

Message from the Chair

Our industry's role in advancing both physical and mental wellbeing is a community asset that deserves wider recognition

As each of us can readily affirm, the last few years during this time of pandemic have often been wearisome, to say the very least. And while we are seemingly over the worst aspects of previous years' lockdowns, restrictions, and personal hardships, we still sit firmly within what can only be described as the pandemic's hangover.

Ongoing supply chain disruptions, a sputtering economy with high inflation, and an overall sense of uncertainty and fatigue being the order of the day. It is little wonder this has taken a collective toll on physical and mental wellbeing.

In my message for Accord's previous annual report, I focused on the immediate but positive learnings from the early stages of the pandemic. For example, on the way our industry nimbly rose to the challenge with resolve and resilience. Now, as we are moving on to new challenges, it seems appropriate to shine a light on the broader benefits our industry provides and the role of our industry into the future.

A recent report from the University of Sydney's Open Society, Common Purpose Taskforce "*The Great Australian Renovation*"¹ highlights the disproportionate toll on mental wellbeing for our younger generations over these last years. Its recommendations call for greater inclusion—such strong, social inclusivity is already a hallmark of companies and brands in the hygiene, personal care and speciality products industry. Our industry respects and values all Australians regardless of gender, race, creed, age or sexuality.

Other important recommendations in this report include improving scientific literacy and communication, the federal parliament setting a good example, and measuring more than just GDP when it comes to the state of our nation. And it is this last point that I will elaborate on.

While our industry has a significant economic footprint and contribution to national prosperity, the overall measure of our impacts goes beyond sales reports and balance sheets to encompass positive impacts on public health and personal wellbeing.

Firstly, through the very nature and purpose of our products. And, secondly, by the initiatives we advance under the umbrella of Accord.

Hygiene products, for both premises and people, have been particularly critical during the pandemic. Aside from offering substantial public health benefits by helping to minimise the spread of germs and viruses that cause respiratory illness and food poisoning, cleaning and hygiene products also help to keep our public spaces and homes in a suitable condition for relaxation, promoting personal wellbeing. Having a clean and comfortable home in busy and difficult times is reassuring, helping to reduce triggers that can cause anxiety. And safe and hygienic schools, hospitals, childcare centres and aged care facilities are a must for protection of the most vulnerable members of our community. All of which makes hygiene products very much wellbeing products.

Our industry's innovative hygiene products also promote public wellbeing, especially when used safely and effectively. One of the roles of Accord is to advance safe, effective and sustainable product use. During the pandemic, Accord issued guidance for new market entrants so that they complied with essential health and safety rules for the making and supply of hand sanitisers. This built on our early work promoting effective and sustainable hygiene, such as via our Hygiene for Health and Washwise websites.

Consistent with a commitment to ongoing industry improvement, Accord will launch in August 2022 a new FitForFood website that aims to assist the thousands of food premises operating in Australia so that they properly select and use commercial hygiene products. Food poisoning is a drain on health, wellbeing and productivity and—alongside Accord's ongoing collaboration with the Food Safety Information Council—this new educational website aims to promote better food safety. Members of the industrial and institutional market segment within Accord will find the new site a valuable resource for their customer base.



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Personal care products also offer both public health benefits and boosts to personal and community wellbeing. Sitting firmly on the public health side is our industry's array of sunscreens, feminine hygiene products, toothpaste and other oral care products, and hand washes.

We also know that beauty and grooming products like shampoo, make-up, lipstick, perfume, hair dye and nail polish not only provide the many social benefits of good personal hygiene and grooming, but there is mounting evidence that they also play a role in enhancing mental wellbeing.

A recent academic studyⁱ brought to Accord's attention by our German sister association, IKW, measured the negative impacts on mental health and personal wellbeing of the COVID-related closure of hairdressing salons. The study, which interviewed 1000 people, concluded that individuals "...perceive hair care products and their hairstyle as cultivating, socially relevant, expressing values, individualising, structuring in everyday life, and rejuvenating". You only have to think back to the height of the lockdowns locally to recall how much we missed our regular visits to the hairdresser or barber.

It is short-sighted to trivialise the importance of beauty and grooming products for personal wellbeing. And this is exemplified by the 32-year experience of the cosmetic industry-supported Look Good Feel Better program. This truly national program, operating in all Australian states and territories, helps cancer patients manage the appearance-related side effects caused by any type of cancer treatment. Since the first workshop in Sydney in May 1990, more than 170,000 women, men and teens undergoing cancer treatment across Australia have benefitted from participating in the program. The thousands of volunteers who generously give their time to run patient workshops will attest to the uplifting sense of camaraderie and hope the program can inspire for those facing the uncertainty and trauma of a cancer diagnosis.

I believe this program and the many other social, sustainability and safety initiatives of Accord should rightfully be viewed as community assets. They build on the already beneficial nature of our industry's hygiene, personal care and specialty products to meaningfully address critical challenges and important social needs.

Ideally and hopefully, with a renewed collaborative and consensus-driven approach to national affairs as the order of the day under the new federal government, there will be meaningful dialogue on how to maximise the innovation, investment and jobs potential of our industry. There will also be opportunities to focus on the additional benefits our industry provides in terms of positive impacts on public health and personal wellbeing. Accord stands ready to engage with the new government and parliament on these goals.

To all valued Accord Member companies, the Accord Board of Directors and I thank you for your ongoing support and commitment and for standing united as we continue to advocate on behalf of our innovative industry in these challenging times.

I thank Bronwyn, Craig, Catherine, Jen, Ery, Stephanie, Rianna and Thomas for their tireless work over the last year. And additionally thank my fellow Board Directors for their diligence and sound governance. Welcome back also to Dusanka to expertly assist with the association's regulation and global trade agenda.

And a final nod of thanks to our industry's many partners and valued collaborators across other industries and in government. We look forward to continued positive engagement with you in the coming years.

Tracey Raso

Chair
July 2022

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ⁱ *Open Society, Common Purpose taskforce 2022. "The Great Australian Renovation," Sydney Policy Lab, University of Sydney (July 2022) - <https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2022-07/apo-nid318808.pdf>*

ⁱⁱ *"The Importance of Hairstyle and Hair Care for Human Dignity", Keidel, H. Neibecker, I. Imdahl, SOFW Journal 1+2/22, Volume 148, Thannhausen, Germany, February 17, 2022*