

Washdyke juice factory marks major milestone

Processing plant's millionth metric tonne of carrots arrived yesterday

BUSINESS

Yashas Srinivasa

A carrot processing plant at Washdyke reached a major milestone yesterday, as its millionth metric tonne of carrots arrived.

Juice Products New Zealand (JPNZ), which has been wholly owned by the Japanese Sumitomo Corporation since 2016, celebrated the milestone and announced plans for expansion during a ceremony in Timaru.

JPNZ chief executive Chris Renfree said the milestone, which equated to a billion kilos of carrots, was the result of decades of commitment from growers, factory staff, transport companies, and customers working together.

"I've only been here for six years so I can't claim the responsibility for what we've achieved today, but I am just really proud of everyone involved in it."

The plant, which opened in 2008, sourced raw carrots from South Canterbury growers and processed them into high-quality juice concentrates for export to markets such as Japan, Asia and North America.

Renfree said South Canterbury had the perfect growing conditions for carrots, and for all kinds of agriculture.

"It's a real agricultural hub," he said.

He said the farmers who supplied JPNZ grew carrots as part of their crop rotation cycle to keep their land in good condition.

The company supported about 100 direct jobs during its peak season, and many more across farming, transport and logistics, he said.

"In the next couple of years, we're looking at significant expansion for our factory that could potentially double the size," Renfree said.

"That means more employees and also more products like turning some of our waste products into final products. It's really exciting.

"That's something we've been working on for a number of years and we have just bought a pilot plant that we are proving the



From left, JPNZ chief executive Chris Renfree, former owner Damian Honiss, Sumitomo Corporation's Yoko Miyawaki, former owner Richard Iversen and farmer Hamish McFarlane.

AIMAN AMERUL MUNER/THE TIMARU HERALD

process with and the results are looking good."

The truck carrying the milestone load of carrots was welcomed to the Washdyke plant by a piper, with the ceremony attended by staff, farmers, representatives of the Timaru District Council and business organisations, and Sumitomo Corporation.

Officiated by Venture Timaru chief executive Nigel Davenport, the ceremony was also attended by former owners Richard Iversen and Damian Honiss, who opened the plant and later sold to Sumitomo.

Iversen said he always knew JPNZ would reach this milestone, but it was very gratifying to see it happen.

"I think the future is very bright because this type of product is in increasing demand," Iversen said.

"And the key to success here is South Canterbury is a wonderful place to grow these sorts of crops you can't replicate this in many parts of the world."

Sumitomo Corporation deputy general manager fruit materials, Yoko Miyawaki, said she was thrilled about the milestone having first visited the plant in 2010.

"Any food manufacture we go to, they can tell the difference of the quality of our products, which comes from the soil of New Zealand," she said.

Davenport said the milestone reflected exactly the kind of economic development the district strived for.

"JPNZ is a textbook example of what strong regional economic development looks like, taking locally grown produce and turning it into premium export products that generate jobs, investment and global connections," Davenport said.

Timaru District mayor Nigel Bowen described the company as "one of Timaru's quiet powerhouses."

"Processing one million metric tonnes of carrots is not just a company success, it's a statement about the strength of our region's food and fibre sector."

Holcim says it remains 'committed to Timaru' following sale of carrier

TIMARU

Brooke Black

Ten years after opening its cement dome at the town's port, multinational cement company Holcim says it remains "committed to Timaru".

Late last year, Holcim NZ confirmed a plan to sell its coastal cement carrier and lay off 32 Kiwi seafarers, and move its product by road, after the Government refused to grant a waiver allowing a non-Kiwi flagged vessel to operate in New Zealand's waters.

The company opened its \$50 million cement terminal at Timaru's port in February 2016. The 30,000 tonne storage dome was the first of its kind in New Zealand and was pitched as an important gateway for cement distribution to the South Island and lower North Island.

Until late last year, Holcim distributed cement from its dome in Timaru to locations around the country via coastal carrier.

After confirming a plan to sell its carrier, the MV Buffalo, at the end of December, the company said it would move an additional 15,000 tonnes of cement by truck.



Holcim is committed to [the] Timaru facility, which remains the entry point for Holcim's cement into the South Island.

Claire Hartley, Holcim Australia and NZ head of brand and communications

The significant increase in the company's road transport operations was expected to see more than 500 trucks on the road each month, Holcim said at the time.

The *Timaru Herald* asked for an update on its plans this week, including whether the company was still considering a return to shipping, how much cement was being

moved by road, if the changes had any impact on supply lines and whether Holcim would continue to operate out of Timaru.

Holcim Australia and New Zealand head of brand and communications Claire Hartley said the company had "nothing further really to add to our previous statements at the end of last year".

However, Hartley did give an assurance about the Timaru facility.

"Holcim is committed to [the] Timaru facility, which remains the entry point for Holcim's cement into the South Island.

"That commitment doesn't change whether Holcim transports cement out of Timaru by road or, in the future, via coastal shipping."

This week the company was expected to put its case before the Employment Relations Authority following an interim injunction preventing it making six of the seafarers it had employed on the Buffalo redundant. In December, ERA member Nicola Craig granted the interim injunction "until further order of the Authority".

An investigation meeting was set down by the ERA for three days this week, from Monday until yesterday.



The Timaru District Council is consulting on its draft South Rangitata Reserve Management Plan.

COUNCIL

Consultation on management plan

Members of the community have been asked to provide feedback as the Timaru District Council consults on its South Rangitata Reserve Management Plan. The multipurpose recreational reserve, located near the Rangitata River mouth, was one of many recreational spaces managed by the council. The reserve's management plan set out rules and determined activities permitted on the reserve such as for the motor camp on-site. The plan also outlined how the council intended to manage water quality into the future. The aim was to create the right mix of public enjoyment, maintenance, protection, preservation and development of the reserve, the council said. The present management plan was 22 years old and things had changed since then. The council asked for community feedback in 2025, and having considered that had released a Draft South Rangitata Reserve Management Plan. Feedback was required before the draft plan was finalised, the council said. For more information visit the Timaru District Council website. Submissions close at 5pm on April 19.

LINDIS PASS

No injuries in SH8 crash

No-one was injured in a single vehicle crash on State Highway 8/Omarama-Lindis Pass Rd, near the Summit Lookout, yesterday afternoon. A Hato Hone St John spokesperson said they were notified of the crash about 3.20pm and responded with one ambulance and two rapid response vehicles but were stood down by police en route.

CRIME

Police notebook

A 48-year-old man was arrested on Theodosia St on Tuesday for failing to appear in court.

CORRECTION

Due to a production error, yesterday's front-page story *New business prepares to open in CBD* incorrectly attributed quotes from Mana and Meeples Boardgame Cafe owner Nikki Brown and Hobby Lords managing director Liam O'Neill. A caption and comment in the article saying it was hoped the new store would create a bit of a "buzz" in Stafford St should have been from O'Neill, and the quote "Our team is working quickly to get everything cleaned, safe, and back to the standard you expect from us" came from a statement on Schnitz and Co's Facebook page.

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