



THE LINK

Showcasing the successes, innovation and developments in the Fencing, Gate and Wire Industries



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As we approach the end of another year, I wanted to take a moment to reflect on the challenges that we, as manufacturers in Australia, have faced over the past year.

One of the biggest challenges has been the rise in interest rates. As many of you are aware, the Reserve Bank of Australia has raised interest rates multiple times over the past year in an effort to combat inflation and stabilise the economy. While this is certainly a necessary measure, it has put a strain on many of our businesses, especially those that rely on loans or credit to finance their operations.

Another significant challenge has been the shortage of available labour in the manufacturing industry. As the Australian economy continues to recover and job opportunities become more abundant across a wide range of industries, it has become increasingly difficult to attract and retain skilled workers in our industry. This shortage of labour can have a significant impact on our ability to meet demand, deliver products on time, and maintain the high standards of quality that our customers expect.

Despite these challenges, I believe that we as manufacturers in Australia have much to be proud of. We have continued to innovate, to invest in our businesses, and to deliver high-quality products to our customers. We have shown resilience, creativity and a commitment to excellence that is truly inspiring.

Looking ahead to the coming year, we must continue to adapt and evolve in order to thrive in the face of these challenges. We must continue to invest in new technologies, to explore new markets, and to work together to address the shortage of available labour in our industry. By working together, sharing our experiences and insights, and supporting one another through these challenges, we can continue to grow and succeed in the years to come.

Thank you for your continued commitment to our industry, and I look forward to working with all of you in the coming year.

Graham Braithwaite

You said no more rate hikes! **actually I said: no, more rate hikes.**



DIRECTOR'S REPORT

We are excited to offer a new service to members of the AWIA. Your Association has partnered with CreditorWatch, one of Australia's most highly regarded credit reporting agencies, to provide Australian member companies with customer credit reports to reduce exposure to credit defaults and to enable higher credit sales to customers of good standing. This service comes at a particularly opportune

time as interest rates increase, inflation soars and an increasing number of companies, especially in the construction sector, fall over. These reports are comprehensive and are made available promptly, generally within hours of making the request, and are provided on an ad hoc basis, so there is no need to enter into an annual subscription agreement. Please contact me if you'd like further information. The Association is also working on a similar offer for our New Zealand members and will advise further details as they come to hand.

Following on from our very successful conference in Newcastle in May 2022, our focus this year turned to Melbourne to coincide with Australian Manufacturing Week, and members from VIC, NSW, SA and QLD braved what was supposed to be a fine example of Melbourne's coldest autumn weather. As it turned out, the day was sensational, and delegates basked in the sunshine while overlooking the yachts in Hobsons Bay. Quite a difference to the torrential rain Newcastle favoured us with the year prior. Further details of the event can be found on page 11 of this newsletter.

The Australian Tax Office appears to be taking a greater level of interest in the not for profit (NFP) sector and will in future require NFPs, like the AWIA, to complete an annual assessment to determine their eligibility to claim tax exempt status. This development is disturbing to say the least, and eligibility for tax-exempt status largely hinges on whether the organisation exists essentially to support its members or whether it offers benefit to a broader section of the community. In essence, organisations such as the AWIA, who expend significant resources to ensure that industries like ours operate in conformance with Australian regulations and standards to the benefit of the community as a whole, may lose their tax-exempt status while sporting bodies such as the AFL and NRL, which generate hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue, retain their tax-exempt status simply because they are sporting organisations. The voluntary work done by organisations like the AWIA in keeping Australian standards up to date and relevant should guarantee their tax-exempt status. Standards Australia could not operate in its current form without the support of these organisations. We would love to get member feedback on this issue so please get in contact if you have an opinion or suggestion.

I will be travelling overseas for a while to take advantage of the northern summer but will still be contactable for any member issues, so don't hesitate to reach out via email or WhatsApp.

Richard Newbiggin

(Tel: +61 411 725 795 Email: richard@wireassociation.org.au)

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 Vater Hardware Group
 Victorian Temporary Fencing

STANDARDS AUSTRALIA

AS 2423 Coated Steel Wire fencing products for terrestrial, aquatic and general use

A further reminder that any members wishing to suggest amendments to this Standard are requested to contact Richard Newbigin Tel: 1300 942 500 or email richard@wireassociation.org.au.

AS 4687 Temporary Fencing and Hoardings

This four-part Standard has now been published and members wishing to purchase a copy of any part of the Standard should contact Richard Newbigin (richard@wireassociation.org.au or 1300 942 500).

New information in the Standard covers pedestrian barriers and temporary pool fencing, with temporary hoardings also being vastly expanded upon and assigned its own part within the Standard.

The AWIA is continuing to discuss with Standards Australia ways for members to obtain copies of this Standard at a discounted cost to that normally offered to encourage uptake of this revised Standard.

AS 5394 High Security Anti-Intruder Fences in Welded Wire Mesh and Open Steel Panels

The CE-008 committee held its kick off meeting for this project in early March and held a follow up meeting in May.

A working group has been formed to provide appropriate input to the committee, and a schedule of meetings is being arranged for the working group to commence drafting of this new Standard. The committee has set a completion date for drafting of the Standard of March 2024 with the public comment period to commence in June of that year. These targets may be ambitious for a brand new Standard, but the committee believes it has a good team to achieve these goals.

Any readers who wish to participate on the technical committee or a working group advising the technical committee should advise Richard Newbigin as soon as possible (richard@wireassociation.org.au or 1300 942 500).

AS/NZS 4944:2009 Temporary Edge Protection

Parts 1, 2 & 3 of this Standard commenced revision in late November 2021 and entered the public comment phase on 30th March 2023 which met the technical committee's planned timeline.

Considering that the committee were never able to meet face to face, meeting this timeline was a significant achievement.

The public comment phase completed on 1st June, and a total number of seven comments were received. The committee met during early June to resolve the public comments following which the draft documents went back to the editing team at Standards Australia. The draft has now completed its final ballot by the committee and should be published before the end of 2023.

The AWIA is represented on this committee by Director/Secretary Richard Newbigin and if members have any concerns or input related to this Standard, please contact Richard directly (richard@wireassociation.org.au or 1300 942 500).

AS 4672.1 :2007 Steel prestressing materials, Part 1: General requirements

AS 4672.2 :2007 Steel prestressing materials, Part 2: Testing requirements

Revision of this Standard continues with the committee's third meeting occurring via zoom in February.

The AWIA has traditionally provided a representative to the relevant technical committee for this Standard (BD -084). Standards Australia has contacted the Association to request a nominee for the committee to revise both parts referred to above.

If any members would like to nominate for this role, please contact Richard Newbigin at 1300 942 500 or richard@wireassociation.org.au and a copy of the Terms of Reference and further requirements can be provided. Interested members are encouraged to treat this invitation with some urgency.

In the interim, Richard Newbigin will represent member interests on the committee. Any members wishing to raise any matters for consideration by the committee should contact Richard directly per the above contact details.

BOOTCAMP

NEXTgen

NEXTgen LEADERS

NEXTgen Program

Standards Australia's NEXTgen Program selects emerging industry and technical experts and provides them with an exciting opportunity to become involved in the national and international standardisation processes supporting Australian industry and government.

Through the program, participants will access training and gain direct exposure to the standards development process and context. Participants will create a valuable network of key Australian stakeholders and peers across industry sectors.

The goal of the program is to support the future of standards development through investing in the next generation of standards leaders and experts. Any members wishing to participate in this program should contact Richard Newbigin at richard@wireassociation.org.au.

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Since our launch in 2019 there has been a lot of ‘industry noise’ about our approach.

We operate a sustainable and very competitive ‘online manufacturing’ business model that connects customers to a fully automated fulfillment system.

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RETIREMENTS

MARK SCHMAKEIT, INFRABUILD

AWIA Gold sponsor InfraBuild Australia, announced the retirement of Director of Sales, Mark Schmakeit at the end of June. Mark has played an important role for InfraBuild, the industry and our Association, so it is with respect and gratitude that we reflect on Mark’s time in the industry.

Mark’s career in the industry started in 1979 as a Metallurgical Trainee at BHP’s Newcastle steelworks. He worked in production and quality assurance roles in Blast Furnace, Steelmaking and Rolling mills.

In the following years he had various roles including - BHP Customer Technical Service Metallurgist – Newcastle; Automotive Steel Sales – Victoria; Product Development Manager, BHP, Rod & Bar – Newcastle; and Sales and Marketing Manager, Martin Bright Steels – Melbourne.

In 2003 Mark accepted the role of Market Manager at OneSteel Wire responsible for Sales and Marketing of industrial wires. This is the role that first put him in contact with the fantastic people involved in the Australian wire industry and the AWIA.

Asked what he plans to do after retirement, Mark commented “after a 43-year career with the one company, I plan to do a lot of fishing and caravanning.”

Mark’s contribution to the successful operation of the AWIA cannot be underestimated. He has provided the Association with much sage advice and practical support and the AWIA is extremely grateful for all that Mark has contributed over such a long period of time. We wish him well in his retirement pursuits and hope that, even in retirement, he will continue to play a role in the future of the wire industry.



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SOUTH EAST ASIA REPORT



QUARTERLY REPORT – JUNE 2023

The last few months have seen sharp falls in all manufacturing in most of South East Asia. Singapore registered a 6.90% fall in manufacturing output in April - the 7th straight fall! Malaysia's economy is also struggling with a sharply falling Ringgit. While Thailand's election was peaceful, the resulting reforming Government is still not sure of gaining power due to 250 Military appointed senators who may still foil their plans. The result is once again economic decline and a weakening currency. Demand is falling in the Philippines also and almost all steel products now are coming from China. Only Indonesia, with heavily protected borders, seems to be doing well.

There are a few rays of hope however. The huge Sun Cables project to send electricity from solar fields in Australia to places like Singapore looks likely to be back on track. Also, tourism is making a comeback and hopefully this will lead to more infrastructural investments, region-wide, and eventually more wire demand.

Overall though, we need interest rates and inflation to stop rising and then come down - only then will we return to growth.

Article courtesy of Andrew Marshall, AM Wire

PLC FENCING SPONSOR MURRAY BRIDGE RACES

On the 29th May, races were held at Murray Bridge with Association member PLC Fencing providing sponsorship for the event.

It was a fantastic event for all involved and a tribute to the country hospitality that was shown on the day. PLC Fencing's sponsorship is a great example of how members can get involved with their local community and interact with fun and games. It was PLC's Patric Levi whose idea it was to have a fishing rod event where you pull your fluffy horse over the finish line. In our opinion it was the best race of the day as you never lose a cent!



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TECHNICAL NEWS

GALVANISERS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

Design of the ground/steel interface for steel posts

Design of the ground/steel interface is critical as ponding of moisture can significantly accelerate the corrosion of the coating and the steel. This effect is known as ring barking or collar corrosion and is common where water or moisture can pond at the base and in areas where water can seep into gaps around concrete, paved, or tiled joints or the steel post and soil. The ground/steel interface is an example of a micro-environment.

Numerous steps can be taken to help a galvanized steel member embedded in concrete and soil reach the desired service life. Some or all the following measures may be required depending on the corrosivity of atmospheric environment and potential issues identified during the design process. If water can pool at the interface between the galvanized steel and concrete or soil, a localised corrosion cell forms which results in higher-than-expected corrosion rates. Ponding can be minimised by building up concrete or soil around the interface to promote a natural water run-off, and by preventing water from running down the member to the interface.

Additional barrier protection

Batch HDG structural steel members are embedded in concrete footings to extend life and provide a higher tolerance to the overturning moment. For this design to be effective the concrete/steel/air interfaces must be designed and built correctly. This includes extending the concrete below the bottom of the pier, according to the Engineers specification, ensuring the concrete extends above the natural ground level and slopes away from the steel by at least 10° to prevent ponding, and providing additional barrier protection when the exposed atmospheric corrosivity category is C3 or above. This method is especially useful when long-term corrosion protection is required in a corrosive atmosphere and for posts, piers or stumps which are at the perimeter of a sub-floor.

There are several options for protecting the galvanized steel with an additional barrier at the galvanized steel and concrete or soil interface. The normal methods are by using a suitably thick paint or tape wrapping, such as Denso "Ultraseal" cold applied bituminous tape (Denso) (Figure 14). Tapes and paint allow the concrete base to end at or below the interface to the atmosphere, but it will be necessary to consider the corrosivity of the soil in these designs. The barriers are also more susceptible to accidental damage in use. For this application, while probably more expensive than a paint coating, the Denso Ultraseal is easier to apply in the field than other tapes, faster to apply than paint coatings with little to no curing time and has the additional benefit of being able to be selectively overcoated where required.



Figure 14 Denso Ultraseal tape wrapped around the base of a newly embedded post.



Figure 15 A galvanized post without additional protection at the steel and concrete interface showing accelerated corrosion which has reduced the overall durability of the structure. The galvanized coating above the ground, remains in excellent condition.

The best solution will vary depending on the exposure environment, aesthetic requirements, and availability of materials. If the micro-environment is medium (C3) or higher, including an aggressive internal location, the GAA recommend embedding the steel in concrete and:

1. Apply to at least 100mm above the finished height of the concrete or soil and at least 250mm below the concrete:
 - a. a non-conductive abrasion resistant high build epoxy paint layer at approximately 350µm dry film thickness (DFT) without zinc or aluminium pigment (AS/NZS 3750.14 (Standards Australia and Standards New Zealand, 1997 (R 2013))), or
 - b. Denso Ultraseal tape wrapped around the structural steel section.
2. Slope the concrete surface away from the steelwork to facilitate drainage of water away from the steel to concrete interface.
3. Once the concrete has cured apply an elastomeric sealant around the interface of the concrete to seal any existing shrinkage cracks.

Concrete, bricks, and mortar are susceptible to corrosion in acid sulfate soils and will not provide significant protection in these circumstances unless the concrete is designed for these soils. The best solution is to modify the fill and/or increase the cover if concrete use is required (see also GAA Advisory Note AN 42 (Galvanizers Association of Australia, 2021)). If the concrete footing finishes below the finished ground level, then the protection of the galvanized steel to soil interface with a barrier coating is always recommended to increase the durability of the steel structure.

Article courtesy of Galvanizer's Association of Australia (GAA)

Advisory Note 49

Marsh Alliance commences move to electric vehicles



Marsh Alliance has taken its first step in electrifying their fleet of business vehicles with the arrival of its first two Tesla Model 3s.

As an Australian metal products manufacturer, Marsh takes its carbon footprint reduction obligations seriously and after recently upgrading its rooftop solar farm to a 350kW system, the 70 year old business is implementing further green energy initiatives.

"The cost of our electricity consumption has risen by over 40% in the past two years" said Marsh CEO Adam Forrester. "We expanded our rooftop solar farm to help offset these cost increases, further reduce our carbon emissions and ultimately sustain competitive prices for our customers."

There is now a natural evolution to convert its fleet of dual cab diesel utes to lower carbon emitting electric vehicles (EVs), which also offer the business lower life of asset operating costs in running these vehicles. Marsh has also installed two fast charging stations at its Carole Park factory, powered by their green energy solar farm.

Forrester is a passionate technophile and is keen to encourage other businesses to consider the benefits of running EVs. "Over their expected asset life, EVs don't just present a greener option, with attractive government incentives, they offer lower operating costs - between 10-50% over standard internal combustion engine vehicles - depending on local government incentives."

Marsh plans to replace the rest of its fleet of utes with EVs over the next two years.

See the helpful links below if you are considering your switch to EVs:

- <https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/renewable-energy/zero-emission-vehicles>
- <https://www.energy.nsw.gov.au/business-and-industry/programs-grants-and-schemes/electric-vehicles/electric-vehicle-fleets>
- <https://www.qld.gov.au/transport/projects/electricvehicles/zero-emission-strategy>
- https://afdc.energy.gov/vehicles/electric_fleets.html

The Next Generation

of Australian
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Vater Hardware has always innovated the Fence & Gate Industry. As we look towards a second manufacturing shift at our Adelaide Headquarters to match our dynamic growth we are investing in the Next Generation. If you have ever sought a Tool Maker with an “old school” skill set under the age of 50, you will understand the skills shortage we face. Vater Hardware is hiring apprentices for the Toolroom & Factory as we expand our Wingfield operations with our recent land acquisitions. The investment in the younger generation of Australians will keep valuable skills in Australia and Australian Manufacturing alive.

THE FEMININE LINK

Meet Samantha Swain, Protective Fencing

The brainchild of AWIA platinum sponsor Vater Hardware Australia, The Feminine Link is a new feature of The Link newsletter showcasing the talented and diverse skills of the female members of our industry, as well as a way to get to know the personal sides of our colleagues and friends.

In this edition we get to know Samantha Swain, Director at Protective Fencing.

Samantha Swain, a prominent figure in the wire manufacturing and construction industries, is Director of Protective Fencing, a well-established manufacturing business. With a family history deeply rooted in the wire industry, Swain is the fourth generation to make her mark in this sector, alongside her brother James Gibbens.

Protective Fencing, a family-owned security fencing manufacturer founded by Craig Gibbens, has been actively engaged in manufacturing operations within Australia since 1975. Renowned for their unwavering commitment to using the highest quality raw materials sourced locally, as well as employing state-of-the-art machinery, the company has solidified its position as a leader in the security product manufacturing sectors. Over the years, Protective Fencing has achieved remarkable growth, thanks to their customer-centric initiatives and continuous product innovations. They consistently adapt their production and stocking processes to align with market demands, ensuring the availability of top-notch products at competitive prices.



Samantha & James

Samantha takes immense pride in the accomplishments of Protective Fencing and the exceptional team behind it. Recognising the diverse talents and abilities of their workforce, the company has cultivated a work environment where every team member feels valued, respected, and empowered. This inclusive approach fosters an atmosphere of collaboration, where unique perspectives contribute to the company's overall success.

Swain holds a deep appreciation for her family's legacy in the wire industry. Her great grandfather, Mathew George Gibbens, played a pivotal role as a founding member of the Australian Wire Industry Association (AWIA). Reflecting on the challeng-

es faced by the association during its early days, Swain can only imagine the difficulties of organising meetings through handwritten letters or via dial-up telephones. Nevertheless, she firmly believes that the value and benefits of such associations remain as crucial today as they were in the past. Building strong relationships with suppliers, customers, and even competitors is vital in navigating the challenges that the industry presents.

Samantha prioritises her involvement in industry organisations such as AWIA, ASI and Australian Standards which demonstrates her commitment to driving change at a broader level. By actively engaging with these organisations, Swain helps shape industry standards and practices, ensuring they are inclusive, progressive, and adaptable to a rapidly changing world.

NICKNAME: Sam, Sammie, Gibbo

SPORT: Snow skiing, bushwalking and group fitness classes we do with our staff at Protective

PETS: Bella, a 17-year-old long hair chihuahua

FAVOURITE COLOUR: White, pink

FAVOURITE FOOD: Mexican (I would love to go to Mexico one day)

FAVOURITE DRINK: Soda water, champagne

FAVOURITE TV SERIES: The Office

WISHLIST: My children grow to embody kindness, courage, and unwavering bravery in all their pursuits

MANTRA TO LIVE BY: Richard Branson once said "Spend the time to find someone better than you, or as good as you, and give them the freedom to make mistakes. Give them the freedom to do good things for your company and let them get on with it. They're not going to do everything exactly as you do it. They'll do some things better. They'll do some things not quite as well. But that enables you to move on and challenge yourself in other areas."



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MEMBER UPDATES

SUCCESSION AT STAINLESS STEEL WIRE & MESH

All businesses need to learn how to change, and some can do this better than others. In this article we are learning how one family has changed and adapted from its beginnings in 1849 to today. The family is the Greer family who have been in the wire industry since 1849 when they arrived in Australia from Scotland. The business became Greer & Ashburner in 1870, and later Greer Wire in 1979. Today, the Greer family is still in wire, trading as Stainless Steel Wire & Mesh (SSWM) with its head office in Melbourne.

The Greer story: The Greer family have been embracing change for almost 200 years. It is a testament to the Greer family's ability to change and adapt that they are still in the wire industry today. The Greers have seen changes in every generation and these changes are now seeing the Greer women play a significant role.

The new generation: Andrew Greer encouraged his daughters Victoria (Tory) and Amanda to take an active interest in the company bearing their name. Tory and Amanda both spent endless school holidays on the floor at their manufacturing facility learning the business from the ground up.

Andrew Greer founded SSWM in 2002 with his wife Lea as the Finance Manager and together they grew SSWM from the kitchen table to the current head office.

After finishing school, both Tory and Amanda went to university and successfully broadened their experiences and started their professional careers. Tory threw herself into business school, qualified as a chef and learnt the importance of quality and service, while Amanda studied and worked in design and mastered the importance of managing businesses and customer experience.

The apprenticeship years: Both Tory and Amanda returned to Melbourne and were drawn back to the family business working in Sales and Marketing respectively. Their understanding of the family wire business from working during school holidays gave them the deep understanding of wire and mesh that the industry expects.

"Stainless Steel is such a versatile and durable product that has significant benefits over other materials, it is a good news story," Amanda said, referring to stainless steel's ability to be a key driver in the global circular economy, 100% recyclable, corrosion resistance and strength. "I love the fact that Stainless steel will outlast every other steel in whatever application there is."

Succession: After 20 years, Andrew Greer has recently stepped back from the day to day running of SSWM and has transitioned into a strategic role. Andrew appointed Tory and Amanda into General Manager roles in 2021 and then Directors in 2022 as part of the succession plan.

Tory is General Manager – Sales and Supply. Tory has worked in Sales for the last 15 years and has built excellent customer relationships and is able to help customers find the right product for their application. Her role is in operations and encompasses purchasing, warehousing and despatch, and she has recently established a warehouse in Queensland to support SSWM's customers.

Amanda is General Manager – Business Development. Amanda has worked in Marketing, Finance, Contract Management and Governance for the last 12 years. Amanda has recently rebuilt the website: sswm.com.au with improved user experience and technical information to assist customers.

Both women have children, lead busy lives and contribute to their children's schools and sporting groups.

Role Models: These two "Women of Wire" have several role models that they attribute to their success. The first has been their father Andrew a former president of the Wire Industry Association. He inspired their work ethic and taught them the importance of the customer and that service is key when it comes to customer relationships.

The second has been their mother Lea who continually demonstrates that it is possible to wear many hats, and that maintaining a work life balance is important.

The third are the many people that we listen to, follow and reached out to from industry associations and forums that demystify women in leadership roles. "We don't consider ourselves as being feminists, rather are just strong-minded women who know what we want" Tory said. "We respect Lissel Pilcher the ASSDA General Manager who has demonstrated a great example of a woman in a leadership role in the Australian steel industry."

The Future: The future has never looked brighter with a great team onboard and culture at SSWM they are excited for their future growth within Australian and globally! James their brother, who lives in the US has taken their product "Bushfire Mesh" to the US and has started a business. He has taken on a new market entry and new product launch during Covid. With grit and determination, he is showing what is possible when you put your mind to it.

Tory and Amanda have growth plans for SSWM - to make it a strong business that will last as long as their products. They are wanting to build on Andrew's Vision of 'being your preferred supplier' and develop new product lines that showcase where Stainless steel can be used.

About SSWM:

SSWM is Australia's largest stockists of Stainless-Steel Wire and Mesh and is based in Tullamarine Victoria with a warehouse in Sunnybank Hills Queensland. They have recently introduced Stainless Steel Perforated sheets and are industry leaders in Bushfire Mesh, Roof Safety Mesh and Reinforced Concrete Mesh. Even their phone number is innovative 1300 304 316 highlighting the most popular grades of Stainless Steel.



Tory (LHS), Andrew (Middle) and Amanda (RHS)



Amanda (Left) and Tory (Right)

MESHWORKS PERSONNEL UPDATE

Hamish Blackie, previous General Manager of Meshworks, finished up with the business at the end of January 2023, moving to another field - a fibreglass company called Amperlight. After Hamish left, Mario Kosta was appointed State Manager Mesh and Wire products, more or less taking over where Hamish left off.

Mario has been in the reinforcing steel business for the best part of 30 years. He joined the Meshworks group back in March 2012 under Mesh and Bar (the sister company to Meshworks).

At approximately the same time, Padman Aiyer was appointed General Manager Mesh and Bar and Meshworks in Nov 2022.

Both Padman and Mario have been appointed to oversee expansion plans over the coming years, with aims to grow the business substantially. Their ambition is for the business to be the key suppliers in NSW for mine mesh and general-purpose mesh products.

TRAINS TO ROLL ON RECYCLED TYRES USING NEXT-GENERATION AUSTRALIAN STEEL MANUFACTURING PROCESS

A novel steel manufacturing process using waste rubber feedstock has been commercialised in a collaborative project with Australian steel manufacturer Molycop, the UNSW SMaRT Centre, footwear manufacturer Crawford Boots and the Advanced Manufacturing Growth Centre (AMGC).

The process involves maximising the recovery and utilisation of waste rubber from end-of-life vehicle tyres, conveyor belts and rubber safety boots as a substitute for imported carbonaceous material used in the company's Electric Arc Furnace (EAF) in Newcastle.

The development of the new technology reduces Molycop's reliance on imported carbonaceous materials by up to 20 per cent, while removing up to 90,000 tyres from landfill and reducing the steel maker's electricity consumption, and scope one carbon emissions.

In practice, the company, alongside its partners, has developed a means to maximise the use of rubber crumb (polymer) as a source of carbon and hydrogen needed in the steel-making process.

Molycop's President of Sustainability, Ian Tooze said that sustainability is core to the company's strategy and integrated into



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how Molycop does business. Displacing fossil carbon materials is a key objective in Molycop's decarbonisation pathway.

"We are investing in innovative solutions that improve the ways we reduce the consumption of virgin raw materials, recover valuable materials from waste streams, minimise waste and reduce our carbon footprint. What we have developed is yielding results and delivering outcomes for Molycop, our customers and communities in which we operate."

"This project proves that Australia can develop and, critically, commercialise new and innovative ways to address waste and emissions that also benefits steelmakers' bottom lines and the environment. Through AMGC we have bridged that commercialisation gap, developing a product, process and system that can now be offered to global EAF steelmakers."

Director of the UNSW Sustainable Materials Research and Technology (SMaRT) Centre, Professor Veena Sahajwalla said it is crucial for manufacturers and researchers to work to tackle environmental issues, while delivering commercial outcomes.

"Climate change and clean energy narratives often overlook the need for more sustainable manufacturing and waste management practices, where we start to use waste resources for future manufacturing needs. Natural resources alone will not deliver the feedstock supply for all of society's needs, so we need a far more sustainable approach, like some of the innovative recycling technologies we've developed at the UNSW SMaRT Centre."

"By working collaboratively with Molycop we have been able to prove that polymer injection works and is commercially viable. It is only through partnerships like this that we can truly achieve positive environmental outcomes at scale."

"I encourage all manufacturers to engage with your local research institution and challenge them with a business issue that needs solving. Conversely, I recommend researchers go out into the field and work with industry because there are really interesting, practical challenges to solve."

Penny Crawford, Founder of Crawford Boots, said that working alongside a large manufacturer and a researcher has broadened the company's field of view. "Being involved with this project has led to us looking at the entire life cycle of our products. From protecting the feet of workers in mines, to how our boots are used at time of disposal, we now have revised our products to make them more suitable to polymer injection technology – collaborative programs like AMGC's lift the entire manufacturing industry."

As a result of the collaborative project, Molycop and its partners have now developed an exportable product and process which can be made available to global EAF operators.

AMGC's Managing Director, Dr Jens Goennemann said commercialising great manufacturing ideas is where Australia's future prosperity lies. "Australia has an opportunity to transform from being a lucky country to a smart one through the commercialisation of great ideas that have local and global relevance. Together, Molycop, UNSW and Crawford Boots have manufactured a product that will reduce emissions and address waste in steel making, while generating more jobs and revenues for the nation – what more could you ask for?"

Molycop produces over 240,000 tonnes of steel each year, with its business producing train wheels, billet steel, steel bar and grinding media. Molycop has been collaborating since 2014 with Professor Veena Sahajwalla from University of NSW. Sahajwalla is an internationally regarded expert in recycling science, invented the award-winning Green Steel AKA Polymer Injection Technology in 2003, and has been developing it ever since.

Further details of the collaborative project are available from: <https://www.amgc.org.au/project/development-and-implementation-of-next-generation-of-polymer-injection-technology-in-steel-manufacturing/>

Article reproduced courtesy of the Advanced Manufacturing Growth Centre.

MARSH CELEBRATES 70 YEARS OF MANUFACTURING IN AUSTRALIA

Founder Thomas Marsh commenced spring making from humble beginnings in Brisbane's southern suburb of Macgregor in 1953. Since that time, Thomas Marsh & Co (now trading as Marsh Alliance) has grown to become one of Australia's most trusted names in spring and wire product manufacturing.

For the past 45 years, the directorship of Thomas' son Greg, and more recently leadership of CEO Adam Forrester, the humble beginnings in Macgregor have evolved into a large, modern production facility in Carole Park, Queensland, that proudly features a carbon reducing 350kW solar farm powering its factory. A series of business acquisitions over the last 13 years have enabled Marsh to increase weekly production capacity to over 120Ts of finished products and build significant inhouse capability in cold coiling, CNC wire forming, pressed parts and speciality coatings.

Marsh Alliance is the major supplier of garage door springs in Australia today, and thousands of other Marsh products are made for: door and security solutions, building fixtures, electrical distribution networks, automotive and agricultural components, heavy transport and infrastructure, medical aids, defence applications... the list goes on!

For further enquires on how Marsh can help industry members in every home or business, please contact +61 7 3271 3500 or visit marshalliance.com.au

AWIA CONFERENCE MAY 2023

Our last two May conferences (2019 & 2022) have both coincided with a Federal Government election. This year's event was held on Federal budget day, so it seems we are almost destined to have a political flavour at our mid-year conference.

Melbourne was the location for this year's conference and fortunately sunny conditions held sway for the lunch and speaker sessions. Delegates enjoyed the topical speaker presentations backdropped by the Melbourne skyline with HMAS Castlemaine and the many yachts moored in Hobsons Bay in the foreground.

Social activities started with dinner at the Hophaus Restaurant at Southbank for those members coming in from interstate the night before the conference.

A coach had been arranged to ferry delegates to InfraBuild Steel Manufacturing in Laverton North for a tour of its electric arc furnace (EAF) facility. This plant is one of the last heavy engineering facilities left in Melbourne and converts scrap steel into steel billets. The billets are further processed on site into wire rod and bar. As the name implies, electricity is a key input, and the EAF uses as much energy required to power a town of about 100,000 people for 24 hours with each melt cycle.

Delegates were given a comprehensive tour including the highly automated control centres for the different processing areas. On a typically cold Melbourne day in May, this was a warm but

noisy plant to visit. Delegates were glad that the tour had not been arranged during the summer.

Following the tour, delegates were bussed to Williamstown, Melbourne's first port and the site for several yacht clubs and marinas, for lunch followed by our speaker presentations.

Mei Leong from member company, InfraBuild, was our first speaker, and she provided her usual comprehensive and expert analysis of the economies of Australia, the USA and China and their impact on the steel and wire industries both locally and overseas. Delegates were also addressed by Olivia Perry from AWIA Partner firm, FCB Group, who updated members on the Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Secure Jobs, Better Pay) Bill, Sex Discrimination Legislation and Practical Obligations & Duties for employers.

Our final speaker was Hilbert Klaster, Victorian Sales manager for our newest Partner firm, CreditorWatch. Hilbert updated delegates on recent business risk data and changes, with a focus on the construction industry, while also advising delegates on how to spot a customer heading towards administration and how to employ best practices in accounts receivables departments.

Following the conference sessions, delegates jumped on our private ferry for the journey across Hobsons Bay and up the Yarra River back to the Melbourne CBD for our closing dinner and some more networking. It was good to see everyone enjoy themselves so much, and nice to have Brian Mullarvey back to catch up with many of his old friends from the fencing industry.

Sincere thanks to our speakers, Mei, Olivia and Hilbert who contributed so much to the success of the day, and our sponsors, of course, for their support of the conference. Special thanks to Mark Schmakeit, Rohan Russell and Shayne Burns and the rest of the InfraBuild team for allowing us access to the EAF facility and giving us better insight about the steel manufacturing process.

The conference was timed to coincide with Australian Manufacturing Week, and delegates who stayed on to visit AMW were able to catch up with member companies, Marsh Alliance and Protube Engineering, which were exhibiting there. Also on show was a LVD Phoenix FL laser cutting machine which was making a stopover at the trade show before heading out to AWIA life member, Bob Black's company, National Industries Pty Ltd, in Campbellfield.

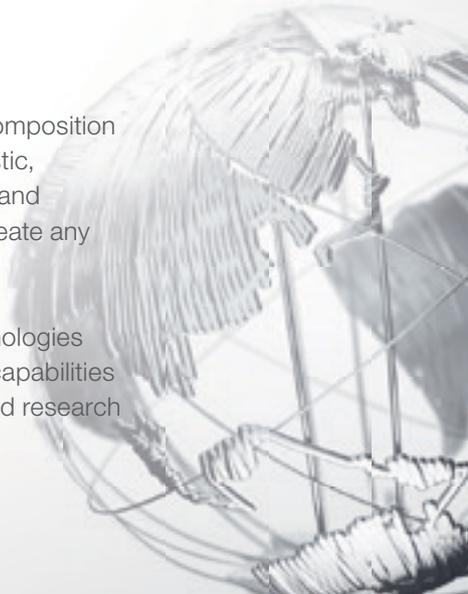


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AUSTRALIAN ECONOMIC UPDATE

Growth in the Australian economy is forecast to remain subdued through 2023 as higher interest rates, the higher cost of living and earlier declines in household wealth continue to weigh on growth. The Australian economy will also be dependent on the global economic outlook.

- National GDP in December 2022 rose by 0.5% quarter to quarter in seasonally adjusted terms. This growth is driven by strong demand from overseas for coal and mineral ores and in transport travel as consumers catch up on travel.
- The Australian Government released their 2023-24 Budget on 9 May 2023. Some of the key points which affect the steel industry are as follows:
 - Residential – Net overseas migration is forecast to increase, whereas housing supply is on the decline. Housing supply woes will get worse before they get better. The budget policies announced for the build-to-rent developments will take time to impact the delivery of these projects.
 - Non-Residential – More than \$3 billion funding is included for the 2032 Brisbane Olympic infrastructure and \$305 million in funding for stadia in Tasmania.
 - Engineering – the Government has emphasised that they will commit to the completion of projects that have already commenced. The infrastructure pipeline is undergoing a review and more clarity will be known in 3 months' time. Expect delays to the projects that have not commenced.
 - Carbon emission reduction – \$4.5 billion funding is allocated to climate-related spending measures for the period from FY23 to FY30. Almost \$4 billion to reduce emissions in the energy system and broader economy, which includes \$2 billion allocated for hydrogen projects.
- The unemployment rate rose to 3.67% with employment dropping by 4,300. Indeed, the job ad Index has continued to decline but it is still 52.5% higher than pre-pandemic levels. This

leading indicator signals excess labour demand is persisting.

- Consumer sentiment has fallen back to March 2023 levels, which recorded the lowest monthly level since the COVID outbreak in 2020 and since the deep recession of the early 1990s.
- Business confidence is at zero, with the weakest area being QLD, whilst SA and NSW are in negative territory. Business conditions eased to +14 but still above average levels. Trading conditions and profitability eased but employment steady.
- Rural export values have declined in the December 2022 and March 2023 quarters but levels remain elevated following favourable weather conditions and tight global supply.
- The RBA forecasts GDP to increase by 1.5% for FY24 (previous forecast was also 1.5%).

Future expectations for Australia:

- GDP growth in 2023 is expected to be low as household consumption will remain sluggish as a result of high interest rates and inflation, which weigh on real disposable income.
- The unemployment rate is expected to increase as economic growth slows but the rate is expected to remain below pre-pandemic levels.
- A large pipeline of residential and non-residential construction projects is expected to support activity over 2023.
- Dwelling investment is expected to decline once the backlog of construction is worked through. High construction costs, construction delays and housing price declines over 2022 have reduced the incentive to build new dwellings.
- The pipeline of public engineering work is anticipated to support a high level of public capital expenditures for several years. The rollout in the near term, will continue to be affected by capacity constraints in the construction sector.



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HR UPDATE - IS YOUR BUSINESS READY FOR FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS?

The recent passing of the Secure Jobs, Better Pay Bill amended the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) ('FW Act') broadening employees' ability to request flexible working arrangements from their employers. These changes came into place on 6 June 2023, and it is crucial that businesses of all shapes and sizes understand them inside out.

Who can make a request for a flexible working arrangement?

Employees will not be entitled to make a request for a flexible working arrangement until they have completed twelve months of continuous service, excluding periods of unpaid leave. For casual employees, the twelve months' employment must be on a regular and systematic basis, with a reasonable expectation of this continuing.

The circumstances in which an employee may request a flexible working arrangement are limited to where they:

- have responsibility for the care of a child who is school age or younger;
- are pregnant;
- are a carer;
- have a disability;
- are 55 or older;
- are experiencing violence from a member of their family; or
- provide care or support to a member of their immediate family or household who is experiencing family or domestic violence.

How do I respond to a request?

If you receive a request for a flexible working arrangement, you must provide a response to your employee within 21 days of receipt of the request. The response must state whether the employer has granted or refused the employee's request.

An employer can only refuse a request if it has:

- discussed the request with the employee; and
- made a genuine effort to find alternative arrangements to accommodate the employee's circumstances; and
- considered the consequences of refusal on the employee; and
- the refusal is on reasonable business grounds.

If an employer is unable to accept an employer's flexible working request, it is a requirement that an employer then explore with the employee other alternative arrangements which may meet their needs in relation to their flexible working request. For example, if you could offer reduced hours but in a different role or at another

location, you are required to discuss this alternative with the employee and include the full details of this in the response.

If the employer refuses the employee's request, the written response must:

- include details of the refusal; and
- set out the particular business ground(s) for refusing the request; and
- explain how the business ground(s) apply to the request; and
- either set out alternative changes the employer is willing to make which would accommodate the employee's circumstances, or state that there are no such changes.

Reasonable business grounds

As mentioned above, an employer is only able to refuse an employee's flexible working request on reasonable business grounds. Reasonable business grounds include:

- the requested working arrangements would be too costly for the employer to implement;
- there is no capacity to change the working arrangements of other employees to accommodate the request;
- it would be impractical to change the working arrangements of other employees, or recruit new employees, to accommodate the request;
- the requested working arrangements would be likely to result in a significant loss in efficiency or productivity; or
- the requested working arrangements would be likely to have a significant negative impact on customer service.

If an employer does refuse an employee's flexible working request for any of the above-mentioned reasonable business grounds, it is not enough that the letter simply states the relevant ground for refusal. You must also detail the reason why you are relying on the business ground. For example, if you are unable to accept an employee's flexible working request because the new working arrangement requested would be too costly for you, you need to explain why this would be the case. If the employee making the request wants to finish two hours earlier each day, and you need to fill those two hours, it would be too costly if the industrial instrument governing the employment provides that employees are required to work a minimum of three hours per shift. If you can simply hire another employee to cover the days your employee has requested not to work, this will not create an additional cost to your business. However, if it is the case that you would be unable to hire an employee purely to cover three hours on a Friday (if it is the case your employee has requested to work half days on Friday), it may be impractical to hire the new employee. These precise reasons need to be explored in the letter you provide your employee.

Article courtesy of FCB Group - 02 9922 5188 or email info@fcbgroup.com.au



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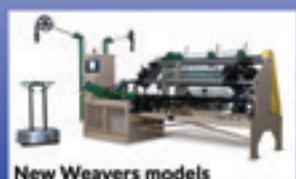
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SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH IN MANUFACTURING

A mentally healthy workplace provides many benefits to your business. By creating a great place to work, you can boost worker satisfaction, productivity and your bottom line. Businesses that do not implement actions to ensure staff are mentally safe see lower productivity, as well as increases in unplanned leave, staff turnover and workers compensation claims.

Psychological hazards are a significant issue across the manufacturing sector. This is due to the nature of the work, which requires workers to perform repetitive and monotonous tasks, often in dangerous physical environments, while adhering to tight processes and adapting to frequent organisational change.

Research shows:

- 44.2% of Australian manufacturing workers experienced a mental health condition in 2021.
- Mental health claims in the NSW manufacturing sector have been consistently high in recent years.
- Only a quarter of manufacturing businesses in NSW took effective action to create a mentally healthy workplace in 2022.

How to identify and manage common mental health risks

There are risk factors that are common across the manufacturing sector that can increase the risk of workers developing mental ill-health.

- high work demands, with low control
- low recognition and reward
- poor change management
- harmful workplace behaviours like bullying and discrimination.

Take action to support mental health in your workplace and reap the rewards of worker satisfaction, better productivity and a boost to your bottom line.

To find out more, the NSW Government has some useful resources you can share at your workplace. Visit the www.nsw.gov.au website and search "Mental Health at Work"



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FAIR WORK OMBUDSMAN - PAID FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEAVE

From 1 February 2023, employees of non-small business employers (employers with 15 or more employees on 1 February 2023) can access 10 days of paid family domestic violence leave. This includes part-time and casual employees.

Employees employed by small business employers (employers with less than 15 employees on 1 February 2023) can access paid leave from 1 August 2023. Until then, they can continue to take unpaid family and domestic violence leave.

What is considered family or domestic violence?

Family and domestic violence means violent, threatening or other abusive behaviour by certain individuals known to an employee that both:

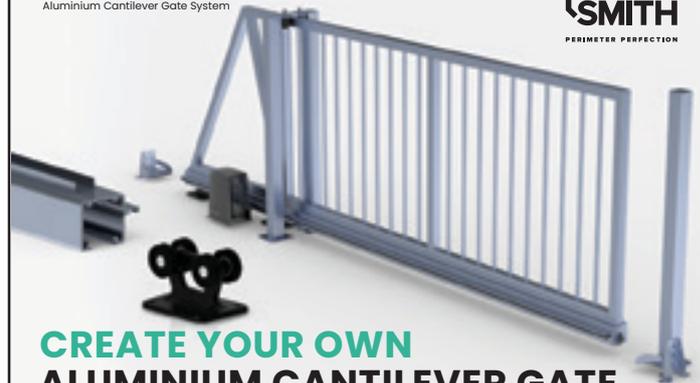
- seeks to coerce or control the employee
- causes them harm or fear.

To access unpaid family and domestic violence leave, the individual needs to be a close relative. A close relative is:

- an employee's:
 - o spouse or former spouse
 - o de facto partner or former de facto partner
 - o child
 - o parent
 - o grandparent
 - o grandchild
 - o sibling
- a person related to the employee according to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander kinship rules.

Learn more at Unpaid family and domestic violence leave by visiting www.fairwork.gov.au/leave/family-and-domestic-violence-leave

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- **Education** – Regular newsletters, free technical data and standards access.
- **Support** – Got a technical problem? Call the AWIA and we will put you in touch with the people that can help.
- **Opportunities to meet new customers** - Up to two Conference(s) each year with key business enhancement seminars and selected technical presentations, national and regional meetings with industry peers (subject to travel restrictions).
- **Promote your professionalism** – Membership entitles you to use of the AWIA and other applicable association logos for your signage and stationery.

In addition to these very tangible benefits, the new and updated AWIA website contains member contacts, products and services information plus hyperlinks to member websites.

AWIA membership also means access to our affiliated Associations including American Fencing Association (AFA), Australian Certification Authority for Reinforcing Steel Ltd (ACRS), Institute of Spring Technology (IST), Spring Manufacturers Institute (SMI) and Wire Association International (WAI). As well as membership to our other Associations as applicable - AFIA, RSMA, TFAA at no extra cost.

Above all else, AWIA membership is really about growth—growth for yourself and growth for your business.

Contact AWIA Director Richard Newbiggin for a one-on-one conversation on 1300 942 500 or email: richard@wireassociation.org.au

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Damon Earp is a Senior Business Development Manager at CreditorWatch. Specialising in the construction industry, Damon has provided many construction suppliers with insight on their customers.

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2023

2 - 4 September
wire Middle East Africa
 Egypt International Exhibition Center, Cairo
 Egypt
www.wire-mea.com

4 - 7 September
wire China 2023
 Shanghai China
www.wirechina.net

20 - 21 September
Workplace Health & Safety Show
 Sydney Showground, Sydney, NSW
www.whsshow.com.au

20 - 21 September
Modern Manufacturing Expo
 Sydney Showground, Sydney, NSW
www.modernmanufacturingexpo.com

20 - 22 September
wire Southeast Asia
 Bangkok International Trade & Exhibition
 Centre (BITEC), Bangkok Thailand
www.wire-southeastasia.com

26 - 28 September
SMI Metal Engineering eXpo 2023
 South Point Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas NV
 USA
Cancelled

27 - 30 November
**23rd World Congress on Safety & Health
 at Work**
 International Convention Centre, Sydney NSW
www.safety2023sydney.com

With the impact of the COVID-19 virus on allowable public gatherings, and the severe disruption this has caused to air and other forms of travel, please use these dates as a guide only. It is expected that some of these events may be cancelled or deferred to later dates.

1 December
**AWIA Fencing Meeting and Christmas
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www.wireassociation.org.au

2024

15 - 19 April
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 Dusseldorf Exhibition Halls
 Dusseldorf Germany
<https://mdna.com/show/wire>

2 - 4 October
CASMI SpringWorld 2024
 Donald E. Stephens Convention Center
 Rosemont IL USA
www.casmi-springworld.org



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Letters to the Editor

If you have suggestions for future articles or want to voice your opinion on important issues facing the sector, please feel free to drop the AWIA a line.
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