It’s easy to fall prey to all the negativity surrounding the plastics industry, with what seems like constant media focus on single-use plastics, plastics in the ocean, recycling plastic waste, CO2 emissions, and climate change. Plastic seems to be a handy scapegoat for most of society’s problems!

The reality is that rotomoulding has many very good stories to tell and as an industry, we must recognise our positive contribution to the world and start to rebalance the arguments and perceptions.

I’d like to highlight a few areas for us to think about.

**Rotomoulding reduces disease and saves lives**

Access to clean and safe water is essential to a healthy life and it is said that half of the world’s hospital beds are occupied with people suffering from a water-related disease and 20% of deaths of children under 5 in developing countries are linked to dirty water and poor sanitary conditions.

These are frightening statistics, but it is important to know that rotomoulded products are making a significant impact across the world by helping deliver clean and healthy water supplies and contributing to the safe disposal of waste water and sewage.

Whilst it may not be as glamourous as many other rotomoulded products that we like to talk about, the humble water storage tank is a real lifesaver. It is inexpensive, robust, lightweight, non-toxic, and recyclable.

Of course, water storage tanks come in many shapes and dimensions and one of the major benefits of rotomoulding is that you can manufacture products of almost any size. The biggest tank I’ve come across is 70,000 litres (around 18,500 US Gallons), which will hold 70 Metric Tonnes of water when full – that’s the weight of 6 London double-decker buses!

Many of these really large tanks are used to store water in some of the driest rural regions of our planet such as Australia, where they play a crucial role in ensuring farms have enough...
AT ISSUE

water to support their crops and keep their animals alive. These products are critical to ensuring reliable food supply to people, and I can’t think of many things more important than that.

Protecting our health
There are a host of rotomoulding products from the healthcare industry and I mentioned some of these in my article “Zeroes to Heroes” which was published in RotoWorld last year. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of rotomoulding (and also the wider plastics sector) with applications ranging from insulated containers for storing and transporting COVID-19 vaccines at very low controlled temperatures, to parts of beds and privacy screens used for COVID and other patients in hospitals.

Benefiting the Environment
Rotomoulding is the process of choice if you want to make large, hollow, and tough objects. It’s not surprising then that recycling centres (glass, plastic, and paper banks), large refuse bins, street litter bins, stormwater surge systems and grease traps are made by rotomoulders. Rotomoulded products help us collect and reduce the amount of litter and waste that is entering the environment.

The amount of fuel used in vehicles is closely linked to the vehicle’s weight. Many components for trucks, tractors, buses, and trains are made by rotomoulding and are replacing much heavier steel. Diesel fuel tanks, tractor cab roofs and dashboards, truck mudguards and air ducts are helping manufacturers to make lighter vehicles with consequent reductions in fuel consumption and CO2 emissions.

Our sector is also leading the way in the move towards using green energy. There are billions of dollars of investment being made in hydrogen technology and rotomoulding is playing its part in the production of cylinders to store hydrogen for use in vehicles and electricity generators.

Durable and not single-use
Rotomoulded products are typically expected to last 10, 20, or even 30 years and I’m not aware of any that are designed to be “single-use”.

I think it is really important that our industry differentiates itself from other plastics processes and we make it clear that we do not make single-use products.

Insulated fish boxes, floor cleaners, pallets, chemical tanks, and thousands of rotomoulded applications are built to last, give service multiple times and over many years.

Polyethylene is inert, non-toxic, and recyclable
Finally, I think it’s worth pointing out that our industry is mostly using Polyethylene and most grades are safe for food and water contact and are relatively easy to recycle. Therefore, compared with other manufacturing methods such as steel fabrication and glass-fibre, rotomoulding produces products that are low cost, tough, do not rust or corrode, and are more environmentally friendly.

We must spread the word!
As I’ve said many times previously, rotomoulding is a fantastic process, and we need to attract the best talent to our industry and keep it. It’s becoming increasingly hard in a very competitive labour market.

We need great designers with vision and enterprising OEMs who will continue to develop and purchase new products.

I believe that it is incumbent on all of us to explain clearly rotomoulding’s purpose, to promote our industry and show how vital it is in delivering significant benefits to society.