoke escaping chimneys. Mr Stoves is Queensland's only independent manufacturer of wood heaters and has been around for 35 years.



DENTONS PILLOW
Melbourne's Dentons has been designing and manufacturing locally made pillows for over 40 years. Dentons' pillows come in a variety of styles and materials, including their trademark Softec material, which is both soft to touch yet remains durable and supportive.



BUSY BEE BRUSHWARE FLUE CLEANING KIT
Regular cleaning is required if the fireplace is going to get a proper workout this winter. Busy Bee Brushware's chimney cleaning brush kit is a specialised kit for cleaning most chimneys and some larger flues, while their chimneysweep, tradies and handyman brush kit offers all the professional equipment required for starting your own cleaning enterprise.



ALPACA SHOP AUSTRALIA CLOTHING
Adelaide's Alpaca Shop Australia specialises in fashion-forward garments to keep you warm over winter. The extensive range includes knitted jumpers, gloves, scarves, beanies, cardigans and ponchos. The adorable alpaca fur teddies are perfect for kids.



MERINO COUNTRY CLOTHING
Family-owned business Merino Country works closely with local wool producers and processors, with all fabrics knitted and dyed in Australia and made in-house at their Brisbane garment factory. Look out for their range of Wundies, or Merino wool underwear.



BENDIGO POTTERY CROCKERY
For a remarkable six generations, Bendigo Pottery has celebrated ceramics in the Victorian regional city. Australia's oldest working pottery is a tourist attraction itself, with displays of early pottery and historic wood-fired kilns. Can't make it in-person? The online shop has all the tools required for cosy cookery, from casserole dishes to gravy boats.



ELUME PILLAR CANDLE
Warm clothing and blankets might help keep you warm, but it's candles that tip the scales firmly into cosy territory. Elume's signature pillar candles highlight a range of soothing scents, from smoky woods to sandalwood, lemongrass to green tea. A range of reed diffusers and oil burners help home in on hygge at home.



WILDCAT INDUSTRIES PIZZA OVEN
Wood-fired pizzas are a key culinary touchstone for winter. Heavy duty Australian steel construction, thick firebrick lining to retain heat and ceramic insulation are the hallmarks of Wildcat pizza ovens, which are the ideal enablers of warm winter entertaining.



G'DAY BABY BEANIE
G'day baby specialises in organic, natural materials for babies and kids. The gumnut beanie is shaped like a gumnut and made from 100 per cent cotton fabric and is designed to keep baby's ears out of the cold. If you're after a gift for new parents, the welcome baby gift set includes organic, sustainable essentials, from a koala bib to a hand-crocheted baby rattle.

Windows dressed with local talent

Manufactured in Australia for nearly 70 years, Luxaflex products are well-suited to our tastes and climate.

When it comes to home window furnishings, tastes over the years have changed.

Aluminium venetian blinds are no longer the go-to they once were decades ago, but the company that brought them to the mass market has been transforming Aussie homes with innovative window covering solutions ever since.

The Luxaflex brand has been operating in Australia for almost 70 years, first introduced by Hunter Douglas, a global leader in window coverings and architectural products.

Hunter Douglas established its Australian operations in the 1950s and today employs 360 workers across the country as a leading supplier of blinds and other window coverings made locally under the trusted Luxaflex name.

In contrast to the do-it-yourself online blinds market, Hunter Douglas customers are offered a tailored solution with made-to-measure high quality products, says the company's Vera Meharg.

The large range boasts an assortment of colours, operating systems, and innovative designs.

Importantly, products are made with world-leading fabrics and sustainability in mind, so they can thrive in Australia's harsh sun.

As well as uniquely being made in Australia, several products are patented and only available from Luxaflex retailers.

"There's not a lot of Australian-made products any more, unfortunately," Meharg says.

"It's one of those industries where it's been a race to the bottom. To win that price war, everyone had to look to imports to just try to keep down the costs.

"But we've been Australian made since we first started here and that's something we really don't want to move away from.

"As long as we can still get consumers supporting Australian made products, then we can keep doing what we're doing," she says.



The wide range of Luxaflex products can transform the look of a home inside and out, and help with heating and cooling costs.



"It also means we can continue to play a role in backing Aussie jobs and manufacturing."

Customers can also be assured of product quality and receiving their items in a timely way, Meharg says.

Many products have a one-week turnaround and three-day express service, not to mention experts on the ground to talk to and quick action if something's not quite right.

Over the years, Hunter Douglas has expanded its product range, from hard finishes, such as aluminium venetians, to the softer products of today with flowing fabrics.

Blinds are no longer just an aesthetic, and form and function play a huge role in controlling light and privacy.

Convenience in how they are operated and energy efficiency are also



growing concerns for customers.

Whether its roller blinds, curtains, shutters or outdoor awnings, company experts are on hand to give customers a complete solution for their window and outdoor shading needs.

Luxaflex has also led the way with innovations such as the Duette Architella honeycomb shade, designed to provide superior insulation and energy efficiency.

Most of the Luxaflex range is made at the company's main plant in Rydalmere, NSW, where certified Australian-made products, including its Nordic Folding Arm Awnings, Evo Awnings and Roller Blinds are manufactured.

The products offer UV protection, light control and are designed to allow you to transform your home in an instant.

'We've been Australian made since we started here ... something we really don't want to move away from.'

Vera Meharg

Over the years, Hunter Douglas has embraced innovation through its product design.

Roller blind fabrics – developed and made at the Rydalmere plant – are continually tested to ensure they are suitable and long lasting in the Australian climate.

The company's certified Australian made Luxaflex PolySatin shutters, manufactured at the company's facility in Yatala, Queensland, are also a mark of its innovation.

The shutters are backed by a 20-year warranty and tailor-made, using a high-quality polyresin compound, making them impervious to moisture. This means they won't blister, peel, flake, corrode or fade.

Most window coverings can conveniently also be motorised, automated or integrated into home automation systems.

They can be adjusted at pre-set times, operated together with other shades in the home and controlled in response to environmental changes, via a special app or remote.

By the press of a button, you can help reduce energy consumption, create the perfect ambience, and adjust the shades when you're not home to give the impression someone is there.

Luxaflex has a network of authorised dealers and showrooms across Australia, where consumers can speak to a professionally trained consultant, and see and touch samples.

Free measures and quotes are available and trained consultants can guide you on the best choice for your home, based on the perfect fit, look and use of the space.

Everything is handled from the start of the process with product selection all the way through to final installation.

Luxaflex Gallery stores also guarantee consumers can replace their purchase with a product of equal or lesser value if unhappy with their final selection within 21 to 40 days of installation.

The website can be found at Luxaflex.com.au

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