

15 August 2018

## **Midland Brick founder Ric New wins Robert Law Award**

***Embargoed until 2pm Friday, 17 August 2018***

The suburbs of Western Australia would look different without Midland Brick founder Ric New.

Mr New, who was born in Perth in 1914 and left school to join the building industry at 14, responded to a severe shortage of construction materials after World War II by manufacturing his own.

With his brother Gerry, a 200-pound loan from his mother and homemade machinery put together from war surplus parts, Mr New established Midland Brick in 1946.

By 1989, the year he died, his company was supplying about 80 per cent of the bricks for the WA market, which means many of the homes in traditional suburbs owe their existence to the double-brick champion.

On Friday, his daughter Marylyn New accepted the Robert Law Award on his behalf at the Master Builders-Bankwest CEO lunch, honouring his influence on the state's building industry.

Midland Brick general manager Greg Smith said the company began with one kiln built by the New brothers from secondhand bricks and has grown to be one of the world's largest brick-making plants.

"Ric was a great innovator throughout his life and was probably responsible for more advances in brick manufacture than any other West Australian – or indeed Australian," he said.

Mr New used war surplus to make his brick-making machinery. The gearbox of a Sherman tank was modified to become the brickworks' first auger and three Bren Gun carriers were converted into the state's first commercial forklifts, which tore around the works at an alarming 40 miles an hour.

"Throughout the 1950s Midland Brick constructed more kilns and created new types of bricks but bricklayers were in short supply, so Ric helped start WA's first bricklaying school," Mr Smith added.

Master Builders Director Michael McLean said Mr New's entrepreneurial flair and can-do attitude were worthy of acknowledgement.

"In these fast-changing times, young West Australians should be inspired by Ric New's determination and encouraged to think creatively to find simple solutions to what might appear to be complex problems," he said.

Two Master Builders awards for young people are named after him. The annual Ric New Rising Star Award goes to an outstanding person aged up to 25 and the Ric New Medal for Excellence to someone up to 35 with strong innovation and work ethic in the building and construction industry.

Mr Smith said Midland Brick became the world's largest brickworks on one site in 1985, gaining a place in the Guinness World Records. The company has produced more than 10 billion bricks, enough to reach the moon and back three times.

**For more information please contact: Michael McLean, Director – W: 9476 9800 M: 0412 376 660 or Greg Smith W: 9374 8535 M: 0401 896 321**

**About the Robert Law Award:** Robert Law was the first Master Builders WA President in 1898. The award was introduced in 1998, the association's centennial year, to honour a significant contribution to the building and construction industry made by an individual or organisation. The inaugural winner was Homeswest, others include Len Buckeridge, Dale Alcock and Garry Brown-Neaves.

**Additional quotes which can be attributed to Midland Brick general manager Greg Smith**

"When the Dongara to Perth gas line opened in 1971, Midland Brick became the State's first customer for natural gas, converting its oil-burning kilns to this much cleaner fuel."

"In 1972, Midland Brick introduced its first clay paver and the New brothers formed The Midland Contracting Company to train and develop a new skilled workforce. The first contract for the team was the Perth Concert Hall. These pavers remain in place today, which is testimony to the quality of the product and the skills of those workers.

"In the same year, the company also began its long-standing relationship with Telethon, donating bricks to the first Channel 7 Telethon Home. By the end of the 1970s Midland was making 83 types of bricks, including the unique Fastwall – another of Ric's early innovations."