

IT'S A REGIONAL REVOLUTION

jennifer hullick

FUTURE ADELAIDE



Clockwise from left: Pye Group marketing manager Renee Pye; Mini Jumbuk managing director Darren Turner; Clean Seas farms and sells premium quality fish; Derby Rubber chief executive officer Michael Clayton.

With the best in local resources, it's little wonder South Australia's regional producers are making headlines around the world

MINI JUMBUK

NARACOORTE

It began with small souvenir sheep, but the hard-working staff of Mini Jumbuk have parlayed the processing of South Australia's best wool to become a leading brand among Australia's wool bedding suppliers.

The company, which began as a cottage industry in Naracoorte in 1975, has cleaved to its regional roots to become a business success and employer of choice, surviving the worst

of
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COVID-19 pandemic to come out stronger on the other side.

“We’ve stayed true to wool and we’ve stayed in Naracoorte on the Limestone Coast,” says Mini Jumbuk managing director Darren Turner. “If we had a choice of moving, we would stay here. We had manufacturing operations in Melbourne (a joint venture for 15 years) but we decided to relocate to SA when our lease ran out.”

Fifty people are employed in Naracoorte and 12 in an Adelaide-based plant at Dry Creek, all taking pride in the woollen quilts, underlays, mattress toppers, pillows and more they help manufacture for major retailers, including Myer, David Jones, Adairs and Harris Scarfe.

Turner says operating in a region has strong benefits, particularly around creating a workplace culture and sense of community.

“We give back to the community and our staff give back to the company,” he says. “A lot of the staff have been with us for 10 to 20 years, as well as new staff that come along. It’s important that you are a company of choice for people to work for.”

Operating in a town with almost zero unemployment, Mini Jumbuk has a workforce that is about 80 per cent female. It has aligned shift times with the 3.30pm school pickup and believes in consulting with customers and staffing on new products.

Looking ahead, the company is partnering with selected Limestone Coast farmers to launch a new range called the Limestone Coast Wool Range in February 2021. "We are pretty proud of the region – we take it from bale to bed," Turner says.

CLEAN SEAS

PORT LINCOLN

From bluefin tuna to yellowtail kingfish, Clean Seas is a South Australian company that has dedicated itself to the farming and sale of high-value, premium quality fish in the pristine waters of the Spencer Gulf.

It has continually challenged what the industry thought was possible, setting up fish farms in the blue waters off its base in Port Lincoln and, through its own research, closing the life cycle on tuna breeding in the first instance, from broodstock to adult fish ready for harvesting.

The work of the company, listed on the ASX in 2005, means Clean Seas has the intellectual property rights to breed and grow out tuna, kingfish, snapper and mulloway. The focus these days is kingfish, creating a farming process and premium-grade end product that has won it current Business SA Exporter of the Year status and many food awards.

COVID-19 restrictions have thrown up new challenges but an agile reaction has seen the company expanding its markets beyond Europe to North America and China, and introducing retail outlets to its previous list of high-end, Michelin-star customers.

Freezing its product has been one answer, acting chief executive Rob Gratin says. "We use liquid nitrogen and a super freezing technology we call Sensory Fresh – it's usually reserved for berries and fruit, where the texture of the product is important. It means we can send product by sea but still send it at premium quality, where someone can thaw it and eat it raw. It's a way of getting sashimi-grade kingfish to markets around the world, even though the planes aren't flying."

Clean Seas is also working to expand its regional operations further north in Spencer Gulf, the natural home of the kingfish. "We are very proud of our Spencer Gulf heritage and operations," Gratin says. "The majority of our 70 employees are employed here – we are heavily invested in the region."

It plans to open more fish farms 5km offshore from Whyalla and work with the local high school to support the school's aquaculture training program. "We are working on a solar farm at Whyalla to produce all of our electricity in a sustainable way, which will create yet more jobs on the gulf," Gratin says. "As a company we are sponsoring the formation of the

industry up there. The Spencer Gulf connection is intrinsically important – it underpins the quality of the product we are able to grow.”

PYE GROUP

MURRAY MALLEE

The Pye family has been growing premium produce for generations, building from a small one-man concern in New Zealand to become one of the largest suppliers of potatoes, carrots and onions to Australia from its regional base at Parilla.

Marketing manager Renee Pye tracks the origins of the horticulture company back to her grandfather, Allen Pye, chosen by McCain Foods to begin growing potatoes for them in Australia in 1990.

“They looked for land around Australia and they settled on the Mallee, just inside the SA border near a small town called Parilla,” Renee says. “We needed land where there was an untapped source of groundwater.”

Parilla Premium Potatoes flourished, with the next Pye generation, Mark and Fiona, introducing carrots and onions to the mix. The Pye Group later acquired washing and packing company Zerella Fresh and its facilities at Virginia.

A hands-on approach to the business has been key. “My father still lives on the farm in Parilla and loves living out there,” Renee says. “He plays a very hands-on role – he’s out checking the crops every week and understanding what’s happening.”

The company is now getting a boost with a \$35 million plant to be built at Parilla to replace rundown facilities and a lack of space for expansion at Virginia. This will result in fresher produce that has experienced less time between harvest and washing, delivering a fresher product to the consumer.

“Often in the summer the produce will travel from farm to Virginia on a 40C day taking four hours travel time, potentially decreasing the quality,” Renee says.

Virginia will not be forgotten, with plans for an expansion for the carrot storage facility and a food innovation hub creating value-added foods from vegetable waste. “At the moment it goes to very happy cows, but we want to create value,” she says. “Especially when the margins are so slim when you are growing produce.

“There’s never not an answer to a challenge. There’s always a way around it or you just need to think differently on how to do something and have a positive outlook.”

DERBY RUBBER

WINGFIELD

The products made by Derby Rubber have to stand the test of some of the most extreme conditions on Earth. Their ability to do so has made the family-owned company a world leader in designing and manufacturing ballast regulator broom elements.

"The product is a rubber broom element which they use essentially for sweeping rail track," chief executive officer Michael Clayton says. "It's the last process when they lay down fresh track or in maintaining tracks."

Derby Rubber has been making and evolving the product, which makes up about half of its production, for more than 20 years. "It's a product that's striking rocks all day, with high temperatures in Australia and really cold temperatures in the northern parts of Sweden and Russia, so it needs to be really good quality," Clayton says.

"We came up with some new designs for the product and our own rubber compound for it."

That innovation and growth have continued, with the company choosing to relocate to Wingfield, in Adelaide's north, 16 months ago to pursue its targets. "Prior to that we were 55 years in Sydney. We made a deliberate choice to move for the growth of the business," Clayton says. "Because a significant proportion of our business is in export and also related to mining in WA, we chose Adelaide to centralise."

Derby Rubber now employs 15 people, with warehousing in Sydney and the Netherlands, and is working to boost its international footprint with a range of high-performance rubber components. "We service agriculture, mining and transport," Clayton says.

"We make the door and window seals for trains and trams – we are into niche applications, where performance really matters."

Clayton is currently eyeing defence as a natural market for components that can endure the most demanding applications. The company is also releasing a new product at the next transport trade fair InnoTrans in Berlin, but the wraps are still on. In any case, Derby Rubber knows it's in the right place to create a positive future.