

Fiji Time



Swapping Tales with the Natives

After lobbying for a Fiji conference for the last fifteen years, Orla had this one on our travel plan as soon as it was announced. And ARMA did not disappoint – Leisa and Michelle put on a fantastic conference – one of the nicest rotomoulding events we have attended. The location was superb, we had a very healthy attendance from Australia, New Zealand and beyond and there was a great line-up of international speakers. We were treated to a glimpse of rotomoulding across the pacific by Prakash Chand of Rotomould Fiji who operates eight rotomoulding facilities in six different countries, all remote and all in need of water storage: just delivering large tanks to remote villages across jungle covered mountains can prove to be a challenge in itself! The latest advances at Queen’s University were ably covered by

Mark Kearns and the intrepid Dr. Mooney conquered airline mishaps, cancellations and the international date line to give a sparkling talk on the state of rotomolding in North America. Leisa gave us an update on the progress of the tank standard revisions and Harry Huang of Wenling Rising Sun gave a very entertaining talk on their engineering and design capabilities. Local material suppliers Qenos, Matrix Polymers, VPlas and Price Plastics all contributed to provide great receptions and entertainment over the course of the conference.

Beyond the event, Fiji is actually made up of no less than 333 islands, many of which are uninhabited and still evoke the classic desert island image. The islands are volcanic in origin and the locals enjoy persuading visitors that coating yourself

in volcanic mud and then taking a dip in hot springs is somehow good for your skin – Orla could not resist and dragged me knee deep into some sort of goop! The main island of Nadi is quite built up, similar to the Big Island in Hawaii, but one idyllic dot of sand and greenery was the scene of the after-conference dinner with a Captain Cook sunset cruise followed by dinner under the stars on the sand. On a remote setting like this with limited light pollution, the southern sky is ablaze – a sight rarely seen nowadays by those living in the modern world and reminiscent of a memorable visit a few years ago to Easter Island, even further out into the Pacific. The native dancers provided a fitting end to the evening – I’m glad that head-hunting is a thing of the past...

Aussie Rules

Overall the Australian rotomolding market is pretty much back to where it was pre-boom with around 55,000 tons of material consumed per year in Australia and 8-10,000 tons in New Zealand. Most of this is for the water tanks industry (mainly agricultural but with a good portion for domestic use). There has been consolidation of large tank producers (and I mean large – up to 50,000 litres!) combining operations – having multiple operations is the key to overcoming the challenge of the geography of the country (long distances). Beyond tanks, there are a few good technical molders who equally face challenges due to the relatively sparse OEM manufacturing sector. The last ten years has seen more molders trying to move into non-tank applications which means new materials, multiple layer designs and foaming are all being explored. The industry is fortunate



Cuddly but a Little Smelly (the Koala bear)

to have the only full-time dedicated rotomolding association supporting them; ARMA help lobby government to protect

the water tank market, provide training programs, industry standards and organize great conferences!

Beyond rotomolding, Australia has been quietly booming as a country for many years. They have had their ups-and-downs with water shortages in the 00s (which created the rotomolding tank boom), mining expansion as China grew followed by reversals on both fronts and then slow but steady recovery. It has an affluent air and an open, big-country feel which regularly puts cities like Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane in the top ten lists of places to live in the world. We have been in all three recently and it would be tough to choose: Sydney has a great water front area and the opera house; Brisbane has a great riverfront area and a smaller city feel; Melbourne has the culture and an amazing selection of restaurants. Maybe we'll have to go back for a few months to check again! Day 9677. **R**

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