



## A word from our new President

Bob Gutsell  
Pact Group

It's an honour and a privilege to accept the position. Thank you for this opportunity and the exciting challenges it will bring. There are many challenges, but the one that really excites me is the prospect of taking control of our own story.

We're in a situation right now, where the majority of our industry are aged 40-65. Which means that over the next 25 years, thousands of years of experience will leave our industry. The first part of our story is that this industry is still very much the land of opportunity.

When I started my apprenticeship as a Plastics Engineer, 3 weeks after my 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, I had no idea that I'd be doing the role I have now or standing before you today as president of this fine organisation. For me a turning point occurred a year after I started my apprenticeship. You see I had always wanted to be a tool maker, and a year after starting my apprenticeship I was presented an opportunity to change my apprenticeship to being a tool maker. Our personnel manager at the time Rod Kilgour, told me the job was there if I wanted it, but also encouraged me that I'd have broader range of future opportunities if I stayed as Plastics Engineer. I took his advice and here I am.

I used to attend Plastics Institute events, back in the days when we were a drinking organisation with a plastics problem, in Auckland with others from the Hamilton site and looked upon the executive and the senior industry leaders of the time in awe. And yet here we are.

The immortal quote from the 1967 film the graduate "... there's a great future in plastics. Think about it, Will you think about it?"

I suspect all of you have stories similar to mine to some degree. It's my firm belief that the New Zealand plastics industry is a land of opportunity where one can start at whatever level they are at, work their way to a better future that they like us, never dreamed of. We need NZ to know that.

The second part of taking control of our own story is reminding ourselves that we are greener than we think. Our Industry is already almost entirely electric, we recirculate any water we use, and very few of our plants have chimneys, our emissions are already comparatively low.

Let's for a moment consider Plastic as a renewable resource. Once it comes out of the ground as Oil and is converted to plastic there is no reason, let alone excuse, for plastic to be lost into landfill, our waterways, and oceans. We are making huge inroads into kerbside collection of recyclable plastic from one end of the Country to the other. We just have to be able to re-use it, and we are, we're now reprocessing and repurposing plastic into all manner of things and every day and every week passes by we are recycling even more. We're now recycling PET milk bottles into meat trays, HDPE milk bottles into Janitorial packaging and other uses.

Our Holy Grail is for all the plastic we produce to be recycled back into its original use over and over and over again. When we achieve it, we'll be greener than most of our manufacturing peers. So, let's celebrate each step we take towards becoming a true circular economy, each step we get incrementally closer to that Holy Grail.

The third part of taking control of our story, is taking control of the narrative about Plastic in water ways and Oceans, WE HATE IT! Every time there's a news article or a photo in any form of media of resin granules in a water way or on a beach, we get another black eye. We need to challenge ourselves and our non-member peers that an Operation Clean Sweep Audit pass and the certificate is a Badge of Honour in the movement against polluting our environment. It's one of the places we can really control the narrative by constantly and publicly front footing the war against this kind of pollution.

If we take control of our story, then I truly believe we can be seen a great place to have a career, with participants able to hold their heads high as leading the charge for sustainable manufacturing and show the world we are more serious about clean beaches and waterways than they are.

Finally, I'd like to thank Abbie for the inspirational leadership she has shown over the last 3 years. Most of you who know her will also know she's a person that is always questioning her capability. But she deals with that by throwing herself at as much training and professional development as she gets fit in her already busy life. Then she brings those learnings directly into the board room. So, thanks to

her leadership the PNZ board has changed in leaps and bounds over the last 3 years and I'm excited to take the reins from here on in.

May 2024