

SHUTTER MARKET UPDATE

In the current competitive climate, three key players outline how quality product and service can successfully be sold as a wise investment with a marked point of difference from the long wait times and lower quality of price driven offerings. Belinda Smart reports

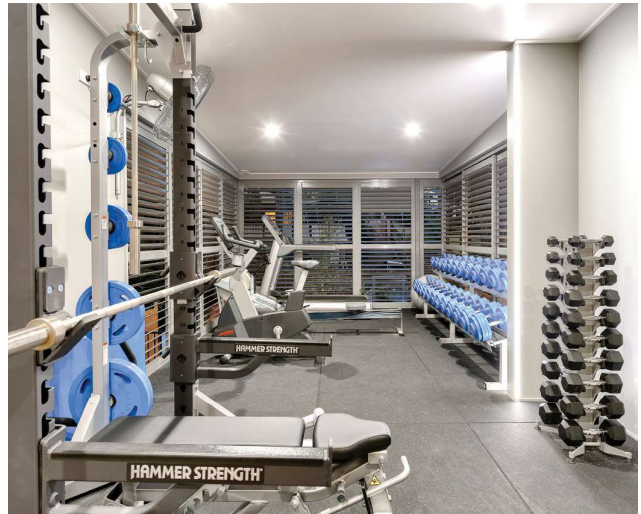
Dena Dillon, CMO of The Window Outfitters (TWO) confirms that in 2017 TWO Australia will continue to develop products positioned as offering superior design and utility "This is perfectly demonstrated with TWO's exciting aluminium internal range. Weatherwell aluminium shutters tap into the growing consumer search for a superior window treatment solution for wet and high traffic areas in homes. The Weatherwell collection of aluminium internal shutters integrates into internal spaces, such as kitchens, bathrooms and playrooms, providing supreme ease of maintenance and peace of mind. Now there is a seamless way to include aluminium shutters into spaces which require additional strength and durability. Weatherwell shutters are available in a range of blade sizes, powder coat colours and timber grain finishes, so that mix'n'match by room requirements can be achieved and set a new bar in contemporary living."

She adds that TWO Australia has also had distinct success in the Melbourne market, which is demonstrating significant growth in the shutter, home furnishings and home styling markets.

"Melbourne households are increasingly willing to invest in up front design consultation before renovating or building. Many designers and decorators have embraced shutter retailing and now offer integrated solutions with blinds, curtains and shutters. In the past the more complex nature of shutter installation, has caused designers and decorators to avoid shutters as a window treatment, however this has been overcome with TWO Australia's wholly owned Made2Fit service, which provides a holistic solution for designers and decorators from design advice, measure, and installation. They can now retail high-end timber and aluminium shutter solutions, with the confidence of the manufacturer as a partner. This has created enormous growth in the Melbourne market for TWO Australia."

The new home buyer market has also driven significant growth for TWO Australia.

"Shutter solutions like Highprofile Timber and Weatherwell Aluminium are being sought out much earlier in the buying cycle, essentially at the build stage. The primary draw card underpinning this growth is that by considering shutter solutions at the build stage, installation factors can be incorporated with window and door selections. Crucially, customers are also able to colour-match to interior palette selections and trend wall colours. TWO Australia is a true bespoke wholesale supplier of shutters and offers a colour matching service, so that the shutters integrate with the entire internal





and external home décor. This service, whereby Highprofile shutters can be seamlessly matched to popular Dulux or other trend colours, has created significant growth for TWO at the home build stage."

In line with this, one of TWO Australia's other growth areas has been in the Highprofile timber collection of special shapes. As TWO Australia is able to custom manufacture to any shape, the increasing inclusion of large window expanses, and special window shapes to frame vistas and views, has seen a significant rise in this product line. Meanwhile Weatherwell Aluminium shutters for outdoor enclosures also continue to be a strong seller for TWO. "As backyard spaces decrease and outdoor entertaining increases, customers are looking for solutions that create usable

areas without adding to the building footprint. TWO Australia has seen a rise in the use of Weatherwell Aluminium shutters, not just for outdoor screening, but in full enclosures by pools and BBQ areas to create outdoor entertainment rooms which have sun protection and regulated airflow. In an exciting trend this Australian concept is even being exported to the US where you can now find Aluminium shutter rooms in hot climate areas such as Texas and California. TWO has a global footprint and the Weatherwell Elite range is one of the fastest growing new categories in shutter retail in America."

Dillon concludes that one of the most significant trends in Australian shutter retail and consumer sentiment in the last year has been the focus away from synthetics like

PVC and other vinyl shutter solutions. "Consumers today have a growing demand for non-synthetic products, which are managed sustainably and responsibly. Aside from environmental concerns surrounding inorganic materials, PVC shutters have the difficulty of being significantly heavier than organic materials like timber. They are not able to span significant widths and can often sag under their weight. Aluminium shutters internally also provide a new pathway of choice, as they provide a fantastic solution for wet areas and additional durability."

Australian Window Furnishings Jenny Brown, National Marketing Manager, Australian Window Furnishings, says innovations in the shutters market are helping drive sales.

"Our trademarked Luxaflex PolySatin Shutters combines the beautiful look of a finely painted shutter with the unmatched durability of polyresin. This modern alternative to wooden shutters is designed for strength and durability and is virtually maintenance free.

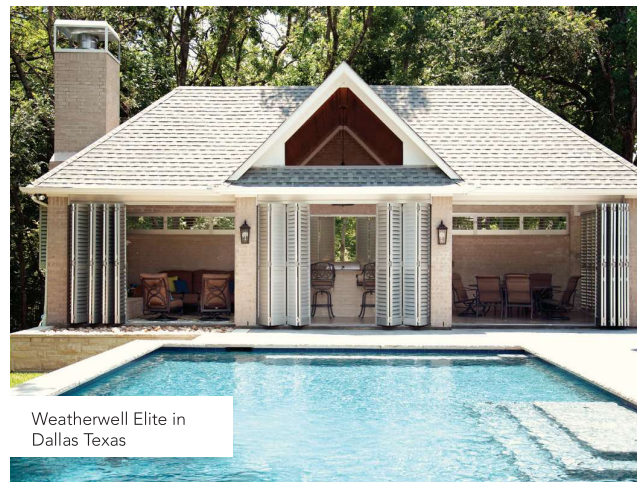
"Another leading innovation in the shutters market is Australian Window Furnishings' SmartView technology. Most plantation shutters have a tilt-bar running vertically down the louvres. The optional SmartView Operating

System performs the same function as a tilt-bar, but is hidden within the jamb of the panel. This system provides an unobstructed view and a clean, contemporary look, all while allowing the shutters to be closed tightly in both directions." In terms of where shutters are selling well and where sales are a little softer, Brown notes that in the past, Queensland was a standout state for sales of PolySatin Shutters, primarily due to the warmer climate.

"However, we have seen this trend shift with the product now having a steady demand across the country."

"The special formulation that makes up PolySatin Shutters not only helps shutters resist the harsh, bleaching UV rays of summer, but also provides protection in winter. Consumers in the southern states have been looking for a product that won't blister, peel, flake, corrode or fade. Consumers are drawn to the durability aspect of these shutters."

"PolySatin Shutters are one of our strongest sellers in the shutters category. This product stands up to the toughest conditions, yet is easy to care for and maintain. This along with Australian Window Furnishings' famous 20-year Warranty*, means it is understandably a popular product."



Weatherwell Elite in Dallas Texas

Brown notes that the biggest influence on the market currently is that shutters are now a design feature of a room.

"This means that shutters are not only highly sought after for external window furnishings, but they are also performing well in the interior market."

"A product like PolySatin Shutters, which has the design element along with ease of use and durability, means more and more people are incorporating them throughout their home design."

"When interior design company Three Birds Renovations recently partnered with Australian Window Furnishings to provide smart window furnishing solutions for their fifth house renovation in The Hills district in New South Wales, PolySatin Shutters were chosen to be installed throughout the home."

"Australian Window Furnishings also recently partnered with Three Birds Renovations in a competition where we offered consumers the chance to win PolySatin Shutters for their home which we're happy to say received thousands of entries."

The success of this competition shows how well-known and desired this product is for modern homes.

Ozroll

Ozroll Sales and Marketing Manager Jack McDonald confirms the company's very own range of Plantation Shutters is now ready to be supplied nationwide around Australia, "following 12 months of testing production capabilities and preparing marketing collateral, all based around our Inspire range of plantation shutters."

"Our research tells us that there is a yearning for high quality products, delivered in a short time period. The market is currently overrun with low cost options from overseas, which means that a lot of distributors



Three Birds Renovation House, with Luxaflex PolySatin Shutters installed.



Three Birds Renovation House, with Luxaflex PolySatin Shutters installed.

are subject to lengthy turnaround times and less than preferred material. If there are any issues with these imported products, it can be a further six weeks until the product is repaired."

"This is where Ozroll's Inspire range of plantation shutters come in. Made from a poly composite material, these shutters are manufactured in Queensland and our aim is

to produce finished product within two weeks of orders being placed and then deliver in the third. We have noted that there is an appreciation for poly composite products, due to the fact that there is far less wear and tear and a far lower chance of ever having to return to site. So effectively what we have done is developed a design which uses a practical material

and can be made available for install in a far shorter turnaround time than most other suppliers; and in the case of an emergency (where maybe an installer has check measured wrong), we can do repairs or revised orders immediately and satisfy end user concerns."