



Top choice: The Entapack table at the awards night with Vincent Papaluca third from the right at the rear.

Pictures: Sam Stiglec

Top award comes as 'surprise' for Entapack

DANDENONG-BASED company Entapack was named the Premier Regional Business Award winner at a glittering awards ceremony on Tuesday night.

Managing director Vincent Papaluca told the audience of 300-plus at the gala dinner organised by the Greater Dandenong Chamber of Commerce at the Sandown racecourse that the win was a "complete surprise".

"To compete against firms as large as we have the win is a huge thing," he said.

Entapack, based in Advantage Drive, Dandenong, makes liquid packaging liners, exporting 40 per cent of its output.

Mr Papaluca said the firm competed in a highly specialised market as one of "about 10 firms in the world dealing in this field".

"The industry started in the USA and we now export a good deal to that area. It's a bit like selling coals to Newcastle," he said after the dinner.

"I don't even know who nominated us for the awards. The first I heard was when we were contacted by the organising chamber."

Entapack, which employs about 50 workers, started 19 years ago. Since then it has established an enviable reputation.

Awards host Jamie Sturgess said the judges had been "blown away" by what they had seen at the

factory and what Entapack had achieved.

"Here is a business in Dandenong that is taking on the best and leading the way."

Guest speaker and state Minister for Small Business Andre Haermeyer acknowledged the hard work of small businesses across the south-east.

"Many of the best and ground-breaking business ideas have come from innovative small businesses that are seeking to find new ways to become more competitive."

He said small businesses played a vital role in Greater Dandenong's growth and prosperity, accounting for well over 90 per cent of the municipality's total of about 8000 businesses.

"The State Government is committed to providing an opportunity for these businesses to operate in a fair environment, to operate on a level-playing field."

Chamber of commerce president Peter Helmore said the awards highlighted the area's diversity of business.

"Again, the gala dinner showcased a diverse and highly successful group of companies who have their base in the Dandenong region but whose customers can be anywhere in the world."

He said the chamber was committed to growing the awards further and to making them the "best and most prestigious".

THE WINNERS

NOMINATIONS for the awards are made at five business breakfasts through the year. Each nominee is entered for the Premier Regional Business Awards as well as for other sub-awards.

- Premier Regional Business Award (National Bank) – Entapack.
- Environment Award (Ausmelt) – Sita Environmental Solutions.
- Export Award (Femier Hodgson) – Entapack.
- Innovation Award (Macpherson and Kelley) – Dair Industries
- Employment Award (ESP Tecforce) – Grenda Corporation.
- Service Excellence Award (*The Journal*) – Eye Society.
- Small Business Award (MJC Partners) – Bowen & Groves.
- Retail Award (City of Greater Dandenong) – Big In Black.
- Young Enterprise Award (Chisholm Institute) – Scott Mansfield.

The awards started in 1991 and are now among the best known in Melbourne. Other sponsors are The Dandenong Club, Garleigh Trophy Centre and Satori Graphics Pty Ltd.