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Seating ahead of the rest

The humble chair becomes more than just a simple seating device when created by Tasmanian company TopForm Furniture Pty Ltd.

TopForm's designers and manufacturers make chairs that are top-quality in terms of durability and comfort – and then they start getting creative. It's not just about sitting around – it's about comfort, style, ergonomics and independence.

Add a footrest, activity table, hand rail, magazine rack, neck pillow and perhaps even a massager and you will begin to see why the TopForm slogan is: "Think of comfort".

This Tasmanian family company has been turning the ordinary chair into an innovative and in-demand product since 1965. The company was established by Claude Postma, who retired in 2001. It is now owned and operated by sons John and Geoff, who are the company's Marketing Manager and Managing Director respectively.

John Postma said that TopForm designed and manufactured furniture for the health care, home theatre, commercial and retail markets, as well as re-upholstering furniture. More than 30 people are employed at its Glenorchy office and factory.

A Total Quality Management company since 1991, TopForm's achievements have been recognised with national awards including a Small Business Award in 1992 and a berth as a finalist in the National Business Bulletin Awards.

In 1999, TopForm won the "Best of the Best" award at the Furniture Industry Association of Australia Awards for its convergence chair, which was judged the best piece of furniture in the country.

The convergence chair is a recliner with built-in computer hardware and surround-sound system. A flat-screen monitor swings up and out of a recess in the arm of the chair, via a patented swivel-arm attachment, to sit at eye-level with the operator.

A remote keyboard and mouse, stored in the other arm of the chair, sit on the operator's lap and can be connected to the internet or a television.

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One of its most recent products is the Nouveau Home Theatre Range, which can turn the average lounge room or home theatre into a luxury viewing area.

The company received a Tasmanian Innovations Program grant through the Department of Economic Development in 2000 to develop and market the range. It features recliners in sets of two or more that can be customised to fit touch screens, drink holders, lift-up storage arms and neck pillows.

While the 1600 seats in the luxurious Hobart Concert Hall were TopForm products, the majority of its products are sold for domestic use.

Geoff Postma said that TopForm never lost sight of the importance of ongoing research and development and business planning. Economic Development has provided funding and advice for the development of marketing and distribution plans, as well as business reviews.

“Every product has a limited lifestyle and people’s needs are always changing, so we recognise the need to keep developing new products and designs,” Mr Postma said.

“We’ll continue to expand the business by targeting selected markets and providing products that cannot be found elsewhere.”

John Postma said that TopForm was also member of Style of Tasmania, a group of Tasmanian Furniture Manufacturers that supports and promotes products from Tasmania’s forest-based industries.

“We have distributors in Sydney and Melbourne and more than 80 per cent of our production is shipped interstate.

“We’re competing against imported products from China and Malaysia and set ourselves apart by offering customised products and quality manufacturing for niche markets.

“TopForm prides itself on being the market leader in health care and home theatre.”

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