

## Cornerstone of the Industry

Emeritus Professor Harry Lovell ranks education and training through the Australian Institute of Packaging (AIP) as one of his proudest industry achievements, writes **Anna Game-Lopata**



Emeritus Professor Harry Lovell

When Harry Lovell first visited this country in 1970, the food industry of which packaging is an integral component was respected for its innovation, research and development. “We now import a great deal of our innovation from overseas, which I think is unfortunate,” Lovell tells Packaging Magazine.

Professor Lovell says he was astounded to learn of a range of packaging developments and products simply not available in Australia, when he attended the International Meat Science & Technology Conference in Dublin in late 2007. “We live in a global city with Australia in the suburbs,” he says.

Harry Lovell’s interest in packaging was initially sparked by Reading University’s head of food science and technology in the UK where he studied. “During the Second World War, this professor led a large research program into the shelf life of dried milks which were essential to feeding the nation at that time,” Professor Lovell recalls. “He was also responsible for implanting the need for well based industrial experience for those entering not only the teaching profession but also engaging in research. Subsequently I was fortunate to have a sound grounding in the production and technical aspects of food processing and packaging.”

As a food and packaging technologist, and a consultant to industry and government, Emeritus Professor Harry Lovell sees education and training as essential components of his current role. “I’ve been proud to pass on the experience I’ve gained and to give support and encouragement to many students through AIP education over the years,” he says.

“Many aspects of packaging are integrated into processing operations and nowhere is this more true than in the case of food. The primary package, as in the case of cans and retort pouches is also the process vessel. This requires the packaging technologist to understand the technical and scientific aspects not only of the packaging mate-

rial but also the effects of the processing conditions.”

In terms of future technological advances in the industry, Professor Lovell points to increasing attention to opening packs; currently a major gripe amongst consumers. “Clearly we will see an emphasis on environmentally friendly design, but we have to keep in mind that product protection must take precedence and must never be sacrificed,” he says. “I think materials will get thinner and simpler but obviously there are practical limits. Biopolymers show promise but still have a long way to go. Shelf life predictors which have been tried successfully overseas have great benefits to offer. We have the ability to produce talking packs and for the visually impaired and others these have much to offer.”

Professor Lovell says his dream for

**“I want to see packaging technologists on the boards of companies and decent career pathways and opportunities.”**

the Australian Packaging industry is for some sectors to take the need for training and education more seriously. “There’s a perception that you need simply to call someone a packaging technologist, give them a white coat and that’s it,” he says. “I have the greatest sympathy, for example, for buyers who purchase packaging materials but have to ‘pick up’ their knowledge of the properties of the materials without any formal independent training. I want to see packaging technologists on the boards of companies and decent career pathways and opportunities. Outside of financial pathways we have a cultural cringe about developing technical people in some industries.”

According to Professor Lovell, there have been at least nine attempts to introduce degree level programs in packaging in Australia since 1981. “All of these have faltered and been unsuccessful, except for the Australian Institute of Packaging (AIP) Diploma in

Packaging Technology and the Certificate in Packaging which are both world-renowned and Internationally Accredited,” he says. “Further, successful Diploma students can go on to internationally recognised Masters degrees in packaging with credit.”

Professor Lovell says AIP education has gone from strength to strength over the years and has a lot more to offer in the future. “It is up to industry to access these programs,” Lovell maintains. “The AIP has been successfully running these courses for the industry for over thirty years. They are available to anyone in the industry and Corporate Programs can also be tailored for larger companies. We deliver our programs direct to the student regardless of location and each one gets individual treatment with a personal tutor.”

Lovell believes there’s an important industry related reason other courses have been unsuccessful. “That is the abject failure, with the exception of a few large major companies, to offer a career path in the packaging industry,” he says. “Funding is an equally important issue. Some companies simply regard it as the student’s responsibility and then wonder why people leave after they complete the course.”

Accompanying these factors is the lack of awareness in many companies about the positive contribution packaging technologists can make to a company’s growth and profitability. “We have the ability to deliver training and education at all levels and in particular in partnership with the printing and machinery sectors,” Professor Lovell maintains. “Together we could maximise our efforts. The cornerstone is that we can bring together people with current practical experience and sound academic backgrounds, which is what the packaging industry requires.”



Successful AIP student Sarah Squire

## In a holistic sense

Amcor Fibre Packaging National Development Manager George Ganzenmuller FAIP is the 6th person to receive the AIP's Founders Award in its 45 year history, writes **Anna Game-Lopata**

George Ganzenmuller's interest in packaging broke a long family tradition. "I studied Food Technology to become a brewer like my father and five previous generations," he recalls. "However after an early laboratory role at the Carlton and United Brewery in Brisbane (yes that included some taste testing), and a technical role at Leigh Mardon Flexibles in Sydney which exposed me to a variety of food packaging technologies, my family tradition was not to be."

It soon became evident to Ganzenmuller that packaging technology is a central element in the success of nearly all consumer goods, either through protection or merchandising. "At that time in the mid 1980's, long life products in aseptic packaging were at the cutting edge of technology," he says. "I became intrigued how the different polymers affected the qualities of the foods and also the properties of the packs. I therefore commenced the Diploma in Packaging Technology via the AIP to further my studies in the subject and it turned out to be quite beneficial."

Ganzenmuller says one of the proud-

est moments in his career was the eve of the first large conference he organised for the AIP in 2000, which coincided with the completion of his first stint as National President. "Our membership peaked at 500 that year," he says. "Right in the middle of the conference packaging technologists became highly respected following a pharmaceutical tampering scare which would rely on an appropriate packaging solution."

"Other events that fill me with pride for my profession include my first approved patent for a packaging innovation and my first win at the Australian Packaging Awards in 2003 for a

submersible asparagus pack made from a new material structure now known as Hydro Armour™ that had its inspiration from all things trawler cartons for the seafood industry and the aseptic packaging science I dabbled in many years before."

Ganzenmuller's current role within Amcor has an innovation focus which requires a good understanding of market and technological opportunities, and a team focus. "Our work involves dealing with a variety of divisions outside Amcor Fibre such as Flexibles and Cartons as we aim to transition different solutions and fulfil customer needs," he explains. "Quite a few of the patents I've initiated involve components produced in other divisions that extend the traditional boundaries of the corrugated packaging arena. The latest example of such a product is Photo Surefresh® which incorporates a reverse print high temperature film/paper laminate as a premium packaging liner."

George Ganzenmuller maintains that in a holistic sense, packaging companies will always need an element of ver-

tical integration to deliver cost effectiveness as well as responsiveness to constant change. "It's good to see Amcor investing in a next generation paper mill in Botany for example," he says. "From a perspective of servicing the agribusiness sector; these industries will remain heavily dependent on water, fuel and technology. As water becomes increasingly scarce, it will drive agriculture away from traditional growing areas close to cities into remote areas to the north. As fuel costs rise, the role of packaging in enabling cost effective delivery and waste minimisation will become greater. Industrial goods will continue to face pres-



George Ganzenmuller FAIP says the need for convenience will drive innovation in the form of retail ready packaging.

ures from overseas sources but those goods that are produced locally will require higher value added packaging to assist in protection and merchandising."

"Sustainability means different things to different people," Ganzenmuller also observes, "but no doubt it will emerge as one of the big drivers of advancement over the coming decade. I hope that as sustainability models improve; full combined product and packaging assessments are used to shape packaging developments."

In terms of specific areas of development, Ganzenmuller points to new materials that are lighter and stronger and if appropriate utilise recycled material, new pack designs which in conjunction with better materials minimise damage levels to increasingly valuable products and minimise transport costs that will grow in proportion to fuel costs.

"The need for convenience will drive innovation in the form of retail ready packaging," he says, "which will need to offer true value in the form of better merchandising and labour savings that actually offset any increased supply chain costs to be viable in the long term."

While Amcor is a multi-national company with many areas of opportu-

nity, Ganzenmuller says his Fibre Division is focussed on delivering valued, timely and cost effective fibre based packaging solutions with specific target areas of opportunities. "The replacement of less environmentally friendly packaging formats such as EPS foam, improved retail packaging formats and the facilitation of export markets are examples," he explains.

George Ganzenmuller's hope for the packaging industry as it matures is that companies truly respect packaging technologists and their ability to facilitate true value to new products as well as maintain a balanced approach to innovation and competitiveness. "Unfortunately, many companies involved with packaging, including the major retailers, fill packaging positions with part time or associated professions thereby limiting the development and nurturing of specialists within our industry," he says. "This limits potential packaging development outcomes."

"At a senior management level; I hope to see opportunities given to appropriate technical managers; not just those with a commercial or operational background. The infusion of technical understanding would help drive a customer-focussed organisation and balance the often conflicting priorities between sales and operations."

## Robust, integrated network

Australian Institute of Packaging (AIP) president Craig Wellman believes packaging translates technology into brand investments - a creative endeavour with solid technical roots. By **Anna Game-Lopata**.

Craig Wellman admits to being a frustrated marketer who likes engineering, but was formally educated in business. His interest in packaging began with his family business, which covers rigid packaging and historically, food retailing. "My grandfather used to sell food and now we help package it," Wellman tells *Packaging Magazine*. "I've always maintained a strong interest in how things work on shelf and for the consumer. Packaging embraces high end materials and process technologies across various disciplines along with marketing and branding, consumer trends, health and wellbeing, environment, logistics and more...there's more to a bottle, cap or pouch than meets the eye."

Wellman describes his recent appointment as National President of the AIP as his proudest industry achievement, providing the opportunity to work with a vast array of very talented people.

**"The AIP is uniquely placed to deliver educational services over the long term which we hope will open the pathway from school leaver through to tertiary qualifications"**

In this new role, Wellman sees his primary responsibility as supporting the AIP leadership team in guiding the organisation on behalf of its members. "Our main objective is fostering a greater knowledge and application of packaging technology through education and training," he says.

"This involves building existing and new relationships with industry, government and educational bodies here and abroad to develop (we hope) the education pathways from school leaver through to doctorate level over the long term. We also aim to maintain our international recognition as is currently the case for existing AIP Diploma and Certificate programs."

"Working with like-minded associations including the PCA, APMA, WPO

and others remains key to achieving our goals in a holistic way," Wellman adds. "Underpinning this will be a consolidation of the AIP's operational infrastructure to 'future proof' packaging education for the industry over years to come."

According to Wellman, the most challenging aspect of his role is achieving recognition for packaging technologists and their careers within multinational organisations as a distinct line of professional endeavour as opposed to something you just fall into. "Another challenge is to present packaging technology as a youthful profession to potential talent in the context of an ageing industry," he says. "This is vital to ensuring brand owners have sufficient feedstock of technologists - especially given the increased pack design 'churn' and technology shifts driven by the new green economy."

In terms of the Australian industry, Wellman sees many factors affecting

the domestic environment. These include globalisation of pack designs, strong growth in Asian economies and the resulting placement of MNC manufacturing hubs in Asia, sustainability and green pack design shifts to name but a few.

"While industry is consolidating to respond with global muscle, Australia's packaging industry is 60-70 per cent predicated towards food and beverage production where we are a net exporter. I think this provides a basis for a continued and sustained future," he maintains. "Australia also presents as an ideal test market for MNC product development given the small scale and similar demographics to US and European markets which opens an opportunity for global product



The AIP fosters a greater knowledge and application of packaging technology .

development, often on a lower cost base."

"Further, the green economy in which Australia holds a strong position (eg; biomaterials) will create new opportunities for packaging technologists on both raw material advances and applications as many packs face re-design to reduce carbon footprints."

According to Wellman, just some of the packaging technologies of the future include green materials, specifically biopolymers and continued development of existing material science for lightweighting; retail ready pack designs including shelf ready, trolleys & dolleys; stand up pouches versus bottles for supply chain efficiencies & environmental impact reductions; automated recycling and sorting system enhancements including resin compatibilisers; increased integration of packaging production and filling. Craig Wellman's dream for the packaging industry is to see a robust and integrated network of talented people

working together to enhance the lives of every inhabitant of our plant through improved packaging sustainability, functionality, enjoyment, efficiency and economy. "In doing so, we will develop vibrant careers for tomorrow's school leavers in packaging," he says. "Packaging training in Australia is in strong demand, but with the exception of existing AIP certificate and diploma courses, remains largely unfilled."

"In the short term, new developments will involve short courses with the Australian Industry Group in a wide variety of packaging topics including a follow up to Conference with some new 'green packaging' workshops late this year and early in 2009," Wellman says. "The AIP is uniquely placed to deliver educational services over the long term which we hope will open the pathway from school leaver through to tertiary qualifications - as is enjoyed in many other countries around the world."