



## MEDIA RELEASE

### THE COLLECTORS

7 November 2012

#### A cut above

#### *Victa collectors keep the dream alive and well*

Whether it's Victa or Vegemite, the 20<sup>th</sup> Century certainly bore some great Australian products that developed into iconic brands and continue their dominance today.

While the 2012 London Olympics may have celebrated the UK's National Health System and the Great Ormond Street Hospital in their opening ceremony, the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games opening ceremony featured a great 'V' for Victa encapsulating a brand that captured a nation.

#### **Cottage industry beginnings**

Car salesman Mervyn Victor Richardson had always harboured the dream of being an inventor. Fortunately Richardson hadn't been deterred when he and his brother created a plane that plummeted on its maiden flight destroying the plane, but luckily leaving its pilot unscathed. As an amateur mechanic, his tinkering in his Concord, NSW garage, also led to the first motorised Victa lawnmower.

Richardson never expected his namesake Victa to be the success it quickly became. Built in 1952, Richardson captured the domestic market with Australians keen to enjoy the outdoors on their quarter acre blocks and swap manual lawnmowers for a less labour intensive, motorised version.

Within two years, the two-stroke mower had sold 60 machines and just six years later, the company moved to a new Sydney factory in Milperra with 3000 employees, generating 143,000 mowers a year for export to 28 countries. The company, now headquartered at Moorebank in NSW, where it still assembles Victa petrol mowers, has sold more than eight million Victas to date.

#### **Everyone owned a Victa!**

Windsor, NSW resident Tony Cassar, is an avid Victa collector – and if he doesn't have an original model, he builds a replica – including the Peach Tin Prototype (the first Victa model).

"I have more than 30 original models. I began my collection when I was given one at nine years old by my 'mower enthusiast' neighbour, who with only one arm and leg, used to call out to me to hold things for him so he could work on them," says Tony.

"At aged 14 I had four models and then I started getting serious. I go to fairs now to display my models to the public. At the Victa 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in Concord it was fantastic talking to people – everyone had a Victa back then [in the 1950s and 60s] and the memories they evoke are just wonderful."



### Collector community

Tony is a member of the Sydney Antique Club based in the heart of NSW's antique community in Windsor, home to collectors of chainsaws, motorbikes, car engines and everything in between. In addition, Tony chats to other lawnmower collectors as part of a strong online community at [www.vintagemowers.net](http://www.vintagemowers.net).

Established in 2006 by John Young from Barellan Point, QLD, the vintagemowers website provides a forum for 600 plus members – increasingly father/son members – about rebuilds of old mowers, where they should go to find them, or how much they should be paying, for parts or old models.

A collector himself with more than 50 models, one of which dates back to 1957, John created the website to provide a forum where collectors can swap information. As facts can get lost over the test of time, John's wealth of knowledge will always set the record straight and he has associates from Victa today and yesteryear to ensure that the information he provides is always spot on.

"The website brings together a community of like-minded people," says John. "It's a labour of love as much as anything and I've become a stickler for accuracy both in the Victa story and the cost of parts or models. It's great to be able to offer advice to other collectors building a replica or just making general repairs."

By cross referencing facts and talking to people from the day, the website has become a trusted source for all of its members and John's tenacity has ensured [www.vintagemowers.net](http://www.vintagemowers.net) a place in the National Archives.



### The Aussie way of life

With smart advertising, Victa ensured that in the late 1950s and 60s everyone spent their weekends mowing the lawn under their Hills Hoist washing line. The ads were posted far and wide on the Sydney tram and billboards making such offers as: *“Meet the Victa Mustang, most popular mower in the band.”*

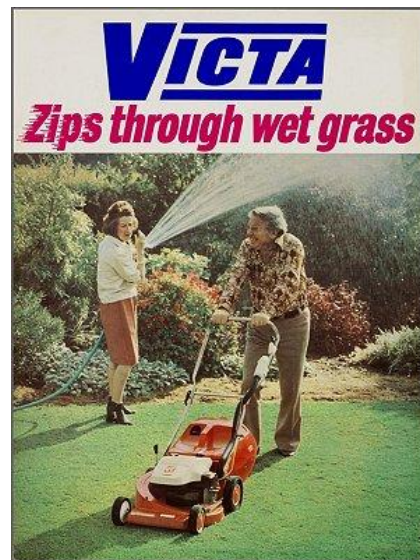
Pithy slogans such as *‘no lawn too fine, no growth too tough’* were used as part of hugely successful ad campaigns. *‘Turns grass into lawn’* was still used 50 years on from Victa’s 1959 origins.

Aussie humour has always played a part for Victa with the original Peach Tin Prototype, so called because of its peach tin fuel tank. And in 1957 the upside-down boomerang on the Victa logo was reversed to create a ‘happy’ logo instead of sad.

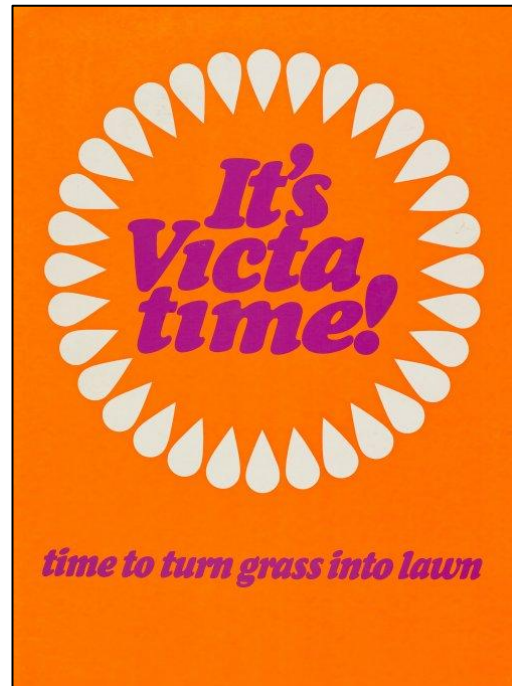
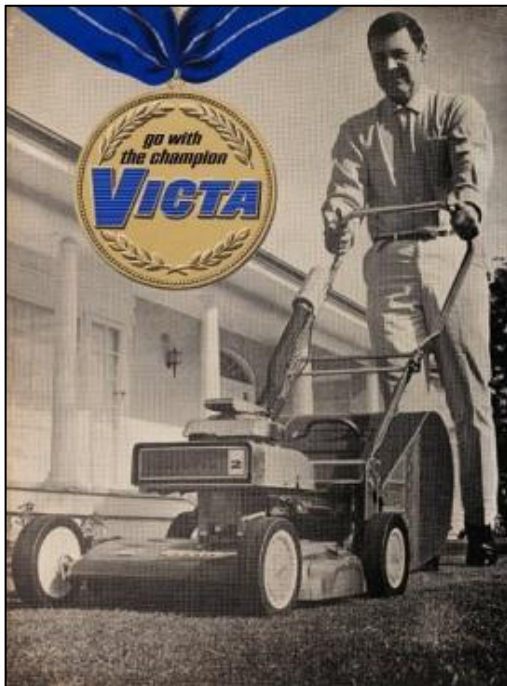
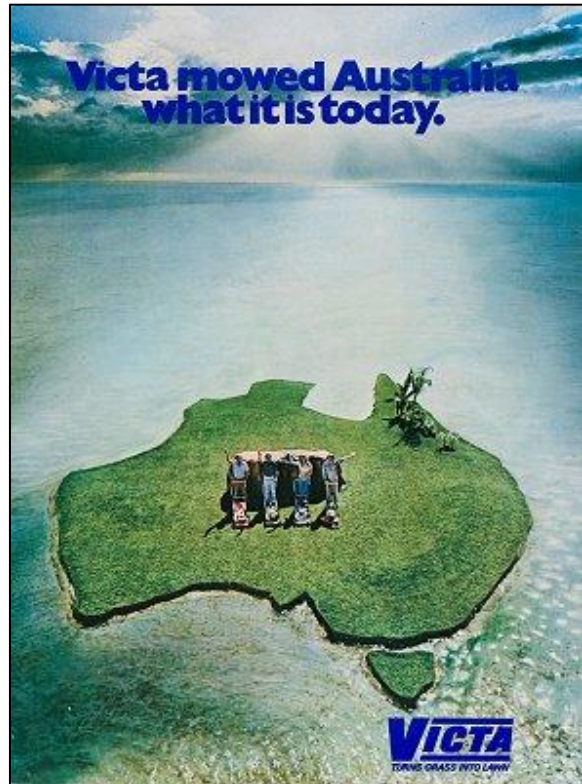
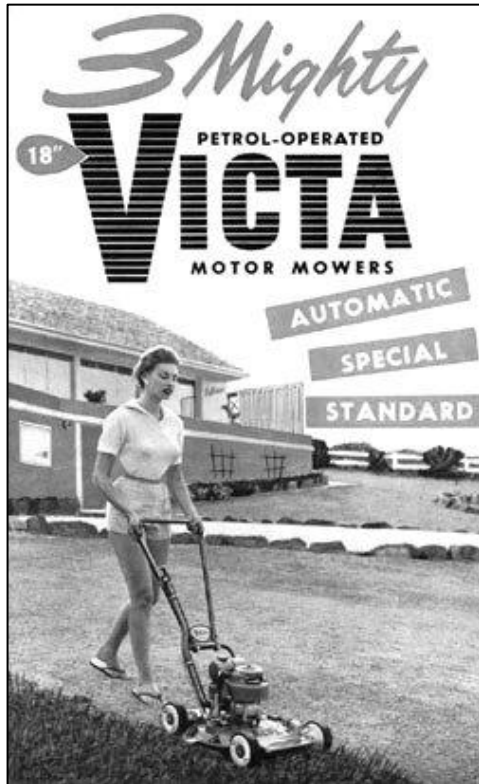
“My favourite Victa is probably the 1957 Automatic,” says Tony Cassar. “It was a bit of a flop at the time and ended up being recalled because it couldn’t be adjusted properly. But like anything unwanted at the time it was created, the ugly duckling becomes the swan and it’s definitely one of my more sought after pieces.”

Now owned by Briggs & Stratton Inc, Victa petrol lawnmowers continue to be assembled in Australia. The interest in Victa and the ownership Australians behold of the brand has ensured its place at the Sydney Powerhouse Museum with a Special Collection. The museum provides examples of the famous brand from early models to advertisements.

“My broad knowledge of Victas and my collection is one of the most extensive. I will never give up my collection, and if later my children don’t want my Victas, they will be donated to a museum. Victa is a great product that continues to be developed to meet today’s needs and I hope it is with us for a long time to come,” concludes Tony.







**About Victa – [www.victa.com.au](http://www.victa.com.au)**

Victa is a renowned garden and lawn care company with a history spanning 60 years. From humble beginnings in a Concord NSW backyard where it was created in 1952, Victa has expanded to become a global exporter of lawn care products. Today, Victa is owned by the Briggs & Stratton Corporation, a world leading small engine manufacturer and major supplier of engines to Victa. The vast majority of Victa mower products continue to be assembled in Australia at the Moorebank NSW head office.

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