

Barriers and opportunities for SME manufacturing operations in the Asia-Pacific rim - A case study in the Australian household consumer market

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Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are viewed as extremely important for the development and sustainability of economies worldwide. To this end, much has been done to promote and support SMEs. However, a number of issues have been identified as key barriers for the establishment and operation of SME manufacturing activities. A case study in the Australian household consumer market is used to demonstrate some of the issues: accessing available government and non-government organisation information; non-standardised labelling of supplied materials from other countries; inconsistent availability of materials from certain suppliers; lack of engineering prowess for non-standardised manufacturing equipment; accessing investment capital; availability of existing systems to promote and aid clean manufacturing processes; and training requirements. Initiatives in other countries are evaluated and recommendations are made to address these issues. Finally, the positive aspects associated with the establishment of an SME in Australia are also highlighted.

Dr Alan Brent has consulted to a variety of industries in different countries for over ten years pertaining to sustainability issues. He is currently responsible for the Chair of Life Cycle Engineering in the Department of Engineering and Technology Management of the University of Pretoria, which aims to improve the sustainability performances of product value chains. He also acts in the capacity of Technical Director of B-earth (Asia-Pacific), a company that specialises in the manufacturing of eco-paint and related products. Gerhard Cronjé is responsible to establish the manufacturing and distribution operations of B-earth in the Asia-Pacific region through separate Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). He has commissioned and is currently optimising the main Australasia manufacturing facility in Sydney.