

Leo's star aligns with PIAA

The PIAA has a new board member hailing from South Australia. Under the chairmanship of Walter Kuhn, the board continues to strengthen and proactively seek new directions. **Andy McCourt** met with Sarah Leo of Openbook Howden Print & Design, Adelaide.

Finding replacement board members for an Association such as the PIAA is never easy, all the more so when the shoes to be filled are the accomplished boots of the retiring Peter Lane.

The wish list might include: someone with good experience in running a print media business, someone who understands family business as well as corporate culture, someone who can bring refreshing 'external' views, someone with great communication skills and someone who knows the procedures and protocols that make a good board work well.

In Sarah Leo of South Australia's Openbook Howden Print & Design, the boxes are all ticked, and then some. Currently 2IC of the company which grew substantially in 2006 with the acquisition of Openbook Australia Printing – a venerable publisher with its roots back over a hundred years as the Lutheran Publishing House – by longtime PIAA member Howden Printing; Leo has been with the company since 2000 and is currently General Manager, Brand, Strategy and People.

"I admit I'm not a printer, not a tradesperson," she says, "I take more of an umbrella view, an external questioning of issues



spanning operations, what do we really offer, what's really happening, where is the industry headed and of course, what do our customers really want?"

Experienced change-agent

Since all PIAA board members volunteer their time, that time needs to be available and, under Leo's guidance, the 55-staff company has systems and structures already in place that ensure continuity in the absence of key personnel.

"We continue to invest in automation, MIS, workflows and we went digital in 2006 following outsourcing and now have six digital presses," she says.

If being a board member of the PIAA includes helping other printers manage change and adapt to technology, then Openbook Howden's Sarah Leo brings this knowledge to the table in spades. The company, based in the southern Adelaide suburb of St Marys, is in a bright, clean and spacious building, presenting a very pleasant working environment. Production includes offset, narrow web labels, digital cut-sheet and digital labels.

While printing 'always was and always will be' the company's core business, other services include online inventory

management for customers needing fulfillment to multiple locations across Australia, creative design and multi-purposing of print files to online and other electronic platforms.

"I take more of an umbrella view, an external questioning of issues spanning operations, what do we really offer, what's really happening?"

"We also like to work with clients to help them adapt to changes too," says Leo. "Our team can develop systems and procedures which create streamlined offerings, ranging from client-facing solutions to internal process improvements." This style of services-extension, which increases the 'touch points' of printer-to-client interaction, is just the sort of initiative that PIAA members can benefit from as our industry is re-shaped to be future-proofed.

Families and education first

Also of importance are Leo's other community involvements, particularly her committee membership of the SA Chapter of Family Business Australia, Family Business Australia, the peak body committed to contributing to Australia's future through a dynamic and sustainable family business community. With so many PIAA member companies run as family concerns and franchises, such experience is invaluable.

Education figures prominently in Leo's background and community activities. She is also a Council member of Woodcroft College, helping the Head of College develop, establish and maintain the mission, vision and philosophy

of the school and ensuring the College's mission is appropriate and relevant to the community. Substitute 'printing industry' in there and we have a perfect description of what would be good for its members.

"As an industry I think we do a poor job in conveying the size, importance, relevance and position of printing in the overall business and social scenario. We are a leading manufacturing employer, diverse and largely comprised of family or small business enterprises; we need to focus on communicating this," she says.

Adding to the brains trust

While acknowledging that most of her functions on the PIAA board will become clearer once she starts attending meetings, Leo notes succession planning, Australia Post costs, sustainable growth, professional development and managing technology changes as immediate priorities. As the sole SA state board member now, she will of course be flying the flag for printing and packaging there, but sees that benefitting the national panorama too.

Leo's structured and analytical approach to business in general and printing in particular is sure to add to the already impressive brains trust on the PIAA board. Rarely, if ever, before have we seen such a practical mix of talent that includes a major ASX-listed concern, web offset, large sheet-fed, small sheet-fed, direct mail, packaging and digital experience. Now we have the strategic and analytical talent of Sarah Leo on board for South Australia.

There continues to be two casual PIAA board seats to be filled, one for the ACT and one nationally but, rest assured, SA in good hands. **21**

Peter Lane passes on the baton *after 30 years*

Epochal change for the peak industry body as prominent industry identity, Peter Lane, steps down from the board where he's been a notable presence for more than 30 years. The managing director of family-owned Lane Print in Adelaide, he ushers in his fellow South Australian, Sarah Leo of Openbook Howden, to take the state's seat at the board.

During his time with the Association Lane served multiple terms as National President (1995–1996, 2005–2008) in addition to a record participation at board level. He was a prime mover in the reshaping of the Association during tumultuous years of digital transformation and consolidation. Providing a steady hand on the tiller he oversaw the tenure of numerous CEOs as the Association changed from being a state-based industrial relations advisory organisation into its current identity as the peak industry-lobbying representative.

When he first joined the state-based branch in the late 1980s, the Association was the Printing And Allied Trades Employers Federation of Australia (PATEFA). An early enthusiast of digital technology, Lane was an innovator in data-driven printing, a specialisation that gave his own printing company a head start in the tumultuous changes engulfing the industry.

As Lane Print grew and evolved, opening facilities in Canberra as well as a foray into Indonesia, he continued to make time to serve the Association as well as the National Printing Industries Training Council and as five years as President of the World Print and Communication Forum. He is currently chairman of the Forum of



Asia Pacific Graphic Arts, the international industry association for the Asian region.

Always an active and engaged board member, he was responsible for many of the significant changes that have kept the local Australian Association at the forefront of industry developments.

In 1997 he was acclaimed as Graphic Arts Person of the Year and has been a guiding member of the board of the industry trade shows PacPrint (five times) and PrintEx (twice). In 2004 he was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for services to the printing industry,

If merit is recognised by the scope of an individual's contribution to the welfare of others, then Peter Lane deserves all the accolades. Ending an unmatched career of service to the peak industry body, the Printing Industries Association of Australia, he leaves a legacy of unswerving dedication. Recognised for his commitment to the probity and sustainability of the printing industry his insight and input will be sorely missed.

particularly for the integration of information technology into conventional print technologies and the community.

Everything passes, everything changes

According to Lane, he stepped down from the role of Board Member and Secretary at the end of December although he still has one year of his term to run. "I wanted to make the transition as seamless as possible. Sarah Leo is a very

capable woman. She'll discover there is a lot do for the industry by being on the board," he says.

"I've been very fortunate during my time and the industry has been very good to me. It's a pleasure to give something back."

"Succession planning is important as people age."

He nominates industry training and meeting the demographic changes as major challenges confronting the industry. "The aim is to develop a sustainable industry as well as an Association. Succession planning is important as people age," he says.

He admits to owing a debt of gratitude to a sympathetic board at the family-owned business. Not everyone is able to devote as much time to the wellbeing of the broader industry and energy as Lane has over the years.

His contribution to PIAA is recognised and acknowledged by current national president, Walter Kuhn. "Our industry is stronger due to decisions made by Peter Lane. On behalf of the print sector I thank Peter for all that he has done."

Kuhn adds: "He's given above and beyond the call of duty. He will be missed. I'd like to formally acknowledge the contribution that Peter has made to the board, and wish him well in his future endeavours."

Andrew Macaulay, CEO, also spoke in praise of Lane's long commitment to the Association. "Peter has provided me with invaluable insights into our Association, and this has guided me as we move the Association forward. I thank Peter sincerely for his contribution." **21**