



woodshield

WOODSHIELD IS ANOTHER COMPANY USING RECYCLED PLASTIC RESIN TO MANUFACTURE COMMERCIAL FENCING POSTS TO SUIT A RANGE OF PURPOSES, PROVIDING A SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVE TO TOXIC TREATED CCA AND CREOSOTE TIMBER

"In around 2004, a group of plastic engineers from Victoria got together over a glass [several glasses] of wine and came up with the idea to solve the issue of post breakages and end of life disposal. It has proven to be a winner!!" says Sales Manager Ashley Davidson, who has been with the company for over 10 years.

Woodshield posts are made up of chemically free timber, fully encased in a layer of plastic resin coating. This provides additional strength, extended life, heat and weather resistance with protection from pests such as termites. The posts are chemically inert, which means they won't leach chemicals into the soil. They are long lasting, and at end of life, the polymer coating can be stripped and recycled. The untreated timber, cut for firewood or shredded for mulch.

These properties make it an ideal substitute for treated timber on farm.

Woodshield's award winning posts were first taken up by the viticulture industry; and the company now supplies product for use in aquaculture, orchards, equestrian pursuits, general farm fencing and public infrastructure, with posts being exported to New Zealand, the US, and Japan. Ashley has just got back from a recent trip to New Zealand, where the

company has a very established presence in the Marlborough wine region, and continues to supply some of the leading horse studs in the southern hemisphere.

While interest has been strong, Ashley has found some barriers in overcoming farmer perceptions in switching to a new product.

"I find there's two types of mindsets at play; the old mindset that wants to keep doing things the way they've always been done, and the mindset of 'We need to look at the future, let's give it a go!'" he says.

"I've literally stood at field days while the children and wives of farmers have been debating with Dad to try the product and look after the planet."

Established timber supply chains in other countries have also been difficult to break.

"You are talking about very established industries in some countries, supplying construction and housing and the like. We are only a very small player," says Ashley.

"I sometimes think that timber people should never meet polymer people!" he laughs.

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"It's a completely different way of thinking and having to explain what we are about has been challenging at times."

Where the product has proven itself, however, is in the field.

Ashley was surprised to receive an enquiry from a farmer and customer in Cobargo, shortly after the December 2019 bushfires had decimated the region.

"He said he wanted more of the posts, because they were the only thing left standing," he says.

Ashley says that because it is so distinctive, it just takes a single person to trial the product and the word gets around.

"We have our posts installed at South Australian winery, d'Arenberg, for example and the amount of enquiries that this has generated, has been amazing."

"One KI farmer installed the posts after the 2020 bushfires – and now we have several others contacting us."

"People seeing our product, its word of mouth, its innovation, it's the vibe of our times This is our greatest form of marketing," he says.

Posts are made at Woodshield's factory in Melbourne and sold direct to market, which means our "price remains on par with standard fencing in Australia," according to Ashley. The company now has 4 different post profiles for various applications.

Demonstrating its flexibility, the company was recently awarded a contract to supply posts to the DPI in NSW and Queensland Department for Agriculture and Fisheries to support both States' wild dog and rabbit fencing.

Following this, the company was also awarded an innovation award at the 2020 Australian Fencing Awards, and is growing from strength to strength across multiple sectors.

With their circular economy product utilising Agri-waste and giving an old school farm application an extended life span and answer to product end disposal (without having to break the bank); This simple post is one to look out for!

Further Information

Woodshield products are certified for use on organic farms across Australia and New Zealand

woodshield.com.au

PETER HISLOP SPEERS

Peter Hislop Speers has been involved in the FMCG sector for many years, having worked in global procurement for Japanese supermarket chain DAIEI Japan, Dairy Farm Group (Hong Kong) (Jardine Matheson).

Peter has spent the last four years developing a fully compostable product packaging solution for Australia's largest certified organic apple grower, sold under the Woolworths 'Macro' brand. Trials of the packaging were completed in December 2020 with commercial roll-out in store from March of this year.

Solving supply chain challenges is Peter's speciality, and the backbone of his consultancy Palotus, which focuses on achieving commercial outcomes for supplier customers that typically work with the larger retailers.

Peter was drawn to organic production in the early 90s, with an early foray into the industry helping a certified banana producer export product to Japan. Since 2006, he has worked extensively with certified apple grower R&R Smith in Tasmania, helping to develop its supply chain with Woolworths. In 2018, the company was the inaugural recipient of the \$30 million Woolworths Organic Growth Fund.

More recently, Peter has helped the company – and Woolworths – deliver a bespoke, compostable product packaging solution marketed under the Macro brand.

Consumer feedback is driving the push for innovation in product packaging, according to Peter.

"The organic consumer wants food to be safe, nutritious, wants suppliers to be paid appropriately, value sustainability and wants to be kind to the planet," he says.