



**Media Release**  
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## **Celebrating 50 years of keeping New Zealand feet happy**

Did you know New Zealanders typically have wider feet than other people?

Well, wider than Australian's anyway, which is something the Skellerup footwear designers have found out over time. Judging by the popularity of Skellerup's Red Band Gumboots however, they've got the measurements just right.

The wide-topped mid-calf step in boot with its recognisable red bands and toe caps celebrates 50 years in production this year. In all that time, apart from the inclusion of a sponge insole for added comfort, the boot hasn't changed a bit.

Skellerup Divisional Manager Footwear, Paul Randall, says the Red Band Gumboots were the first short boots ever to be produced in New Zealand, if not the world.

"Traditionally gumboots have always come up to just below the knee. No-one is quite sure who it was at Marathon Rubber Footwear – the forerunner to Skellerup - who had the idea to create a shorter boot but sometime during 1958 the new concept was tried out.

"The first pair of Red Band Gumboots rolled off the production line on 21 October, 1958 and became an instant hit around the country," says Randall.

Fifty years later the boots are still a staple in most rural New Zealand households.

Natural rubber compounds with built in UV inhibitors that can withstand New Zealand's harsh environment and its heavy-duty non-clog cleated sole are just two of the boot's many features that make the Red Band Gumboot brand so popular.

They also use heavy-duty 100% cotton canvas to which the rubber is bonded. This gives the boots greater strength, flexibility and protection.

Red Band Gumboots continued to be made at Skellerup's Woolston factory in Christchurch until the late 1980s when economic considerations forced the company to move production offshore. They were the first boots to be made at the company's new factory in Jiangsu, China. The reason for this, says Randall, is because they are the simplest boots to make.

“They are still hand-made to the original specifications and formulations that were created 50 years ago,” says Randall. “Each boot is made up of 19 individual components with at least six different rubber formulations used in every boot.”

The Jiangsu factory has the capacity to produce up to 1,000 Red Band boots a day and the New Zealand market soaks them up.

They have become part of the Kiwi landscape. After all, in the immortal words of Fred Dagg, “If it weren’t for your gumboots where would you be?”

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