

Profits go to charities and communities

IT'S NOT just about food and jobs. Sanitarium, owned by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, is strongly committed to supporting local community programs and charities.

Company profits are used to fund programs such as counselling and support for families in crisis, services for the blind, programs to stop smoking, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait islands community health and education.

Last year, Sanitarium joined the Australian Red Cross to start the Good Start Breakfast Club, to provide a healthy breakfast for kids in 90 schools.

There is also the annual Sanitarium Weet-Bix Kids TRY-athlon to encourage children aged between seven and 15 to be more active. More than 10,000 children take part each year. Sanitarium managing director Dean Powrie

says the company is committed to staying 100 per cent Australian.

"Any time that we're manufacturing here in Australia and exporting, it helps with the balance of trade," he says.

"All the imports are a continuing problem for the Australian Government. Australian consumers must realise that unless Australian manufacturing survives, our economy will eventually be unable to sustain itself."

We're Aussie and Aussie we'll stay

SANITARIUM has been serving healthy breakfasts to Australians for 107 years.

The Australian-owned company has come a long way since setting up shop in a tiny bakery in the inner Melbourne suburb of Northcote in 1898.

The company's first products, peanut butter and a wheat-flake cereal, quickly became tasty breakfast alternatives to the more usual minced kidneys on toast or stodgy oatmeal porridge.

Today, Sanitarium is still the force behind Australia's favourite breakfast cereal.

Australian kids, it seems, really are Weet-Bix kids. And adults like Weet-Bix too.

The company churns out enough Weet-Bix each year from its cereal factory in New South Wales to stretch around the equator three times.

"We're proud that not only are we Australian-owned, we manufacture in Australia, and we've been doing it for such a long time," managing director Dean Powrie says.

But it's not just Weet-Bix.

Sanitarium makes more than 150 other products, including Skippy Cornflakes, Light 'n' Tasty cereal, yeast spread Marmite, So Good soy milk, vegetarian food items and dried fruit and nut snacks.

Its products and reputation for quality health foods have made it a favourite target for overseas firms looking to snap up another Aussie company.

"People are always approaching us to sell. But our customers have given us a lot of trust and we don't want in any way to threaten that trust by having people make decisions that are commercially driven rather than in the best interests of consumers when it comes to health food," Powrie says.

He says he hopes being Australian-made and owned counts in Sanitarium's favour when customers do their weekly grocery shop.

Sanitarium is the only Australian-owned major producer of breakfast cereals. Rivals Kellogg's and Uncle Toby's are both foreign-owned.

"We don't rest on our laurels because of that. We've got to provide healthy products that taste good and are good value," Powrie says.



Healthy start: children love a healthy breakfast, and Sanitarium is good for Australia.

"It's important to remind Australians that buying Australian isn't just a fad or a guilt thing.

"Australians can produce world-class products. Sanitarium exports products from Australia."

ONE of those is Marmite, which once belonged to an English company until Sanitarium bought the recipe and began making it here just before World War II.

The spread now outsells US-owned rival Vegemite in New Zealand.

Another favourite overseas is So Good, now the biggest-selling soy product in Canada, while South Africans love the liquid breakfast-in-a-box, Up and Go.

In Australia, the company employs 1700 people at 12 manufacturing sites

and offices across the country. But Powrie says it's not just Sanitarium's own employees who rely on the company for a job.

"We have many, many hundreds of suppliers that rely on trade with us to keep their businesses going," Powrie says.

"There are wheat growers, farmers and food suppliers, engineers, electricians and the support industries that provide services to us.

"We touch many thousands of people.

"Outside our own employment, we add a lot of value back to the community.

"We're employing people, we're supporting communities, we're building infrastructure. And that's important."

SANITARIUM FACTS

- Sanitarium means "learn to stay well".
- Sir Edmund Hillary ate Weet-Bix for breakfast during his historic climb of Mt Everest in 1953.
- Sanitarium and the Australian Red Cross run the Good Start Breakfast Club, which serves more than 120,000 meals in 90 schools each year.
- Sanitarium opened Australia's first health-food shop in 1902.
- Weet-Bix became Australia's fastest selling breakfast cereal the same time that Sir Donald Bradman hit the fastest 50 in Test history, in the 1932-33 series against England.
- Weet-Bix is sold in 22 countries around the world. It is called Bixies in the UK and Mauritius, Ruskets in the US and Aussie Morning in Japan.
- Sanitarium's Coorabong plant in New South Wales is one of the largest cereal-production plants in the southern hemisphere.
- Sanitarium has its own aid agency, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) Australia, that carries out development programs and disaster relief in Australia, the South Pacific, Asia and Africa.

Help the nation as you sleep

A PILLOW from Therapeutic Pillow International will give you a good night's sleep in more ways than one.

Therapeutic pillows are recommended by health experts, and you are also giving the Australian economy a boost.

Despite its international tag, the company is proudly Australian-owned and its products are Australian-made.

Managing director Leon Parnham says being all-Australian is one of his company's guiding principles.

"I've been a member of the Australian Made Campaign since it started.

"It is important to shout about it, what with the heavy toll imported products are taking on local manufacturing in Australia. Hopefully, the consumer will hear the shout.

"It's not a question of paying more for the Australian product. Often you don't. But you will always get better quality. And you are supporting Australian jobs.

"That's the key to it. You are looking after your own, not after somebody from another part of the world."

Parnham started making therapeutic pillows with his wife Marie in the front room of their home in Elwood 30 years ago.

"You couldn't get pillows like this here. I knew a couple of chiropractors — chiropractics was pretty new in those days — and they were saying to me there's a need to create a pillow that supports the head and the neck evenly," Parnham says.

Therapeutic Pillow now employs 14 people, including Parnham's son Brett, and makes all its products at its Cheltenham factory.

"We're a family business and that means we can plan for the long term without the pressures of a share price. That allows us to work away quietly with health professionals in product development," Brett says.

"Their patients are the winners from that relationship."

Products include comfort foam pillows, back rests, pressure-relief cushions, mattress toppers and products to help with circulation problems.

They are available only from health professionals such as chiropractors, physiotherapists, osteopaths and some pharmacies.

Leon Parnham says this is because he believes only health experts should be dispensing products that care for the spine.

"There are Chinese import products coming into bedding shops, but as far as we're concerned, they're inferior to our home-grown Memory foam products."

The company's best-selling Memory foam product is its CompleteSleeprr adjustable pillow, which moulds and conforms to the head and neck.