

Authentic And Innovative Australian Designs

An Interview with David Woollcott, Chief Executive Officer, King Living

EDITORS' NOTE David Woollcott, who is British-Australian, took over the role of Chief Executive Officer of King Living in late 2022. He previously held leadership roles in Fisher & Paykel, Miele Australia and New Zealand, as well as BMW Group. He is an experienced executive having served in senior roles across the premium and luxury automotive, appliances, and most recently, furniture industries, in a global context. Woollcott is an affiliate member of the UK Institute of Directors (IOD) and the Australian Institute of Company Directors. He is the founder of the concept not-for-profit, SaddleUp! supporting people recently made redundant. Woollcott holds a Bachelor of Engineering degree from the University of Bath and has participated in the Advanced Development Program at London Business School and another Advanced Management Program at Deakin University, Melbourne.



David Woollcott

embodies sustainable, adaptable living – a philosophy that continues to drive us today. Given our scale, it is incredible that we remain vertically integrated and privately owned.

What have been the keys to King Living's industry leadership and how do you define the King Difference?

At the heart of the King Difference is how our customers experience our products today and in the future. Every aspect of a King Living design – from modular configurations to removable covers and integrated technology – offers tangible lifestyle benefits, ensuring our furniture provides enduring comfort. Our in-house design team, dedicated to creating authentic and innovative Australian designs, continuously push the boundaries of what furniture can achieve. We are committed to evolving and refining our designs, a principle of continuous improvement that underscores our dedication to

enhancing our customers' lives. These unique points of difference and the advantages of our vertical integration are key to our market-leading position. Our agility allows us to move rapidly from prototype to final design, maintain full end-to-end control, and deliver products of the highest quality.

How do you describe the King Living' culture and values?

Though we've grown into a global company, we've remained true to our roots as a family owned business, fostering a family-like atmosphere throughout the organization. Our team challenges the status quo, and we're fortunate to have a culture that encourages innovation and creativity at all levels of the business. At the core is a relentless pursuit of excellence and a customer-first approach.

Where do you see the greatest opportunities for growth for King Living?

We envision King Living as a 100-year brand with a philosophy that we're here to stay. As we look to the future, we see significant opportunities to expand further in Europe and

COMPANY BRIEF Since 1977, King Living (kingliving.com) has been at the forefront of Australian furniture design. Established in Sydney, Australia, King Living now operates in New Zealand, Singapore, Malaysia, China, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States. With a reputation built on steel, King Living designs and manufactures contemporary award-winning furniture that's made to last. King Living ensures the highest quality of craftsmanship is maintained. All aspects of design and manufacturing are controlled by the in-house design team, supported by dedicated engineers within state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities.

Will you highlight the history of King Living and how the company has evolved?

King Living began with founder David King and his mother, Gwen, crafting simple foam chairs at their family home in Sydney in the '70s. Today, we are a global brand with showrooms in eight countries and manufacturing operations in three. The true vision for King Living sparked when David noticed discarded, broken furniture piled up on Sydney's streets. David was determined to create furniture that would stand the test of time and adapt to the changing needs of its users. He set out to design furniture that



Haven Sofa – ultra-soft foam offers a luxurious sink-in feel that quickly bounces back to its original shape



The Jasper Coast is tailored for relaxation with expansive deep seating that invites true comfort

the U.S. Our focus is on securing properties in prime locations that align with our brand and meet our customers' needs. Sustainable growth is essential to us, and as a privately-owned company, we have the flexibility to scale at a pace that suits us. Integral to this growth is our commitment to investing in our people, IT, and systems, and ensuring that our culture continues to attract and retain top talent.

Will you discuss King Living's commitment to sustainability?

King Living has been committed to sustainable design from the very beginning. Our products are built to last, starting with a durable steel foundation that offers strength and flexibility, accommodating endless configurations. Our modular sofas can be rearranged to suit our customers' evolving lifestyles, and the removable covers are designed for easy washing, repair, or replacement through our King Care service. In line with our sustainability efforts, we recently launched an online outlet in Australia, furthering our commitment to divert as much furniture as possible from landfill. We will increase our advocacy for a circular economy by measuring the amount of repurposed, reused, and donated product to minimize landfill impact. Additionally, we plan to closely examine our global CO2 footprint and comprehensively review all packaging to reduce waste.

How important is it for King Living to build a diverse and inclusive workforce?

Diversity of lived experience and perspective is incredibly important if we are to offer world-class products to a growing global audience. We have always been an employer of choice and have a strong track record of embracing gender, ethnicity, belief, political persuasion, and sexuality. We ensure diversity of access to our wide array of roles across

the world, but we also ensure that merit wins through high-performing teams, and our customers expect this. We want the best experiences for our teams and customers, which means recruiting and developing the best talent. The makeup of modern-day Australia is alive and well at King Living. In fact, our Support Centre in Sydney, which has around 200 employees, has first- or second-generation family origins from more than 30 nations.

What are your views on King Living's responsibility to be engaged in the communities it serves and a force for good in society?

Long before I joined the company, King Living had been an active participant in our communities, and it was one factor that attracted me to the company. We have a thriving King Foundation, which donates globally to causes where we know we can make a change in a sustainable and long-lasting way. The King family drives this with strong support from our teams in the showrooms, manufacturing centers, and our design and support center in Sydney. We also ensure that our furniture, which is used for photoshoots or for display purposes if unsold, is donated. As we manufacture our products in our own plants, we know the source materials and ensure that repair, reuse, and recycling are designed into our furniture as a policy.

What do you feel are the keys to effective leadership and how do you approach your management style?

I believe in leading as a servant of the organization on behalf of our customer. This means investing time and energy ensuring that many of the obstacles to success are removed for our team of specialists to deliver the next product or the next process. I also believe in getting the basics right; this means setting a clear vision and building a strategy with the leadership, as well as insisting that our teams take an active role in designing their own outcomes against the long-term goals.

What advice do you offer to young people beginning their careers?

Gain breadth of experience before depth. Try as many different roles as you can, particularly in your 20s and 30s. Combining travel and work (if you can) before settling down will also add another layer of experience and opportunity for some fun along the way. ●



Myco Side Table – ideal for small spaces, the minimalistic form combines with a space-saving cantilever design