

Message from the Chair

Our industry continues to play a positive leadership role to aid the nation's ongoing pandemic recovery and to enhance environmental sustainability.

While the last year can only be described as a tumultuous and often emotional rollercoaster ride for everyone, it is a relief and blessing that our nation has weathered the pandemic better than most.

Thanks to a steady and cautious approach to managing the risks of COVID-19 infection spread combined with appropriate but unprecedented levels of fiscal stimulus, the Australian economy is rebounding.

Credit for this goes to the generally rational responses of all Australian governments in managing pandemic risks and, in particular, to the Morrison Government for the prompt and decisive economic relief measures it introduced throughout the pandemic.

“Businesses across the hygiene, personal care and specialty products industry have been working tirelessly to meet community expectations about our products and services”



Tracey Raso

Although I am sounding quite an optimistic note with the direction we are now heading, in reality we are still a long way from full economic recovery, and the virus threat will remain a disrupting and pervasive fact of life for some years to come. This is why I believe we need to reflect on and take stock of some key lessons learnt in dealing with the many challenges of the last year.

Early lessons were about adaptability, as we shifted to new ways of working and did our best to navigate heavily disrupted supply chains to get our products to our customers.

And as the pandemic progressed, we learnt much about the importance of persistence and resilience as we faced the daily ups and downs of a critically evolving situation.

Some Accord Members, mainly those in the industry's hygiene products sector, were pushed to the forefront of the fight against the spread of the virus. Increased demand for sanitisers, disinfectants and all types of cleaning products meant these Members had to find ways to ramp up production and supply. But on the flipside, other Members' product demand virtually fell off a cliff leaving them the task of finding ways to stay afloat to protect their businesses. Our beauty and prestige products Members, in particular, faced this unwelcome challenge.

Amongst all this turmoil, we learnt another lesson – the power and importance of reliable and timely information. And for this I believe the Accord secretariat team deserves our sincere thanks.

Right from the start of the pandemic, the Accord team shifted its priorities to validating and then disseminating to Members readily digestible alerts of the most critical information their businesses would need. And this approach of more regular and timely industry briefs is now embedded into the very way Accord operates.

As experts commence digging deeper to analyse other learning results arising from the pandemic, one specific finding stands out for me. This is the growth and importance of trust, as measured by the latest edition of the Edelman Trust Barometer.

Published in February 2021¹, the Trust Barometer highlights a pleasing rebound in public trust overall, with Australia leading the world in trust gains over 2020. Most welcome is the finding of a surge in public trust for the business sector. Business is now more trusted than both government and NGOs, according to this latest survey.

Some may feel this an astonishing result. But those of us in this industry know otherwise. Both collectively via Accord and at a company level, businesses across the hygiene, personal care and specialty products industry have been working tirelessly to meet community expectations about our products and services, and to progress environmental sustainability in tangible ways.

Just look through this year's annual report and the many achievements it showcases. Accord has led the way to promote stewardship approaches across the industry, foster compliance with regulations and codes, and increase industry and consumer understanding for safe, sustainable product use via our many educational websites.

Some related highlights over the last year for Accord include:

- Enhancing safety and compliance via development of expert guidance material on the safe production/transport of alcohol-based hand sanitisers for promotion to new market entrants,

- Participating effectively in government-run collaborative endeavours during the pandemic to address supply chain concerns for critical products, such as commercial and personal hygiene products,
- Delivering the successful voluntary phase-out of solid plastic microbeads in rinse-off personal care products via the BeadRecede initiative, with the Government-commissioned independent in-store survey measuring a compliance rate of at least 99.3 percent,
- Undertaking detailed surveys across the industry on plastics and packaging waste matters to help identify opportunities and challenges for better waste management and improved sustainability; and,
- Working collaboratively with the federal Health Department and other key stakeholders, such as RSPCA Australia, to develop the Voluntary Industry Code to Support the Australian Ban on Testing Cosmetics on Animals.

Our industry was measured by leading accounting firm EY back in 2019 to be the 17th largest sector of the Australian economy and this position of importance has only been enhanced by the vital role hygiene products play during a pandemic.

As we move into recovery with the ongoing removal of restrictions and border closures as the vaccination rate for the Australian and global population steadily increases, it is hoped that the lessons we have been learning from the last year can help build a brighter future.

My colleagues on the Accord Board of Directors recognise the importance of Accord being an effective Member service that adds value to our Member companies and enhances our industry's reputation. Expert advice, assistance, and advocacy remains at the forefront for Accord. And is all just a phone call away for Member companies.

I thank Bronwyn, Craig, Catherine, Jen, Ery and Stephanie for their tireless work over the last year. I also welcome our newest staff Members Rianna Goodwin and Thomas Dolahenty. And with a mix of sadness and gratitude I say thanks and goodbye to Dusanka Sabic, wishing her well in retirement, and also to Rachael Linklater. Both served Accord well.

I thank all Members and supporters of our industry for their engagement and commitment to standing united as we move forward into the challenges ahead.

Tracey Raso

Chair
May 2021

¹ <https://www.edelman.com.au/trust-barometer-2021-australia>

