

Turnils



Turnils - Honeycomb

TURNILS AUSTRALIA HAS STREAMLINED ITS PRODUCT RANGE TO ENSURE THAT ITS OFFERING IS CLEAR TO THE MARKET. *Dawn Adams reports.*

THE PRODUCT offering from Turnils Australia has been streamlined to eliminate confusion and to meet demand in the domestic market. "When I came here, I found Turnils Australia was a very good business but our offering to the market was confusing," says Managing Director, Mike Stephen. "We looked very closely at what we were stocking and then simplified the range. I believe that it's much clearer to our customers what our product range is now and it's also easier for us to identify gaps and to add new products."

He points to a focus on honeycomb shades with the introduction of new fabrics,

updated colours and two new systems. "We're having great success with our honeycomb fabrics, which come highly recommended, due to their superior insulating capabilities, helping architects and builders achieve six-star energy ratings for homes," he says. Trapping air between the cells, this fabric has become known for helping stop heat loss from the window in winter and reducing solar gain in summer.

"Our focus is on the things we know the Australian market wants," he says. "Now, we can spend time adding to that range without diluting the offer."

Folding arm awnings are also

a growing market for Turnils Australia. "The introduction several years ago of a kit service—where we cut the profiles to size, assemble the awning and then the manufacturer puts on the fabric—is the fastest growing part of our business and is popular because manufacturers don't have any scrap or wastage."

"Key to our success here has been our focus on turning customers' awning kit orders around as fast as possible," says Mike. "If a consumer decides they would like a folding arm awning, they don't want to be waiting for months to have one fitted, so we gear up

to turn around fully assembled awnings in 5 to 7 days, even at the height of the season." Orders can be quickly filled because all the warehouse staff are trained to produce awning kits, while casual employees are enlisted at peak demand times to complete other tasks.

Venetian blinds remain a core product from Turnils. "We supply everything for venetian blind makers from machinery to tooling to make the products, including components like rails, slats and cords, and plastic components, such as controls, head-rail components and end caps, as well as point-of-sale material."

FROM SEPTEMBER 1ST THE DISTRIBUTION OF *Faber Benthin* PRODUCTS IN AUSTRALIA WILL BE TAKEN OVER BY TURNILS.

Turnils Managing Director, Mike Stephen, says, "the addition of Faber Benthin is a great fit for Turnils. There is very little 'product crossover' and the Faber Benthin products, like for example the vertical and roller blind systems, mean that Turnils is now able to offer customers a comprehensive product range. Tapping into the Turnils network in Australia is expected

to allow Benthin products to be widely distributed across the country. The positioning of the Benthin range in the mid to upper end of the market gives Turnils huge opportunities to develop new marketing programs and expand the product range into new areas".

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Mermet



Mermet Cachet - Peninsula

MERMET AUSTRALIA HAS RECENTLY EXPANDED INTO NEW CATEGORIES WITH THE LAUNCH OF THE CACHET COLLECTION. *Dawn Adams reports.*

THE RELEASE of the Cachet collection in March 2009 marked a new approach from Mermet Australia. The company, a specialist in sunscreen fabrics available in Australia since 1982, set out to explore other opportunities to supply fabric to blind makers.

"I noticed when I came into the business here, and spoke to customers, that Mermet was missing out on a section of the market and that it was in a weak position because it had only one product line, which was sunscreen," says Managing Director, Mike Stephen. "Even though it was the biggest player in the sunscreen category, it still was only catering to around 40 per cent of the total roller blind fabrics market. Maybe we were King, but only of a small Kingdom!" In a significant shift that broadened its product offering, the Cachet collection included, for the first time for Mermet, more residential blackout, translucent and transparent fabrics, specifically coloured and designed for the home.

The company adopted another new strategy: to merchandise the range in a unique way. "We researched how people select blind fabrics," Mike says. "Generally speaking, the last thing people think about is window coverings. They've already chosen the carpet and the flooring, and the blinds (or other window treatment) will have to co-ordinate with them." This finding convinced Mike and the Mermet team that consumers were looking for fabrics that would match other items already selected in a home and that these would dictate the colour choice.

"Rather than put Cachet into fabric types, we organised the range into eight colour groups," he says. "It's easy to pull out, for example, the neutrals selector to find six types of fabric in natural colours, all with slightly different textures; from transparent, to translucent, through to blackout."

In a bolder move, the colour palette became more adventurous. "We've put colour in to make the range more

exciting," he says.

While the company remains committed to developing sunscreen fabrics, Mike is convinced that it will market a different type of product mix into the future. "I expect, looking forward, that we will have 50 per cent sunscreen and 50 per cent other fabrics in our offering, as we expand into other market categories," he says.

The sunscreen fabrics are currently sourced from two Mermet weaving mills; one in Carolina in the US and the other near Lyon in France. "Originally, sunscreens were developed for external use in Europe and were then used for internal vertical roller blind systems," he says. Describing those earlier fabrics as heavier options, he points to two of the early sunscreens as still available in Australia for external use: Satiné and Natté. "As market demand has changed though, yarns have become lighter and the fabric finer, so now customers regularly use sunscreen fabrics internally," he says.

The company in Australia has also had significant input into the colours developed for sale in the local market. "We have a say on the choice of colour and styling of fabric, and in particular, warp and weft colours and how we mix them," he says. "Certain colours sell extremely well in Australia that will not sell so well in Europe and the US. Australian customers often want to maintain an external view, so they choose the darker shades that will allow this"

A greater mixing of colour, rather than a solid single coloured fabric, is a trend Mike is noticing. "As we go forward, there is a mix of modern colour with more traditional shades," he says, "for instance, more chocolate brown in a mix, or perhaps a charcoal with a cocoa brown. Also in Australia, the fabric must be much stronger, as the blinds here are bigger and need to be mechanically more robust than systems in Europe," he says.

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