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Queensland Edition | 2019–2020



# LEADERS

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# Leaders, by example

International Leaders is a business development organisation like no other, writes *Business Acumen* editor Mike Sullivan. The Leaders organisations are growing in Australia and internationally because they are founded, and vested, in the fundamentals of business growth and leadership – and they take on the characteristics of the business environments in which they operate.

**A**LL THE PRECEPTS of great leadership are embedded in the way the International Leaders organisation conducts itself.

Show, don't just tell. Lead by example. Teach—and do. Cash flow is key. Seek sustainability. Adapt to the conditions. Collaborate. Be genuine. Learn from others. Help and inspire others.

What became the International Leaders organisation began as Queensland Leaders in 2006 in Brisbane. The foundation for what the Leaders became has remained true to a practical concept.

For business leaders to develop, and for their businesses to grow, they need access to trusted networks, knowledge and capital.

Queensland Leaders was led from its inception by James Paulsen and Stephen Beirne. Today they still guide the organisation and operate in the roles of International Leaders Founder and CEO and Queensland Leaders CEO, respectively.

They knew the original concept was right, because from their previous roles in investment banking and venture capital they saw, on a daily basis, what made business leaders and their companies successful.

They also examined, as part of their work, a lot of business development models and understood that the fundamentals for success were, indeed, access to networks, knowledge and capital.

This fundamental idea placed Queensland Leaders in an unusual predicament. To succeed, James Paulsen realised the organisation had to stretch well beyond the known realms of business networking and leadership groups and into something else: a leadership catalyst and support ecosystem. Leaders essentially created a platform business for dynamic companies.

“The key to that, from day one, was to get the best business minds together—those who had track records for success, and that included overcoming adversity—and have them guide us and the companies we were looking to assist,” Mr Paulsen said.

“We wanted people who were passionate about developing business in Queensland—people who genuinely wanted to help develop the next generation of leading companies headquartered in Queensland.

“So we did that. We assembled a group of the best business leaders in Queensland. Some of them became members of our Advisory Board—and most remain so today. Others joined

up their companies as Industry Partners and others joined us in the roles of Industry Experts.

“I remember someone at the time called it the ‘brains trust’ of business in Queensland. And they were doing this for all the right reasons—giving back, to help business development in their state, and their country, for that matter.”

That tone was set by the Queensland Leaders Advisory Board that has seen long service and sage guidance from names that have graced the boards of many of Australia's leading companies and organisations over many years: Keith De Lacy, Sallyanne Atkinson, John Allpass, Peter Birtles, Ian Runge, Vivienne Anthon and Stephen Copplin.

## EXPANSION

Queensland Leaders became a catalyst for the accelerated development of some of Australia's most dynamic companies and brands—some of those better known nationally and internationally include Corporate Travel Management, VAE Group, Titan, Livingstones, Advisory Board Centre, Grove Juice, Nimble, EM Solutions, Pensar Infrastructure Group, Monte Marte and Uniline.



It is no wonder these organisations found better ways to grow and innovate. They were taking advice and receiving introductions from the leaders of many of Australia’s best companies, ranging across ASX-listed groups to successful small-to-medium-sized enterprises to multi-generational family businesses.

That successful formula became noticed beyond Queensland’s borders and was first taken interstate by Victorian Leaders CEO Robert Ford with the help of former Australian Cricket Coach, John Buchanan. They were also instrumental in the later establishment of South Australian Leaders, which is led today by CEO and Director Natasha Malani.

Around the same time, NSW Leaders was established and about 18 months later WA Leaders was opened up by CEO Rupen Kotecha and he soon followed it with a satellite regional WA series which has proven extremely popular. In Queensland, the Gold Coast satellite series also took shape about this time, led by CEO Michael l’Anson.

NSW Leaders was established in a market that has always been a highly competitive scene for business coaching and development organisations, all knocking on the doors of the most corporate headquarters-rich city in Australia. The Leaders approach has been to take more time developing the organisation in Sydney, in order to seek out the business leaders that have the genuine values that have worked so well



James Paulsen.

in Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia.

And in all states, the diversity of the network has been extended through the concurrent series that reach out to different business sectors:

**ONLINE LEADERSHIP**

A key element of growth and progress for International Leaders has been the development of online platforms that impart news and knowledge about companies in the network and enable Members, Experts, Partners and Alumni to connect locally, nationally and, increasingly, internationally with the development of New Zealand Leaders and London Leaders in the UK, and potential Series in North America and China also taking form.

Perhaps one of the most important recent online platform developments—and one that has had a strong impact in a short period of time—has been the Leaders-i-Centre (LeadersIC.com) which showcases the network’s leading company opportunities for investment and capital raising.

This part of the Leaders platform has been able to bring growth aspirations of Leaders companies into sharp focus and has been a conduit for equity, debt, M&A, exit and market opportunities that would have been difficult to initiate without it.

“The Leaders-i-Centre is all about interaction, innovation and investment,” Mr Paulsen said. “We have seen some really interesting opportunities take place since its launch that, frankly, I cannot see how they would have emerged prior to its inception.”

The platform is just the latest in a long line of innovations that International Leaders has brought through to assist its network—and now those innovations are a driver for increasing the reach of the Leaders.

“Each of our initiatives is purposefully designed to provide participants with fresh, relevant and valuable knowledge in order to achieve success in their personal, professional and business vision,” Mr Paulsen said

“With access to local, national and international networks, International Leaders creates opportunities for further growth.

“The Leaders platform provides connectivity into key industry, business and government leaders. This unique experience combines Industry Partners, Experts and Alumni, delivered in a unique yet structured approach to support each Member’s journey in achieving their vision.”

www.intlleaders.com ■



# Queensland's leading companies kick some serious goals



*What an Australian business development organisation should be. This founding Leaders group engaged with strong and innovative companies headquartered in the state and provided an atmosphere in which those leading companies could meet with, advise and assist future leading Queensland companies and their leadership teams. It was more than idea, it proved to be a game changer.*



Queensland  
Leaders



*By Stephen Beirne, CEO,  
Queensland Leaders >>*

**C**ELEBRATING its 13th year, Queensland Leaders has thrived on building a long-standing and sustainable network consisting of the State's business, industry and government leaders across a variety of different industries, sectors and backgrounds.

Each of these business Leaders commits their time and expertise to support the next generation of leading companies across two separate Series.

The Executive Leaders Series selects 25 businesses each year, representing more established companies that are entering their next stage. This could include growth, investment, expansion, new product innovation, or succession as examples.

The Future Leaders Series selects 15 companies each year, typically at



*The Queensland Leaders format of providing a variety of environments in which Members, Partners and Experts would meet evolved into a versatile recipe for business success. It now forms the foundation for national and international success.*

an earlier stage in their journey. The primary purpose is to surround each with the leading expertise and networks to build a sustainable and profitable business long term.

Each year Queensland Leaders provides these Members with a variety of workshops, mentoring, connect events, alumni events and other activities all designed to drive their business success.

Over the last 12 months, Queensland Leaders has provided Members with:

- Facilitation of more than 400 personalised 1-on-1 mentoring sessions with true industry experts across a range of expertise and industry sectors;
- 45 Knowledge Workshops, focused on exposing growth companies to fresh ideas, emerging trends and opportunities, and different thinking to take full advantage of their opportunity;
- 10 high-quality networking Connect Events with industry leaders, experts, and more than 100 growth companies each time;
- Industry Field trips with leaders such as Super Retail Group to gain

a unique behind-the-scenes insight into industry best practice across a range of fields and disciplines;

- Over 100 companies attending Growth, Strategy and Investment Forums in conjunction with the Efic and AusIndustry—focused on innovation, collaboration and commercial opportunity;
- Social events and networking opportunities bringing business leaders together in a social setting to further cement relationships and cross-opportunity.

During 2019, Queensland Leaders will be focused on making sure that each company involved is receiving direct access to the knowledge, networks, and resources they require to achieve their full potential.

Other notable outcomes in recent times from within the Queensland Leaders network include:

- Three companies achieving a public listing on the ASX;
- Over \$90 million of investment transactions;
- 12 Queensland Leaders Member companies directly accessing sister-Series interstate/overseas to open offices and create new business opportunities in other regions;
- Continued relationships with all three levels of government to ensure companies are gaining access to all possible opportunity, grant opportunities and other key outcomes;
- Full reciprocal rights access through the International Leaders network including across Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom;
- Access to China via the launch of an annual China Trade Mission in conjunction with AustCham Shanghai.

Queensland Leaders welcomes enquiry from all companies who are seeking growth, national or international expansion, succession/exit, or investment opportunities.

[www.qldleaders.com.au](http://www.qldleaders.com.au) ■

**Stephen Beirne.**



Images: Supplied.

# Advisory Board Centre a foundation for better business growth



*Louise Broekman knew from experience how a well-chosen advisory board could positively drive organisations. So she made an organisation to help create boards.*

IT TAKES a prescient vision to create a business that specialises in helping others to develop an innovation that made your own business a success.

Yet that is precisely what drove Louise Broekman’s creation of the Advisory Board Centre.

She realised what a manifest difference establishing an advisory board had made to her previous business—which she went on to sell successfully after developing it across eight countries—and understood that providing that experience and method to other businesses could produce similar outcomes for them.

“As a business owner in 2005, I had a proven business model within my own market and my own reach. It had great possibility,” Ms Broekman said. “To make the leap to scale, it would take deep personal commitment and change to the model. I knew my strengths and understood that the things I didn’t know could blindside me.

“As managing director, I wanted to make deliberate and confident decisions, so I chose to have a powerhouse behind me and established an

advisory board. In effect, I had to find a way to survive my own ambition,” she reasoned.

“We grew the business to 135 offices in eight countries and my advisory board was with me from scaling, going international and exiting the business. I can say that the advisory board structure changed my business and it changed my life.”

Like most entrepreneurs, Louise Broekman had a vague idea of what she wanted from an advisory board, but access to information on what its formation and operation entailed was limited. She had a fundamental requirement of the people she would invite onto her advisory board.

“I was looking for confidential and safe conversations with other successful entrepreneurs who expected me to step up—and ensure I would also be okay,” Ms Broekman said. She managed to find entrepreneurs who were generous with their time and provided honest experiential information. It was a success almost immediately.

“Following this success, we prototyped, tested and validated different advisory board models over five years,”

Ms Broekman said. “Through this we identified something bigger than we expected.”

The idea for a business that helped create specialised advisory boards for other entrepreneurs was born.

“Formalised Advisory Boards is a model that is highly impactful, flexible and durable,” she said. “It wasn’t just one business, it had the possibility of being a new, fresh and dynamic sector.

“This was an opportunity we couldn’t resist. To support the growth of the sector, a collaborative eco-system needed to be carefully developed.”

## EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACH

Louise Broekman and her team took her personal experience and translated that into a flexible system and, later, a platform.

In February 2017 she established the Industry Group Advisory Board Centre as an independent body to fulfil two functions:

1. Share a quality framework for the ‘advisor’ sector by prequalifying, educating and resourcing the advisory community.
2. Be an independent resource for business to educate, connect and engage with advisors more effectively.

“With two years, operating as an Industry Group, we are supporting businesses and advisors in Australia, New Zealand and Asia,” Ms Broekman said. “The future is exciting as we continue to support more effective engagement of advisors so they maximise their impact.”

There have been three significant outcomes over the past 12 months. First came positive results for businesses that have implemented formalised Advisory Boards.

Second has been a clear uptake of research and education in the market.

Third has been the growth of the formalised Advisory Community.

## Results for businesses

Ms Broekman said evidence-based results became a key outcome of the formalised Advisory Board sector.



The Advisory Board Centre not only helps find the right mix of experience among board members, it takes into account the dynamics and organisational ethos.



The networking aspects of Advisory Board Centre are a catalyst for growth.

“Measuring net economic impact in terms of business outcomes and internal business confidence of owners ensures results are driven through focus on targeted strategies,” she said.

“The number of formalised advisory boards is growing internationally. We have seen our efforts to support and validate the work of advisory boards independently is driving results.”

**Research and education**

With the growth of businesses adapting formalised advisory boards, the Advisory Board Centre has invested in significant research.

Ms Broekman said this year the first *Advisory Board Centre, 2019 State of the Market Annual Report* will be released.

“This is a compilation of trends and future considerations for advisor engagement globally,” she said.

**Growth of the formalised Advisory community**

The pre-selection and professional development of Advisors is core to the advisory board community, Ms Broekman said.

“This curated process has enabled us to create an exclusive community of advisors who are leaders in their field.

“From leading entrepreneurs and c-suite executives, it is powerful and influential group of independent leaders.”

**NEW PRODUCT GROWTH**

Advisory Board Centre’s Advisor Concierge has been a ground-breaking introduction to the market over the past year.

It has transformed the dynamics of creating a fit-for-purpose advisory board to all types of companies—and given business leaders added confidence in the process.

“We offer this as a complimentary service to organisations seeking to build



**ADVISORY BOARD CENTRE**

an advisory board for the first time or for those looking to refresh their existing structure,” Ms Broekman said.

The issue the Advisor Concierge has addressed is that of independence. As an industry group, the Advisory Board Centre decided it would work best if it did not charge for the service or take rebates from individual appointments.

“This has enabled us to be an independent third party to support businesses to gain clarity of their needs and support them as they build their Advisory Board structure,” Ms Broekman said.

This and other innovations have helped prove the case, time and again, for advisory board use to focus and accelerate the priorities of any business.

“Advisory Boards is an inherently flexible and dynamic model where it can be applied in multiple environments,” Ms Broekman said. “From emerging businesses, to existing changing organisations to corporates and multi-nationals, its strength is in its simplicity.

“The challenge has always been quality standards, best practice and access to advisors.”

This is the foundation created by the Advisory Board Centre. It is a best practice model for Certified Chairs to apply to their own advisory boards, pre-qualified advisors worldwide and an independent access point to connect organisations with advisors.

Only 6 percent of businesses currently use advisory boards, Ms Broekman

said, “perhaps because access and a practical pathway has not existed, until now”.

She said the model for creating a global conduit was built for the future growth of Advisory Boards—“not as a fad, but as a distinct strategic management discipline”.

“We are not unlike the businesses we support. A high growth organisation always has its challenges,” Ms Broekman said.

“We call it ‘surviving your own ambition’. We are no different. We estimate there are 430,000 Advisory Boards world-wide with a community of over 1.3million advisors. Our challenge is now to keep up with the demand and the momentum we have created.”

Ms Broekman said formalised Advisory Boards were a proven mechanism for sustainability and growth.

“Government—local, state and federal—should be looking at the capability and value advisory boards create when looking at funding models to support businesses,” Ms Broekman said.

“There is an ongoing need for education and access.

“As an Industry Group, we are continually building awareness of the value Advisory Boards create.” ■

Images: Supplied.

**Advisory Board Centre**  
**Best-known brands:** Advisory Board Centre, Advisory Boards for Business, Advisory Concierge, Certified Chair.  
**Markets:** Emerging businesses through to \$100m businesses.  
**Led by:** Louise Broekman, Founder and CEO  
**Size:** 250 members in Australia, New Zealand and Asia.  
**Contact:** www.advisoryboardcentre.com.au | Ph: 0408 477 165 ■

# Taking the DAIS on branding



Images: DAIS.

Jack Perlinski (right) has taken branding consultancy DAIS to an even higher level of engagement with companies and individuals that need to elevate their brands to achieve, and protect, their growth goals.

**W**HEN you have been successfully navigating one of the world's most tumultuous industries for 30 years—this year—you know a fair bit about how to achieve success. In the case of branding specialist group DAIS, you also know how to provide a foundation for others to succeed, for that is your business.

To succeed in the branding and design industries, it literally does pay to be acutely aware of a business's capabilities, aspirations, and the forces that impose themselves upon a particular business.

Which is why DAIS Brand Strategy took a dose of its own medicine in 2018 and re-engineered for sustainability and to enhance its client-centric creativity. Naturally, they branded this evolution: DAIS 3.0.

"The last 12 months has been a resettling of the business into its next generation," DAIS founder and director Jack Perlinski said.

"We call it DAIS 3.0 because, after 20 years in one premises, we successfully found and moved into a new creative studio space (in Brisbane's Fortitude Valley) which has provided a new energy and focus. It's been about re-establishing our processes and creating a fresh vision for what we see as our next 10 year plan.

"Our aspirations are definitely in relation to relevancy and sustainability," Mr Perlinski said. "My passion for the future is focused on where we can diversify the business and grow our offerings in line with changing market trends so that we are relevant for the future and continue to innovate

with energy to fuel our passion for what we do.

"One of the proudest moments was standing across the road from our new office watching the sign go up on the building—that was really powerful and emotional," Mr Perlinski said.

"However, our main successes are always linked to the success of our clients and the brands that they come to us to help them build. We've seen some real success stories grow out of the work we've delivered from the previous year and we always celebrate and acknowledge that—it's a payoff for us when they succeed."

## INNOVATION DNA

Part of assisting clients to find success is interpreting market changes and innovating to meet new demands. DAIS is already navigating that curve.

"I believe the next era of evolution in our industry is presenting us with a completely new dialect of communication with new rules of engagement," Mr Perlinski said. "Ensuring that we take the time to make sure our clients understand what is happening around them and in their markets will be a new responsibility for us.

"These new cultures are driven by technology and change on an almost daily pace, so we must include the new generation thinkers in our teams to make sure we're giving our clients what they need to stay relevant."

"More recently, the pressure of emerging technologies speed of evolution—and the significant pace of change we are experiencing in how we communicate—has inspired us to continue to innovate. We must be

open to adapting and flowing to ensure that we are tuned into the frequency of this change while developing creative solutions that will keep our clients and their brands relevant."

Just as DAIS teams emphasise the 'power of their people' in driving innovation, so does DAIS practice what it preaches. Jack Perlinski may have created the business but the DAIS team today constantly recreates the business, moving it ahead.

He explained it simply: "Love what you do. We have the ability, through the craft of what we do, to change how others feel about themselves.

"If we remain committed to that as our passion to create, to lead and to inspire others, we will always find ourselves loving what we do." ■



## DAIS Brand Strategy

**Brands:** BrandME, *The Why in You*, *The DAIS Book of ...*

**Best-known client brands developed:** Emporium Hotels. LGIASuper. QScan Radiology. Clovelly Estate Wines. Hema Maps. Master Electricians Australia. FKG. Vision 6. U&U Recruitment. Queensland Leaders. International Leaders.

**Leadership team:** Jack Perlinski, CEO and Creative Director. Jodie Perlinski, Director Business Development.

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# Livingstones & SHR Group merger: greater than the sum of its parts

**W**HEN human resources specialists Livingstones and SHR Group merged at the end of 2018, it was obvious there were going to be synergies that would offer significant new market advantages.

How rapidly those advantages have manifested was probably the greatest surprise.

For a start, both groups gained a geographical and market reach advantage that is already paying off in terms of better service for national clients.

Into the mix have come new professional specialisations and networks that have extended the capabilities for the combined group. A major gain for Livingstones has been the addition of a new business migration service.

“For Livingstones clients, we now are able to offer business migration services, which we traditionally weren’t able to,” said director Nadia Taylor, who has been with Livingstones for 21 years.



Nadia Taylor.

With such extended services being offered across the merged group, it is no wonder there has been immediate growth.

“Since our successful merger with SHR, which was successfully completed in December 2018, we are now Australia’s largest independently owned Specialist People Consultancy with a core team of more than 50 permanent employees and offices in four capital cities,” Ms Taylor said.

“The merger has been transformational for both businesses—one that recognises the professional, experiential and operational synergies between the two businesses as well as the collective culture of the merged organisation.

“The vision for Livingstones & SHR Group is to be the most respected bespoke specialist people consultants in the Asia Pacific region. Our commitment and dedication to client relationships and quality work is our key priority.

“The merger brings together the rich history and experience of both teams and provides broader capability across our specialist services, including employee and industrial relations,

human resource management, organisational development and business migration,” she said.

“We continue to create partnerships with our clients that build trust and provide confidence, while delivering the best people management outcomes for our customers.”

Ms Taylor is well versed in driving growth—and she sees huge upsides in potential development from the merger.

## MIGRATION SERVICES

The group’s business migration strengths are built on SHR’s extensive and long standing association with both local and overseas based companies, in securing the relevant visas that provide work entitlements. Now that capability is opened up to the entire Livingstones & SHR Group client base—and future prospects.

“Value is added by the provision of consulting advice to clients planning the importation of skilled foreign labour from countries that currently require skills assessments and other assessment criteria to meet Australian visa requirements,” Ms Taylor said.

“SHR has expanded its capability into international recruitment through assistance to clients in identifying needs, resourcing labour, and advising on and managing the process from recruitment through to visa approval and mobilisation.

“Finally, SHR can assist clients with the strategic planning of immigration activity that assesses alternatives and develops plans where outcomes are cost effective and with a whole of project focus.”

Livingstones & SHR Group’s business migration service focuses on managing all stages and compliance for business migration and international working visas.

The group starts by developing a client specific migration strategy and then conducts all business immigration activity on behalf of the client. The business migration service also conducts all visa activity for international skilled labour, including monitoring for immigration compliance.

Livingstones was established in 1982 by renowned industrial relations specialist Roly Livingstone with much of the firm’s work in those days



The Brisbane office kitchen area and collaboration space. Livingstones & SHR Group staff thrive on innovation.

concentrated on watershed issues including the South East Queensland Electricity Board (SEQEB) dispute, the Powers Brewing Voluntary Employment Agreement (VEA), the national pilots’ dispute and seven day trading on the Gold Coast.

For nearly 25 years Strategic Human Resources (SHR) has been one of the largest privately owned providers of human resource management, employee and industrial relations services in Australia.

Livingstones & SHR Group teams are committed to solving people issues—and to prove how powerful their combination and new synergies really add up for their clients. ■



## Livingstones & SHR Group

Livingstones & SHR Group operates across the Industrial Relations, Human Resources, Organisational Advisory and Business Migration sectors. With a core team of over 50 staff, the group has offices in four Australian cities.

The group is led by CEO Steve Rayner, Chair Alex Aspromourgos, Deputy Chair Belinda Honey and Directors Nadia Taylor, Mark Rodgers, Mark Hudston, Mike Allan, Colin Gibson and Steve Scott.

[www.livingstonesshr.com.au](http://www.livingstonesshr.com.au) ■

Images: Supplied.



MontMarte may be involved in an industry that has been around since civilisation began, but this 'one big happy family of enthusiasts are leading the way in encouraging the take-up of recreational painting globally.

## Mont Marte makes an art form of business

SOME of the world's most appealing art is being created using products developed and sold out of Australia by art supplies innovator, Mont Marte.

Mont Marte developed its 1200-plus art supply product range almost by accident, from an earlier general retail venture created by the Kent family. Today the Mont Marte business supplies more than 75 countries from Australia and its joint-venture production and distribution facility in Northern China—and major growth is tipped for the US market in particular this year.

"At Mont Marte we believe that everyone is an artist and our mission is to enable and empower everyone to explore their creativity," Mont Marte general manager Cheyne Kent said. "We intend to be known as a global household name for delivering on our mission."

Mont Marte started in 2003 as a stand-alone operation drawn out of general retailing and is today the most recognised art supplies brand in the country.

"In 2009, we formed a joint venture company with our leading product manufacturers in China and are now distributing the Mont Marte brand of products to 75 countries from our distribution centre in Northern China," Mr Kent said. "The Mont Marte complex, covering 50 acres, includes our joint venture manufacturing partners in easels, paints and canvas, which form the basis of the Mont Marte product range."

Mont Marte began as an innovation out of a family business and has

thrived through maintaining that emphasis on finding new and better ways to do things, while always remaining practical and in touch with changing customer needs.

### HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Mont Marte has made an art form out of constantly finding better ways to do things, discovering eager new markets and being creatively practical.

In mid-2002, Cheyne Kent, his father Bob—a highly experienced retailer—and Cheyne's step-mum, Carol started a wholesale business selling hardware, garden tools and ornaments, along with some giftware, to mainly discount stores around Queensland.

Then Bob Kent had an epiphany.

"One day we got a call from our agent in Shanghai ... we had a container of Black Garden Rocks to ship but we could only half fill it due to weight and she asked what she (the supplier in China) should do," Cheyne said.

"Dad told her to find something light to fill the container ... not to ship it half full, whatever she did. Well, she filled the container with artist canvases and when it landed they sold out completely in days," Cheyne Kent said with a smile. "We were onto something!"

Bob Kent began a long, arduous and ultimately rewarding journey in creating and building the Chinese joint venture business relationships.

"In 2003 we registered the Mont Marte brand and within 12 months

we changed our trading name to Mont Marte International to focus exclusively on the art supplies industry," Cheyne Kent said.

### PROJECTING PRODUCT

Mont Marte has recently expanded its service offering from the initial concept of an instant 'Art Department' that can be dropped into any retail store, to an express parcel model that allows small retailers access to the range of more than 1200 products.

Mont Marte is continuing to expand its footprint across Australia, but is also on the cusp of huge expansion in the US.

"We are in discussions with a number of retailers whose store numbers are in excess of 22,000, as well as identifying some very major opportunities in countries that have been overlooked by many of our competitors," Mr Kent said. "Our distribution across Iraq, basically a war-torn country, has taught us much about identifying opportunities in unexpected places."

"Our goal is to have a presence in 5,000 retail outlets across Australia and staying true to our business plan of not offering our products to the majors. We sell our product through discount variety, news agencies, art and craft, hardware, supermarkets and even electrical stores and bait and tackle outlets."

"We work in an industry that has been around in a form since the beginning of mankind and our Mont Marte brand is changing the face of that industry across the globe," Mr Kent said.

[www.montmarte.com.au](http://www.montmarte.com.au)

Mont Marte launched its new brand identity to the globe at Creative World in Frankfurt, very appropriately, on Australia Day 2019. ■



Image: Alitrax

The Alitrax racetrack design technology system.



Image: Supplied. © Julia Thorne Photography

Inside the hi-tech Nautech factory, Brisbane.

## Nautech doubles down on innovation

**N**AUTECH Group is an organisation making giant strides forward ‘on the double’.

It seems as if Moore’s law—which refers to the power of semi-conductors doubling every two years—applies to Nautech as a business.

For a business built at the cutting edge of semi-conductor utilisation, it is ironic that over the last past two years Nautech has doubled its staff numbers and doubled revenues.

Yet that performance is just the first step of an energetic campaign to leap forward in all areas in which the company operates.

That will be no mean feat as Nautech is developing and manufacturing technologies across a vast business spectrum including emergency services systems, specialised vehicles and adapted technology, automatic numberplate recognition, P25 radio networks, motorsport control systems and contract electronics manufacturing.

Nautech’s extensive capabilities have built quite a reputation for innovation and reliability in Australia, but increasingly its developments are being acclaimed in New Zealand, North America and Europe as well.

Some of Nautech’s better known recent successes include the successful supply of specially-equipped police vehicles for the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games and the company’s implementation of a state-wide deployment of Number Plate Recognition systems (VEHiQA ViQ) for Queensland Police.

In motorsport, Nautech is already recognised as a national leader in innovation and proved it again in 2018 with the deployment of the largest motorsport track safety system in Australasia at the Bend Motorsport



Images: Nautech

Nautech’s KIA Stinger police vehicles incorporate the VEHiQA integrated vehicle intelligence system.

Park, South Australia. Nautech also deployed its Alitrax Sentinel software solution, to provide in-car safety and flag status for motorsport—a system that features in the Bathurst 1000 and Bathurst 12 Hour events.

“The Nautech Group of companies have expanded on our highly-engineered solutions, incorporating advanced vehicle integration, for our ever expanding client base in emergency services and motorsport,” Nautech Group managing director Andrew Holden said.

“Some of the most pleasing recent business results include being selected to build the new Queensland Fire and Ambulance rapid response vehicles, along with a completely new range of Police vehicles due to local vehicle manufacturing closing,” he said.

### ENGINEERING SUCCESS

While the company surprised itself by growing 100 percent over the past financial year, Nautech teams are proud of the additional engineering services the company can now provide.

“Our engineering team skillsets have allowed us to grow our product portfolio over the last year dramatically,” Mr Holden said.

In the vehicle sector, Nautech now produces specialised commercial vehicles for Fire and Ambulance services and these incorporate live vehicle telemetry via private radio networks.

Both Alitrax Sentinel and VEHiQA ViQ vehicle integration technologies utilise Nautech’s systems to broadcast data over P25 private radio networks—and this technology itself is opening up doors internationally.

“We are looking at international expansion through our USA operations for Alitrax,” Mr Holden said. He said Nautech was also looking at a national footprint for VEHiQA by the end of this year, as well as developing a distribution network for Nautech products in Europe and Asia.

In terms of growth, Nautech is more a law unto itself. ■



**Nautech Group:** Nautech Electronics Australia Pty Ltd, VEHiQA, Alitrax.  
**Brands:** ViQ Emergency Warning Products, Alitrax–Connected Racing Intelligence.

Nautech’s brands and products operate across a business spectrum including Emergency Services, Specialised Vehicles and Technology, Automatic Numberplate recognition, P25 Radio Networks, Motorsport and Contract Electronic Manufacturing. The company has representation in Australia, New Zealand, North America and Europe.

**Nautech leadership team:** Managing Director Andrew Holden, General Manager Peter Forsythe, Finance Manager Suzanne Holden and Operations Manager David Bowden.

The Nautech Group employs 40–50 staff and has current turnover of \$6–\$8million. ■



Image: www.mullinslawyers.com.au

## Mullins helping businesses to innovate—and comply

**M**ORE OF THE SAME isn't considered to be a negative for Mullins advisory team, but only when 'the same' relates to achieving stability in a turbulent market and continuing to achieve success for their clients.

In recent years that has meant getting involved with scale-up and developing businesses at various levels, to both mentor and support. The process started when Mullins joined Queensland Leaders as an Industry Expert mentor in 2005 and has now extended to direct engagement with many companies that have come through the Leaders program—including sitting on several advisory boards.

David Williams—who is the partner in charge of the Corporate Practice at Mullins and is a director of Mullins Migration Pty Ltd—has been at the forefront of Mullins' moves to step up the scope of engagement with these growth companies. In fact, a key aspect of the success of many of the companies Mullins assists has been the right kind of advice—at the right time—coming through Mullins specialists who are seeing these businesses close-up.

"One of the most rewarding things our Corporate practice did last year was continue our membership with Queensland Leaders, including being part of their mentoring program," Mr Williams said.



David Williams.

"The other very rewarding thing we did was join four of our partners as members of the Advisory Board Centre. Both of these appointments have enabled us to work closely with organisations to help them achieve their business goals, which we find very satisfying."

Through Mullins' Advisory Board Centre membership, Mr Williams was appointed as chair of the advisory board for Nautech Electronics Australia Pty Ltd and chair of the advisory board for Syngineering Water Pty Ltd. He is also a member of the advisory board for VAE Group (Value Added Engineering Group Pty Ltd).

"We will continue to work with these organisations in 2019," Mr Williams said. While much of the advice Mullins teams provide is industry compliance specific, increasingly Mullins' experience across legal and financial business structures has helped clients shape their businesses for greater resilience and long-term security.

In recent times this has also included advice on the new environment of corporate responsibility which has emerged following recent Royal Commissions.

"I think one of the biggest things to impact businesses in the last year has been the Royal Commissions, particularly the Royal Commission into misconduct in the banking, superannuation and financial services industry," Mr Williams said.

"Although some businesses may not think this relates directly to them, it puts a spotlight on governance and misconduct generally. Particularly in re-

lation to the Hayne Royal Commission, it's not the laws that need to change, it's simply the enforcement of them by the regulators.

"This is relevant to all organisations, as bad behaviour by directors and/or business owners occurs everywhere."

Encouraging best corporate practices that both build reputations and drive profitability has been instrumental in the growth of Mullins from its beginnings as a 'family' practice.

### KEEPING FAMILY HERITAGE

The Mullins that David Williams joined in 1998 felt like a family business—and Mr Williams felt right at home in the way the firm interrelated with clients.

"When I joined Mullins it was very much a family business which was started in 1980 by Patrick J. Mullins, the father of Pat and John Mullins who are still partners of Mullins," Mr Williams said. "Back then, Curt Schatz (the current managing partner), Paul Lutvey



Pat Mullins.



John Mullins.



Curt Schatz.



Paul Lutvey.



Bob Lette.

Images: Headshots by Sheree Burke Photography. Image of Bob Lette is in the Public Domain.

and Bob Lette were the only other partners.”

Patrick J. Mullins OAM set up as a sole practitioner in a small, three-roomed office in Edward Street, Brisbane in 1980. He was joined by his two legal graduate sons, Patrick Jnr. and John Mullins in 1981.

“Mullins’ philosophy was simple: to deliver the best possible results for clients,” Mr Williams said. “Together John and Patrick Jnr steered the family firm through a period of steady growth to become the strong corporate law firm it is today.”

Today Mullins is a thriving commercial law firm with an invested, loyal and service-driven team of more than 80 staff led by managing partner Curt Schatz. The firm occupies prime real estate in Brisbane’s Eagle Street business precinct at Level 21, Riverside Centre.

Mullins is invested in the nine key industries in which it has particular experience: Pubs and Restaurants, Clubs, Hotels, Accommodation industries, Education, Retirement Villages and Aged Care, Sport and in the Churches sector.

In 2018 Mullins established Mullins Migration—extending an existing service that is branded now as ‘Part of the Mullins Group’ as a separate practice.

“Mullins Migration offers migration services and significantly supplements the existing Corporate offering,” Mr Williams said. “I am appointed as a director of Mullins Migration and am pleased to say it is moving forward steadily.”

Another relatively new service that sits as part of the Mullins Group is Workplace Secure which offers a fixed, low-cost annual or monthly subscription in return for ongoing employment law advice. This helps clients to ensure compliance with workplace laws “and to reduce the risk of employment disputes and litigation, providing peace of mind” said Mr Williams.

“Over the years, the firm has moved to become a brand, rather than a family name, as the firm’s reputation has evolved and new partners have taken equity,” Mr Williams said. “We are proud to have grown the firm to a steady partnership of 19, with more than 65 supporting staff members.”

Mr Williams said one of the most pleasing results Mullins had achieved over the past 12 months was its brand refresh, launched in April 2018.

“We worked with DAIS (brand strategy specialists and another Queensland Leaders Industry Expert) to

review the position of the firm and develop a new brand that represented the value we believe we represent to our clients,” Mr Williams said.

“The feedback in relation to the new brand has been very positive, and it has moved the firm in the right direction.”

### GOING DIGITAL

As a legal firm that works with many leading edge technology companies, Mullins Group was both eager to transition to a digital-first operation but careful in its execution.

“In the current market, we are most proud of being able to continue to grow the firm,” Mr Williams said. “This has been achieved by making several decisions to both increase our top line—by introducing new services such as Mullins Migration and Workplace Secure—and by thinking smarter in order to reduce expenses.

“One way we have reduced our expenses is by going digital. With the onslaught of digital disruption, we progressed over the last three years to digital dictation and electronic files. This enabled us to review our space requirements and reduce our footprint in relation to tenancy, yet retain all of our staff and still have room to grow.”

“Embracing this technology has also made it easier for staff to work flexibly, which has in turn enhanced our service delivery to clients, particularly those who work internationally.”

Mullins’ transition from hard copy files and documentation to the electronic format has better enabled partners and staff to operate remotely and provide far more efficient service to a wider spectrum of clients.

“Our lawyers can now produce high quality documents quickly and efficiently with minimal, if any, support staff requirements. This tool also assisted greatly with the rebranding of our documents following the launch of our new brand, as so many old documents needed to be updated into the new style.

“In addition we have implemented complete speech recognition technology which further facilitates our flexible work environment, and with the rapid emergence of big data, we are currently implementing the BigHand Quantum and Evaluate business intelligence tools that will allow us to capitalise on the value of our data and move our reporting and business analysis to the next level.”

## MULLINS

**Brands:** Mullins Migration, Workplace Secure, Corporate Services, Private Client Services, and Mullins Group Services.

Mullins is strongest in the industry sectors of Pubs and Restaurants, Clubs, Hotels, Accommodation industries, Education, Retirement Villages and Aged Care, Sport and in the Churches sector. The firm is led by Managing Partner Curt Schatz, with 10 equity partners, and a Chief Financial and Operating Officer.

Mullins Group has more than 85 staff and a turnover of more than \$17 million. Recent awards and recognition include Doyles Guide awards: 2018 Leading Commercial Lawyers, Queensland; 2017 Leading Commercial Lawyers, Queensland; and 2016 Leading Corporate and Commercial Lawyers, Brisbane.

[www.mullinslawyers.com.au](http://www.mullinslawyers.com.au) ■

### SET UP FOR SUSTAINABILITY

The Mullins Business Plan is now based on growth and providing for succession. Growth against turnover has, over the last 18 months, progressed to 20 percent, Mr Williams said.

“We have achieved the majority of this through organic growth—work from existing and new clients—but have also developed other product offerings, Mullins Migration and Workplace Secure, which will continue to grow.”

Mullins is a firm that practises what it preaches—especially about business leadership and building a reputation for reliability, capability and fairness in client service. It is well positioned for stable and astute growth, but like all good business advisors is wary of challenges they may need to fend off on the horizon.

Like many legal firms, Mullins has been watching the acquisitive creep of the major accounting advisory firms into the legal ecosystem.

“It is a competitive market at the moment, and has been for some time. This really requires us to keep focused on service delivery, client retention and continuous innovation to stay ahead of the curve.

“To keep growing, we will focus on the succession plan for our young lawyers and remain committed to our client base.” ■



# New Hope Group sets new standards in mining



*Above and beyond requirements, New Hope continually searches for improvements that will provide better outcomes for the environment and communities near its operations.*

**N**EW HOPE Group may be an Australian miner with a pedigree stretching over 80-plus years, but it has the demeanour of a fresh, young resources innovator.

For instance, New Hope Group is a coal miner which strategically sets aside as much of its natural bushland as possible, as advised by its environmental science teams, then mines and rehabilitates as it goes to create top quality pastures for its own pastoral company to farm on the site.

New Hope Group also has a small, but successful, oil drilling operation that insists on refining its crude in Australia and selling it close to a local refinery in Western Queensland, keep-

ing costs down for local communities. The group also owns the Queensland Bulk Handling (QBH) operation at the Port of Brisbane, from where it ships its coal internationally and assists other resources companies to do the same.

New Hope Group is not known for the sorts of controversies or grand self-promotion that some mining giants engage in—which is no mean feat, seeing that one of New Hope’s most profitable sectors is coal mining. Perhaps that is because the company makes an art form of working closely with its local communities.

In fact, New Hope Group is rapidly becoming better known for its mine

site rehabilitation methods and capabilities than it is for its mining activities. For example, New Hope’s New Acland coal mine on the Darling Downs won a Queensland Government environmental award in 2018 for the rehabilitation of its mine site into pastoral land.

That pastoral land reformation has performed well from the outset for the cattle farmers utilising it: New Hope Pastoral. Yes, New Hope Group’s own pastoral company operates its former mining lands as they are progressively rehabilitated behind the mine. New Hope has a team of environmental scientists guiding the process and also utilises university science teams to conduct ongoing research on local wildlife and bush conservation and mine site rehabilitation.

So New Hope has a vested interest in getting that rehabilitation right, taking particular care with soil quality and the local vegetation mix. New Hope plans the mine and its rehabilitation in tandem, challenging its teams to keep wildlife disruption to a minimum and—as a happy consequence of water utilisation in coal mining—is usually able to boost local wildlife habitat through watering.

## TAKING THE LEAD

New Hope Group managing director Shane Stephan was with Macarthur Coal—a successful coking coal group that was later purchased by US giant Peabody—before joining the company.

But he has a grass roots appreciation of the mining industry, having gone from working underground on a coal

*New Acland progressive rehabilitation.*



mine cadetship through to earning his mine manager’s certificate at age 22—and then going on to obtain a list of complementary qualifications, later completing a degree course in business finance and accounting.

He first put that education to good use by moving into investment banking with Barclays in Sydney in the field of structured finance—debt and corporate finance, centred on equity raising and takeovers—a portent for his future in leading acquisitive resources companies.

Shane Stephan literally does know mining operations inside-out. Before moving into upper management of companies such as Macarthur Coal, he also had a management-level hands-on stint with the Queensland Inspectorate of Mines where he was part of the greatest health and safety transition, and adoption of new safety technologies, in Australian resources history.

**NEW HOPE BECKONS**

After being part of the leadership team that took Macarthur coal from its Australian Stock Exchange listing on July 5, 2001 at \$128 million market capitalisation, to a \$5 billion market cap before it was bought out by American giant Peabody, his next move was to a very different type of mining group: New Hope.

Mr Stephan said, “New Hope is a much more conventional mining company, very vertically integrated. We own our own drill rigs, have our own geologists, we do our own exploration, we do our own geological modelling, we have our own engineers, we get our own approvals. We don’t employ mining contractors. As a norm we are owner-miners. We do our own marketing.”



*New Hope Group’s rehabilitated coal mine site is among the best cattle grazing lands in the region. It is today a beef cattle farm operated by New Hope Pastoral.*

New Hope had been around since 1952 and had a strong balance sheet and a strong heritage and reputation or working with local communities over long periods of time.

“It actually started in Walloon, just outside of Ipswich, a little underground coal mine ... that was actually bought out of receivership,” Mr Stephan said. “The mine had gone into receivership in the 30s—in the Depression—and a group of people had purchased it off the receiver after World War Two, in 1952.

“It was purchased off a receiver, it had gone broke and they had New Hope for it! So that’s where the company got its name.”

What is not readily understood about New Hope Group is that for decades it has been controlled by Washington H. Soul Pattinson—the second oldest listed company on the ASX.

“They have just over 50 percent of our shares,” Mr Stephan said, “so we are and have always been Australian controlled.

In fact, in late 2018 New Hope Group became included in the ASX 200 for the first time.

“For the recent past, we have always been large enough, but the lack of liquidity in our shares had stopped us being in the index. Because the three largest shareholders held such a

*Continued next page ...*



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percentage and they did not trade their stock, it has taken us a long time to get into the Index. But it is good to be in the Index now."

**NEW HOPE GROUP NOW**

New Hope currently manages around 6 million tonnes a year of thermal coal into Asian markets out of two mines: Jeebropilly and Acland.

"Jeebropilly is right next to the Amberley Air force Base, around 600–650 thousand tonnes a year," Mr Stephan said. "Now that mine is the last mine in the West Moreton field, which is the homeland of coal mining in Queensland. Jeebropilly will be the last mine in the West Moreton region.

"It will close in the third quarter of 2019. It just runs out of resource.

"And then we have Acland," Mr Stephan said. "It's developed progressively over time to the point where it is capable of producing 5 million tonnes a year. Currently it is operating at about 4.5 million tonnes."

The Acland mine is currently in Stage 2 and the company intends to finish its rehabilitation and move on to Stage 3, once approvals are granted.

However, New Hope's plans are yet to be ratified by the Queensland Government. "We don't want any production gaps because that puts at risk my contracts and it puts at risk the jobs of our workers," Mr Stephan said.

The vast majority of New Hope's coal goes up into North Asia: Japan, Taiwan, Korea, and some occasionally goes into mainland China, with some shipments into Vietnam and, every now and then, into South America.



New Hope Group managing director, Shane Stephan.

Mr Stephan lamented the fact that the public did not get access to factual cost-benefit analyses about the Australian coal industry and the vital role it was playing both economically and in transitioning to a low carbon emissions future.

"I think the signal is clear from our Asian customers. They want a high energy, low sulphur coal. They want it for 20–30 years. They are building these advanced ultra-super-critical thermal power stations as part of their energy mix ... and they are not cheap.

"They've made their decisions, and when you think about it, it is totally rational. They are not relying on any one energy source, they are taking a diversified approach. Which makes perfect sense."

In some ways it is 'back to the future' for New Hope, which is still headquartered close to its foundation mine.

"Head office is in Brookwater, it used to be in North Ipswich," Mr Stephan said. "We've got a sense of our heritage, even though the business has changed materially at various times over its history. You have to adapt."

[www.newhopegroup.com.au](http://www.newhopegroup.com.au) ■



*Bottom left: If you had not seen the New Acland site before it was rehabilitated into improved pasture land, you might never believe it had been a coal mine.*

*Below: The pasture is among the best in the region today and native wildlife is thriving on the former mine site.*

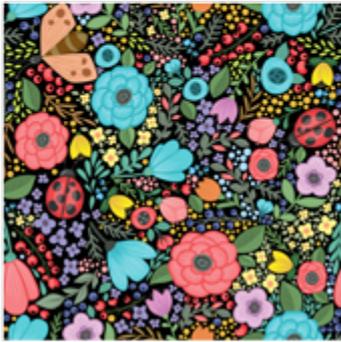


Image: Supplied. Photo by Mark Duffus @ 2018.

Images: Supplied.



**HP Mosaic 3.0**  
taking design to infinity



seed file



## QLM labels brands with the wow factor

**A**NDREW SIWICKI's grandfather warned him as a child: "Work hard or you'll end up sticking labels on jars."

"Well I showed him... I now run the sticker company," laughed Andrew Siwicki (tongue firmly in cheek), who is now General Manager of one of the world's most innovative and creative label printing companies—QLM Label Makers.

Even QLM Label Makers Australia's most recent awards list—on top of a decades-long tally—proves the point: Winner at the 2017 World Label Awards; Gold in the 2018 FPLMA Label Awards; Grand Winner in the 2019 HP Digital Print Excellence Awards for Asia-Pacific and Japan, and Winner of both the Food, Wine and Non-Alcoholic Beverages category and the Event and Campaign Label section.

While the awards are satisfying for QLM Label Makers teams, that is not what inspires them to constantly excel, Mr Siwicki said. That constant quest comes down to a method of 'bringing labels to life' on behalf of clients that has been part of QLM's DNA for almost half a century.

"For more than 45 years QLM has worked with local heroes and multinational companies to bring their labels to life," Mr Siwicki said.

"QLM has achieved this growth through a combination of ambition, pride and passion. We have a unique business culture of making it happen," he said.

### LABELS THAT STICK WITH CUSTOMERS

QLM Label Makers started from humble beginnings in the family garage of David and Del Pugh in Brisbane and their son, Simon Pugh is CEO today.

From a single hand-fed business card press, QLM has grown to become Asia Pacific's most dynamic and constantly evolving label company, with offices and teams around Australia and has subsidiary companies in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Malaysia, Vietnam and the UK.

The recent specialised label creation work QLM did for leading Australian gourmet food company, Pukara Estate, not only won the Grand Winner title at the 2019 HP Indigo Digital Print Excellence Awards for Asia Pacific and Japan, it opened many potential clients up to

the way QLM collaborates with clients to push new creative boundaries.

Pukara Estate initially approached QLM to create stronger engagement with their Connoisseur Club members. They wanted something that reflected their brand values but also 'elevated' their product: a special blend of Pukara Estate Olive Oil for their members that they would be proud to have on display in their kitchens.

QLM teams combined the technology of their HP Indigo label presses with 'Mosaic' software to create customised designs, such as those seen on Coke and Nutella product sleeves. The HP Indigo digital printing platform used by QLM makes it possible to customise and add personalisation to product labels and packaging on any scale.

"The Pukara project resulted in the first Australian market application of Mosaic technology in the self-adhesive label space and is part of a number of ongoing projects aimed at utilising the power of personalisation and customisation to generate increased sales.

"The finished products are absolutely stunning and the proof is in the sales and awards—including Grand Winner at the 2019 HP Indigo Digital Print Excellence Awards.

"People want to be *wowed* and you need to surprise and delight them to get their business. That is where QLM is finding its place as the leading supplier for customised labels and packaging," Mr Siwicki said.

It all starts with a conversation to "see how personalisation and customisation could provide your business with that connection," he said.

"Because, after all, it is all about connecting with people and a message that really sticks." ■

### QLM Label Makers

QLM Label Makers create and manufacturer product labels and packaging utilising thermal and digital colour label printers. QLM also represents and distributes label print technology brands including Toshiba, TSC and ADSI.

QLM has more than 90 staff in Australia and more than 500 across the QLM Group internationally. It operates across the Food & Beverage, FMCG, Industrial, Warehouse, Wine, Meat and Poultry industries.

QLM's leadership team is CEO Simon Pugh, General Manager Andrew Siwicki, National Sales Manager Joel Scott, Office Manager Michelle Randell, Art Manager David Brady, QA Manager

Betty Luong, Queensland Production Manager Andrew Conopia and Victoria Production Manager Sert Somphanpanya.

#### Recent awards:

**2017 World Label Awards** – Winner;

**2018 FPLMA Label Awards** – Gold;

**2019 HP Digital Print Excellence Awards: Asia Pacific/Japan** – Grand Winner, Winner Food, Wine & Non-Alcoholic Beverages, Winner Event & Campaign Label.

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Andrew Siwicki.

# Orcoda cleverly organises connected data



The digital age is ripe with opportunity for Orcoda, a diverse ICT company that helps companies to be far more efficient by their organising data systems.

**O**RCODA Limited is a company that means what it says—and does what its name means: Organise Connected Data.

“Last year we changed our name to Orcoda Limited,” managing director Geoff Jamieson said of its combination of the interlinked companies SmartTrans Limited, Resource Connect Pty Ltd, Icuro Pty Ltd and Icuro Healthcare Pty Ltd.



Geoff Jamieson.

“The name Orcoda has generated a lot of interest and the logo generation has been a real conversation starter. The name Orcoda is a *portmanteau* which takes the first two letters of the words Organise Connected Data.

“Orcoda writes clever software that makes healthcare, transport and mining companies more efficient,” he said. It is a simple premise that appeals to most companies trying to get their legacy systems functioning in the modern ICT environment.

The creation of Orcoda Limited by merging the brands SmartTrans, Resource Connect, Icuro and Icuro Healthcare facilitated the merging of SmartTrans Transport logistics software platform and Resource Connect and Icuro’s people logistics software platform into an integrated solution that facilitates a people transport solution that has put Orcoda in a unique position in the market place.

SmartTrans specialises in vehicle planning software solutions to the transport sector and has been listed on the Australian Stock Exchange for

more than 20 years.

Resource Connect has been providing people management software services to the resources sector for the last seven years and Icuro has been operational for about five years, developing software solutions for both the resource sector and healthcare sector.



## Orcoda Limited (ASX:ODA)

**Brands:** Orcoda Transport Logistics, Orcoda Resource Logistics, Orcoda Healthcare Logistics, SmartTrans, Resource Connect, Icuro and Icuro Healthcare.

Orcoda operates across Transport, Healthcare and Resources sectors. It has a market capitalisation of \$10m, employs 15 people and turns over \$2m a year.

**Leadership team:** Geoff Jamieson MD/CFO, Warren Preston GM resource logistics, Simon Anthonisz GM healthcare logistics, Grant Boydell GM transport logistics, Grant Neilson GM customer solutions, and Sean Hardman GM sales and marketing.

**Board members** are Nicholas Johansen (Chairman), Geoff Jamieson (Managing Director) Brendan Mason (non-executive director) and Stephen Pronk (non-executive director)

**Email:** info@orcoda.com

**Phone:** 1300 672 632

**Recent Awards:** 2017 Australian Supply Chain & Logistics Awards—IT and Management Award. 2017 Australian Supply Chain & Logistics Awards—Supply Chain Management Award. 2016 Winner, business excellence award for business innovation. ■

“Our community transportation for aged persons and people with disabilities, is evolving out of our ongoing research and development programs and is able to deliver a much needed service to the community at a lower cost than other service offerings,” Mr Jamieson said.

“The past year has been one of consolidation, as we merged the teams from SmartTrans, Resource Connect and Icuro. As the combined business becomes more established, we’d expect growth across all divisions.

“We are currently completing User Acceptance Testing (UAT) with a large not for profit organisation. So 2019 is looking like it will be a good year for Orcoda.”

## HELPING CLIENTS INNOVATE

In a nutshell, Orcoda’s business optimisation systems, and support teams, help companies and not-for-profits become more efficient in all aspects. So far, Orcoda has been concentrating on logistics for the healthcare, transport and resources industries.

Orcoda systems have an immediate positive bearing on the profitability of client organisations, but they also create important long-term benefits such as better human resources methods and better-informed technology adoption planning.

While helping clients to manage changing environments, markets and technologies, Orcoda has become very adept at managing change itself.

“The integration of the Resource Connect and Icuro merger has gone very smoothly and the team is working together brilliantly,” Mr Jamieson said. “Our resources division is achieving great things. With large mining customers such as BHP, we’re working on projects in traditional energy, gas and sustainable energy providers.

“In the transport business, our team has figured out how to make our application achieve optimal results for a range of diverse cargoes. We are replenishing convenience stores, picking up pathology samples and delivering tyres for a third-party logistics provider. It’s never boring.

“The digital revolution is upon us and Orcoda is well placed to capitalise on this revolution.” ■

Images: Courtesy of ORCODA (left: ©Tomasz Zajda – stock.adobe.com | centre: ©Orskay Berce – stock.adobe.com | right: anekoko – Fotolia)



## TransitCare innovates community transport

A COMMUNITY TRANSPORT service, created a quarter century ago to assist people with multiple sclerosis (MS) to make their hospital visits, is today recognised for its technological and organisational innovations in extending those services throughout Queensland.

“TransitCare was started nearly 25 years ago by Ann Langley and was born out of necessity, as there was no suitable transport service to take people with MS to hospital appointments,” TransitCare CEO Terry O’Toole said.

“Logan and Albert North Disability Services (LANDS) was created in 1994 and received a Home and Community Care funding grant. Since its inception, the organisation now known as TransitCare has grown steadily, from a predominantly volunteer base to now employing 80 staff with support from 72 volunteers.

“TransitCare delivered almost 200,000 trips last year and provided tens of thousands of hours of support for social inclusion. The trip purpose is still primarily around medical and hospital appointments, although many use our services for shopping and social reasons,” Mr O’Toole said.

Mr O’Toole, who started with TransitCare as chief operations officer in November 2014 and stepped up to take on the CEO role in February 2015, said the organisation was steadily transforming into a national leader in the sector.

“I want TransitCare to be the leader in technological advancement, embracing systems that will book, schedule and dispatch in real time and

setting the benchmark for community transport providers across Australia.”

### OPERATIONAL INNOVATION

The past year has seen TransitCare realise many of its goals to develop greater efficiencies through implementing new technologies, especially in the areas of document management, trip scheduling, driver management and the move to e-payments.

There have also been innovations in communications and the successful development of an owner-driver program.

“This year has seen us ramp up our work on all things ICT,” Mr O’Toole said. “We have seen the successful implementation of an electronic document management conversion, the migration from a cash business to cashless, the development—still in trial phase—of new scheduling technology and the improvements in telephony services. Also, the introduction of a seamless payroll including a self-serve kiosk for all employees.

“We are currently working on our telephony system upgrade which should then complete the vast majority of ICT items.

“We piloted a successful owner driver program, boosting scheduling efficiencies,” Mr O’Toole said. TransitCare also obtained the new standard ISO accreditation in both quality and environmental elements and successfully transitioned to a cashless environment. The reaction from clients has been overwhelming.



Terry O’Toole.

Above left: TransitCare has been creating better ways to transport the disadvantaged, for over 25 years. Right: TransitCare’s new bus wrap.

“We achieved a 96 percent satisfaction rating from our clients, commending our service levels—and our Townsville branch achieved outstanding results, growing its client base and suite of services,” Mr O’Toole said.

### TAKING ACTION

Two major achievements in 2018 were TransitCare’s development of its Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and the innovative owner-driver model to assist regional Queensland.

“We are committing to closing the gap,” Mr O’Toole said. “The overwhelming staff support for the development and accomplishment of a RAP is our proudest achievement this year.

“The development of the owner-driver model has not only been our most challenging but also the most rewarding project,” he said.

“It will allow us to provide regional towns with a reliable service that allows people to travel in comfort and safety at a reasonable price.

“This is the most rewarding role that anyone could have: working for people rather than profit.” ■

## TRANSITCARE

**Best-known brand:** Community Flyer

TransitCare specialises in transport for the elderly and disabilities sectors. The organisation has 80 paid employees and 72 volunteers, operating on a turnover of about \$9.3 million a year.

TransitCare’s leadership team is Terry O’Toole, Francine Wicks, Gary Panlook, and Kerryn Prentice.

www.transitcare.com.au

Ph: (07) 3422 7900 ■

# TechnologyOne lifts enterprises globally through ‘the cloud’

**T**ECHNOLOGYONE is Australia’s enterprise software pioneer and the company has taken its leading capabilities to the world over the past decade.

Now TechnologyOne’s pathfinding ways are leading towards its goal of becoming one of the world’s top global Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) companies.

“TechnologyOne is one of only a few enterprise SaaS vendors globally, so we are well positioned for strong growth,” TechnologyOne CEO Edward Chung said. “Moving into 2019, our goal is to continue growing the company into a global SaaS company.”

Mr Chung said this approach came about because of the growing needs of TechnologyOne’s increasingly global customer base which includes a long list of governments, universities, infrastructure groups, not-for-profits and financial enterprises. This particular journey started a decade ago when TechnologyOne made the bold decision to become one of the world’s first ‘cloud-based’ business software companies.

“This past year, TechnologyOne has transformed into a SaaS company which provides a compelling value proposition to our customers,” Mr Chung said. “The TechnologyOne SaaS platform can achieve enormous economies of scale and delivers a level of service, security, reliability, scalability and future-proofing that would not be otherwise possible.

“The SaaS Platform continues to grow strongly with annual recurring revenue (ARR) now \$38.1 million, up 41 percent (FY:2018), and we’re expecting this strong growth to continue in the years to come.

“We remain confident that as we continue to achieve greater scale in this business, it will become a platform that will provide significantly more profits in the coming years. We now have 400 large scale enterprise customers, with hundreds of thousands of users, making it the largest single instance ERP (enterprise resource planning) SaaS offering in Australia.



Adrian Di Marco.

“Having this position allows us to con-



*TechnologyOne’s latest software, Ci Anywhere, is bringing mobile flexibility to big enterprises and diverse businesses, demonstrating the agility of the Cloud.*

tinue to improve the features, speed, security, availability and scalability of our SaaS platform for our customers.”

## UNIQUE CHALLENGES

TechnologyOne’s SaaS offering has never been done before, partly because of the company’s unique business model in which it develops, markets, sells, implements, supports and runs its enterprise software.

“We are one of only a few companies globally delivering true enterprise software as a service, offering a fully configurable solution based on a mass production line of servers that run our software for all of our customers in a single instance of software, using one global code line, which provides massive economies of scale to our customers,” Mr Chung said.

Transforming into a SaaS company is a major change considering TechnologyOne started as a traditional ‘on premise’ software company and was very successful in that pursuit.

“This platform allows customers to stay connected with their teams remotely,” Mr Chung said. “We’re expecting the SaaS platform to continue to propel our company forward and maintain our growth rate.”

Several markets and industries are a focus for TechnologyOne. Mr Chung said these included Local Government, Government, Education, Health and Community Services, Asset and Project Intensive Industries and Corporates and Financial Services.

“There is a need for cloud solutions and digital transformation to overcome challenges in the Local Government, Education, Federal Government and other sectors, allowing our customers to meet the needs of their customers. “

## TECHNOLOGYONE IS ABOUT PEOPLE

For a technology company, TechnologyOne is unique in the way it focuses on people. Mr Chung said TechnologyOne was all about helping people to do business better through technology—and that required a human-centric approach for both clients and staff.

TechnologyOne’s sustainability, growth and future prospects are all about people doing business better, in all respects, assisted by TechnologyOne’s software, he said.

“All of our success has been possible because of the committed and passionate people at TechnologyOne, who never cease to amaze me with

what they achieve for our company,” Mr Chung said.

“We believe our success comes from strong collaboration and engagement with our stakeholders. We have four approaches when it comes to the sustainability in our organisation.

“The first is ensuring our customers are satisfied with the products and services that we provide, and that their data is kept private and secure.

“Secondly, we look after our employees, with multiple opportunities for the growth and development, both personally and professionally. For the past three years we have been named Employer of Choice by the Australian Business Awards, and in 2018 we had one of Australia’s top 20 graduate programs (as rated) by the Australian Association of Graduate Employers.

“Thirdly, we have a responsibility to care for our community and our environment. In 2016, we started the TechnologyOne Foundation with the goal of reaching out and making a difference to the lives of 500,000 disadvantaged children and youths and their families. We hope to do this by donating our time and money to specific charity partners whose work improves and educates children and youths,” Mr Chung said.

“Lastly, we, as a business, have a responsibility to ensure we are working ethically and in our corporate governance, aligning it to our values across all our relationships with customers, in-



*TechnologyOne CEO Edward Chung gets a lot of inspiration from enthusiastic staff who are always innovating, especially on their regular company-wide Hack Days.*

vestors, employees, suppliers and other stakeholders. Our ongoing success is fuelled by continuous innovation.”

In fact, innovation is ‘scheduled in’.

“For example, we refresh our innovation mindset through company-wide Hack Days that encourage creativity and fun, providing an opportunity for employees to break down form new teams based on a hack topic of choice traditional silos and work on projects that are outside normal day-to-day work,” Mr Chung said.

Adrian Di Marco, the founder and executive chairman of TechnologyOne, saw an opportunity in the 1980s when

the information technology (IT) industry was just starting to make traction.

In a demountable office in the car park of a hide tanning factory in the industrial suburbs of Brisbane, he develop a new generation of financial software for business and government.

“Now TechnologyOne is an ASX-150 company with 14 offices around the world, employing over 1200 staff and investing over \$50 million in Australian innovation just last year,” Mr Chung said.

“TechnologyOne has a commitment to continuous innovation, which is at the heart of everything we do.” ■

## TechnologyOne

Australia’s largest enterprise Software as a Service (SaaS) company that operates in the sectors of Local Government, Federal and State Governments, Education, Health and Community Services, Asset and Project Intensive Industries, and Corporates and Financial Services.

TechnologyOne has more than 1200 staff around the globe and for FY18 (ends 30 Sep 2018).

Net Profit Before Tax was \$66.5m, up 15%; Revenue of \$299m, up 9%; Expenses of \$232m, up 8%; Total Annual Recurring Revenue of \$169m, up 22%; Initial Licence Fees of \$65m, up 6%, with APAC region up 9%; Operating Cashflow of \$49m, up 5%; Cash and Cash Equivalents of \$104m, up 12%; Total Dividend of 11.02cps, up 8%; and R&D of \$54m fully expensed, up 8%, which is 18% of revenue.

TechnologyOne has 14 offices around the world. These are located in each

state and territory of Australia, as well as the UK, New Zealand, the South Pacific and Asia.

**Leadership team:** Edward Chung, Chief Executive Officer; Stuart MacDonald Chief Operating Officer; Paul Jobbins, Operating Officer – Corporate Services and CFO; Anwen Robinson Operating Officer – UK; Brock Douglas Operating Officer – Consulting; Brett Hooker Director – R&D; Richard Nicol Group Director – Support & Enhance; Jane Coe Group Director – People & Culture; Daniel Sultana – Acting Director – Cloud.

**Recent awards and official recognition includes:** Finalist in the 2018–2019 Cloud Awards Program in the categories ‘Best in Mobile’ Cloud Solution and Best SaaS (APAC and Europe); RP Product of the Year at the UK Cloud Awards 2016 for its OneUniversity solution; 2016 SaaS Awards for Best SaaS Product for Non-Profits or Education.

### Australian Business Awards:

Software Innovation 2017; Employer of Choice 2016, 2017, 2018; Marketing Excellence 2017.

### TechnologyOne Foundation

**awards:** Listed as one GoodCompany’s Top 40 companies in Australia ‘who generously gave back to their charity and community partners’ in 2018. Winning the Community Contribution Award at the 2018 Australian Business Awards recognised TechnologyOne’s commitment to delivering on its 1% Pledge in its quest to lift 500,000 children and their families out of poverty. In FY18 the work of the TechnologyOne Foundation was recognised with two awards: Winner of the Australian Business Awards Community Contribution; and Ranked 30 in the 50 Best Workplaces to Give Back in Australia in 2018. Technology One Foundation was also shortlisted for the Queensland Philanthropy awards. ■

# WorkingMouse makes business click



The power of Codebots is giving WorkingMouse an edge that it is willing to share with other developers, worldwide, through its channel partners.

**W**ORKINGMOUSE's reputation for transforming businesses, by streamlining operational information technology development, is definitely preceding it.

WorkingMouse teams are increasingly finding themselves in demand offshore as well as nationally, having established 'beachheads' in Singapore and London.

The reason is simple: WorkingMouse has developed a reputation for rapid and effective software application development for businesses of all sizes—using its patented Codebots technology—making client businesses immediately more efficient and more profitable. Increasingly, WorkingMouse is also licensing that Codebots technology to help other developers to improve large enterprise legacy systems.

"We help automate the ordinary to help businesses achieve the extraordinary," WorkingMouse founder and CEO Dr Eban Escott said. "It's our mission. Our passion for being on the leading edge is what drives us today.

"Our codebots write human-readable code, fast," Dr Escott said. "With a codebot on your team, developers have more time to innovate and get creative." A codebot can write, on average, 300,000 lines of code in a minute.

Dr Escott said, "WorkingMouse's professional services are in software development of web and mobile solutions. We partner with you to digitally transform your business through the creation of your bespoke applica-



David Burkett, Chief Growth Officer (left) and Eban Escott, CEO (right), with WorkingMouse partner Lee Steer, Founder of artmarketspace.

tion. We work together through each step—from scope to development to a production environment."

## CODING PARADIGM SHIFT

Dr Escott is a firm believer of applying agile and lean methodology to software development. In fact, he earned his PhD with the University of Queensland (UQ) on this very precept, and it led to the development of Codebots.

Dr Escott has over 20 years experience working as an IT professional in organisations ranging from start-ups to large enterprises. He also now holds an adjunct professor position with UQ and sits on the Industry Advisory Board for UQ's School of Information Technology and Electrical Engineering.

WorkingMouse's breakthrough development of its Codebots system is paying off in bringing specialised ap-

plications through much faster than has been possible before. Codebots are a program tool set that interprets code required in software and app development and 'rapid-manufactures' that code for developers.

"Codebots allow developers to speed up the creative process," WorkingMouse chief growth officer David Burkett said. "They help launch digital transformation, allowing businesses to migrate their legacy systems to modern cloud applications."

Mr Burkett said there were about 70,000 critical access enterprise systems in use in Australia. There is a particular urgency to improve many government enterprise legacy systems.

WorkingMouse had major success in improving one particular system for the NSW Police Service.

"For example, in the case of fatal crash databases in NSW, there were two police spending a full (working) day copying from police systems to a database and communicating it," Mr Burkett said.

"We transformed this database into a web application and updated the interfaces to API standards. The end result was a migration from an under-the-desk computer to a web hosted system that can be accessed anywhere on any screen in the tech stack.

"Now those two police officers are back out catching the bad guys instead of losing time on data entry," he said.

"Codebots has taken a commercial database and synced it to a new system.

"Now the government is looking at doing the same thing for another 300 systems within the NSW Police Service, and Transport and Main Roads."

So far, major WorkingMouse partners include the Department of Defence, the Queensland Government, Unilodge, and HRL Holdings.

"Department of Defence is a huge one for us," Mr Burkett said.

The Big Four international accounting firms—EY, KPMG, Deloitte and PwC—are now looking at WorkingMouse as a potential subcontractor.

Urging it all onwards is the constant research and exploration of founder Dr Escott, who has just produced his latest book titled *Bots that code: The Continuous Modernisation Playbook*.

A very hard working mouse, indeed. [workingmouse.com.au](http://workingmouse.com.au) ■

workingmouse 

# Aizer Group builds diverse offering

**A**IZER GROUP CEO and director Anthony Griffiths is, in many ways, a classic tradie. He wants to do things himself to achieve the highest possible quality for his customers.

The trouble is, when your organisation has such a broad scope as what Mr Griffiths' Aizer Group does—these days stretching across carpentry, cabinetmaking, electrical, plumbing, air conditioning, plastering, painting and roofing—you have to lead by organisational example rather than hand-skills.

In Mr Griffiths' case, that even extends to assisting with the development of the company's core operational software, with the help of two university developers—and then starting up his own IT team to assist in the company's growth.

"To pull all the aspects of our offering together we have created an internal IT division charged with constantly improving our overall efficiency, this has been done through the in house development of industry specific software and by constantly monitoring and improving the systems and processes we use," Mr Griffiths said.

"Having our own software allows us to quickly adapt to meet any requirement you or your customers may have."

## BROADER BASE

There is also, today, significant geographical job diversity to account for. Head office is at Burleigh Heads and Aizer Group has satellite operations in Brisbane, Rockhampton, Townsville for North Queensland and bases its accounting operations in Fiji.

"There is a high volume of transactions, so we need good accounting support," Mr Griffiths said. "That's why we moved the entire accounts team, headed up by Kim Barr, CFO and account manager, to Fiji."

Aizer has navigated that challenging growth matrix of stepping stones in turnover requiring different approaches to planning and management. In its early stages it was regularly growing 200 percent year-on year and leapt ahead to \$5m turnover a year, then \$10million then \$12m.

Then Aizer Group took a leap to \$24 million which challenged its systems

and Mr Griffiths sees the next challenge as managing two significant steps: over \$30m in two years time and over \$35m in the following two years.

"You get a bit smarter about things," he said. "The thing is to struggle to diversify."

## COMBINED ELEMENTS

Aizer Group was formed as a result of the coming together of a number of companies in the building and construction industry, based on the Gold Coast. These mergers created Aizer as very unique player in the industry that offers multiple specialist trades as well as a packaged one-call, one-quote offering for the facility and commercial property management industries.

Aizer has developed sector-specific divisions that combine the best of its services into a specific offering best suited to client requirements. Each of these sector-specific division is run by a dedicated team under the guidance of an experienced manager divided into the fields of Insurance Rectification, Facility Services, Preventative and Reactive Maintenance, and General Building.

Since Aizer's inception in August 2006, the company has taken part in helping rebuild Australian homes after the devastating weather events of Cyclone Larry, the Mackay floods, The Gap storm, Cyclone Ului, Brisbane floods, Tropical Cyclone Yasi, and ex-Cyclone.

At the moment, Aizer gets about 80 percent of its work from the Brisbane area and about 20 percent from the Gold Coast, but has the capability to assemble teams at short notice to meet the recovery demands of natural disasters Queensland-wide.

The growth in business in regional Queensland has had an unanticipated benefit in that Aizer Group is one of the most able organisations in Australia to be able to despatch tradespeople in reaction to natural disaster recovery work, which it does for a range of insurance companies.

## TRAINING PARAMOUNT

Of great assistance for Aizer Group long term has been the innovative Australian Industries Trade College (AITC) on the Gold Coast which structures young people from years 10–12

Image: Monkey Business | Fotolia



*Aizer is seeing its long-term apprenticeship scheme foster young leaders.*

into apprenticeships, while completing high school, and places them in work experience roles with top employers.

Mr Griffiths is highly supportive of AITC and Aizer Group was named the college's host employer of the year in 2018.

"I'd prefer not to employ apprentices that do not have year 12," Mr Griffiths said. "They are the kinds of young people who go on to run our business."

Most tradespeople who come through the ranks with Aizer stay long term. They are also now starting to bring through a few cadets, to help build for the future, and in the field Aizer uses a lot of apprentices "and they are taking up leadership roles now".

Two staff have been with the company since day one, 13 years go.

About 10 staff have been with Aizer for 7–10 years. Many people have been and gone, and come back—about 14 of them.

"It's the culture," he said. "Lots of people come through to us, and their families, because of our culture."

"We don't need the best ... we need the best people. And it is not about the money. We never leave a job unless it is done right. We are learning how to trust and empower people."

He keeps abreast of economic as well as technological trends, but his key focus remains in improving the skills and business acumen of his staff.

"But we are focussed on quality over trends," he said. "We have to keep an eye out for these changes, but one thing is for sure, no matter what happens, someone still has to swing the hammer." ■

**Aizer**<sup>™</sup>  
GROUP

# G8 Education grows early education for the better



Images: Supplied.

G8 Education builds early education and childcare in tune with local communities.

**F**OR G8 Education Ltd, growth is a multi-faceted priority that encompasses the best early learning facilities and practices—not only for families and children, but also for staff.

In many ways the development of G8 Education has been a labour of love for the company's leadership and staff, continually innovating while overcoming financial market fluctuations, changes in government regulations and incorporating new evidence-based methods in child care and early learning.

"The purpose of the group has not changed since inception—we aim to ignite the love of learning in every child, and we want to be known as the champion of early learning," G8 Education CEO and managing director Gary Carroll said.

"Our strategy remains unchanged, being to build differentiated offers for families and children, and to build a scalable efficient operating platform."

Mr Carroll—who joined G8 in July, 2016 and was appointed to the top leadership role on January 1, 2017—said he was attracted by "the opportunity to transform a culture of a scale organisation which, in turn, would enable G8 to be the market leader in a fragmented industry".

He understands not only the business challenges but also the responsibility and opportunity G8 Education has to make a positive contribution to Australian families and society.

"By doing this we have a massive opportunity to make a huge difference to the development of hundreds

of thousands of children, which is incredibly worthwhile and important," Mr Carroll said.

## PROVIDING CHOICE

Choice is a cornerstone of G8's offering.

Mr Carroll said the company's goal was to "operate the number one or two centre in every market in which we operate, by building differentiated offers for, one, families—based on quality, education and experience—and, two, team members, based on career pathways, training and culture".

G8 Education was founded by Chris Scott in 2007, with the group expand-



Images: G8 Education.

## G8 Education Limited

G8 has a stable of 24 brands across the early childhood education sector. G8 Education has more than 10,000 team members and about \$850 million in annual revenues.

G8 is listed on the ASX with the code GEM and the leadership team is CEO and managing director Gary Carroll, CFO Sharyn Williams, GM Operations Jason Ball, GM Marketing Greg Howell, Chief People Officer Jessica Battersby, CIO Peter Nelson, GM Safety, Quality and Compliance Jenni Marsh, General Counsel and Company Secretary Tracey Wood. ■

ing rapidly from its original 40-plus centres to around 500 centres by 2016. This growth was achieved via acquisition, with G8 completing a large number of purchases over that 10 year period.

From 2017, the focus of the group shifted to harvesting the benefits of the scale platform that had been built, with the strategy seeking to build centres in each region that would hold the highest local appeal.

"This will be achieved by utilising the group's scale to provide differentiated offers to families and team members," Mr Carroll explained.

## MEETING CHALLENGES

Market conditions have been challenging for the early education sector in recent years. By sticking to its ethos and strategy, G8 Education has managed to overcome economic challenges including rising operating costs, changing government regulations and a decline in the availability of development funding from banks.

"We weathered very challenging market conditions to deliver impressive growth in occupancy (the percentage of G8's available places taken up) during the second half of the year, setting up great momentum into 2019," Mr Carroll said. "We successfully transitioned to the new Child Care Subsidy—the biggest regulatory change in the sector in the last decade—while also upgrading our own child care management systems and continuing to improve the quality of our centres."

G8 continued to expand its centre network throughout 2018, opening 16 new centres. Other suppliers also made a significant number of extra places available to the market.

G8 Education has also been developing initiatives in literacy, creative learning techniques and health education.

"We have 21 percent of our centres (about 100) that have achieved an Exceeding quality rating, which means that their centres are well above the national standards and providing exceptional early learning services to children and families on an ongoing basis."

"Our strategy remains unchanged, being to build differentiated offers for families and children, and to build a scalable efficient operating platform." ■



Image: Hilton – TravisCottrell, Photographer.

Hickey Lawyers leadership team (from left) partners Joe Welch and Dan Marino, managing partner Mark Lacy, partner Simon Chan, and founder Tony Hickey.

Hickey Lawyers has advised on most of the region's leading developments.

## A vital thread in GC's rich growth tapestry: Hickey Lawyers

**A**N OVERVIEW of the most significant and innovative developments that have sewn the Gold Coast's rich tapestry over the past quarter century sees one legal consulting group's name come through consistently: Hickey Lawyers.

Over the past 25 years, Hickey Lawyers has established a reputation as the region's pre-eminent commercial law firm, renowned for being able to deliver proactive solutions for clients across the Gold Coast and, now, well beyond.

Led by the partners, many of whom have been with the firm for a majority of that quarter century, the Hickey team is well known for its extensive experience across the full range of property development projects ranging through master planned communities, mixed use developments, high rises, land subdivisions, hotels and shopping centres.

"That includes negotiating and documenting complex joint venture arrangements, construction and funding agreements and off-the-plan contracts," Hickey Lawyers managing partner, Mark Lacy said.

While much of that work is concentrated in Queensland and New South Wales, Hickey Lawyers' property experience spans Australia.

"We deliver high quality legal services and specialised advice to a stable of clients that include major ASX listed companies, international and national businesses," Mr Lacy said. "Our team has a strong track record of service in the areas of business advice, hotels and tourism, planning and environment,

property and development, banking and finance, mediation, dispute resolution and litigation."

In recent years, Hickey Lawyers has also helped clients understand and adapt to legal and technological change in their businesses.

"Looking to the future of the dynamic business world in which we practise, Hickey Lawyers embraces advances in knowledge across e-commerce and automation to provide clients with up to date, practical advice to advance the growth of their business," Mr Lacy said.

In fact, one of Hickey Lawyers' greatest strengths is the firm's long-standing and committed staff base.

"As a team we have been able to grow and maintain our relationships with key clients to ensure ongoing future stability," Mr Lacy said. "In addition, we have established a strong reputation for experience and excellence in advice and service."

### RECORD OF GROWTH

Last year, Hickey Lawyers reached a milestone anniversary, celebrating 25 years of being at the centre of the growth of the Gold Coast region.

When now-retired founder, Tony Hickey, started the firm a quarter of a century ago, little did he know that the name Hickey Lawyers would become synonymous with urban regeneration and development along the Gold Coast strip.

"When I started Hickey Lawyers my goal was simply to run a business that provided the best service to our clients and the best way to demonstrate that

objective was to work with the clients doing the most cutting edge stuff," Mr Hickey said. Mr Lacy, who joined 19 years ago, said he was extremely proud of the role the firm has played in the growth of the Gold Coast over the past 25 years.

"The team has provided legal advice on a number of large mixed use developments over the years, some of which were at the forefront of architectural design and some of which really kick started a regeneration for that part of the city," Mr Lacy said.

"We have not only had the opportunity to work with some amazing clients, we've also initiated and grown the careers of the Gold Coast's best lawyers and administration staff."

[www.hickeylawyers.com.au](http://www.hickeylawyers.com.au) ■



### Hickey Lawyers

Founded by now-retired lawyer Tony Hickey OAM in 1993, Hickey Lawyers today is headed by seven highly experienced partners: Joe Welch, Simon Chan, Dan Marino, Scott Eustace, Damian Hodgson, Liam McLindin and managing partner Mark Lacy.

Hickey Lawyers began with a mandate to assist the most innovative and progressive property developments in the Gold Coast region and across South East Queensland—and today that fundamental continues with the firm renowned for its work in urban regeneration and dynamic new projects. ■

# Empowering SA business to lead in 2019



South Australian Leaders®

Our team at South Australian Leaders is inspired to cultivate more leaders and growth in SA in 2019.

Our mission is to inspire business leaders and empower them to be a step ahead. We are a valuable pathway for any CEO, MD or Founder of a business geared for change.

By *Natasha Malani, CEO, South Australian Leaders* >>

**S**outh Australian Leaders launched in 2016, and we now have over 100 companies in the network.

The companies that are represented in the SA Leaders Series are hungry for growth, collaborative and like-minded. The principles we work by are founded on doing business based on trusted relationships, that when we collaborate we do it better, and a positive culture that is energising and evident when you walk into the room.

We provide the framework, environment and support structure to enable businesses to prosper. To help them grow, invest and expand, develop new product innovations and succession plans.

Business leaders and decision makers are supported to make better decisions, resolve the issues that are keeping them awake at night, and identify new opportunities.

In the words of Andrew Downs, SA Leaders Advisory Board Member and Managing Director of SAGE Automation: "Business is simple but it's not easy."

Our objective is to ease business growing pains by helping each company achieve their full potential through a support structure that can assist manage some of the complexity.

We focus on delivering expertise, fresh ideas and emerging trends through Knowledge Workshops, with customised expertise from leading experts delivered through one-on-one structured Mentoring Sessions.

We support the development of quality relationships through Connect Events each month. We give structure to 'working on' the business in an efficient and effective manner.

In addition to learning in a structured format, we focus on practical learnings. Case studies, expert mentoring, field trips, social events and networking all bring our business leaders together to further cement learning and relationships.

We have many case studies and testimonials, including a sample of inspirational stories in the pages that follow. Our member companies are what inspire us.

"SA Leaders has been invaluable to us. It provides us the opportunity to step back from the business, to think about important elements that often get lost or put to the side in the day to day running of the business. It is very empowering to understand and action what we previously had not considered," said Emma Kardachi of the Kardachi Food and Wine Collective, a 2018 SA Leaders Executive Leader.

Our Industry Experts are leaders in their field of expertise, available to give advice and all demonstrate a strong commitment to South Australian Leaders and are great mentors and sounding boards for our member companies.

Our key partners include EFIC (Export Credit Agency), Business SA, and peak industry bodies. We actively seek out influencers, thought leaders, and experience.

We deliver an annual Growth, Strategy and Innovation Forum to further focus on innovation, collaboration and the growth of the SA Leaders network.

We welcome the access to the International Leaders network through full reciprocal rights across Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. This is another way that we fast-track relationships with potential partners, distributors and customers as we continue to support the growth of our member companies into new markets.

We also have a strong relationship with Government. We are committed



*Natasha Malani, CEO SA Leaders is focused on attracting fast-growing and like-minded companies to SA Leaders.*

to supporting them as they build the local economy—and 2019 will present great opportunities for our State and our South Australian Leaders.

In December 2018, the GFG Alliance announced a visionary 'Next Gen' mega-steel plant for Whyalla, followed by the Government announcement that Australia's Space Agency will be based in Adelaide.

We will continue to tap into these types of opportunities to support supply chain development, export, new technology, job growth, skills development and investment in South Australia.

We welcome the opportunity to connect with you.

[www.saleaders.com.au](http://www.saleaders.com.au) ■





Top left: SA Leaders focuses on building knowledge for business leaders.  
 Top right: The Hon Steven Marshall MP, Premier of South Australia addresses the SA Leaders network.  
 Above left: One on one mentoring is where problems are solved and opportunities are realised.  
 Above right: The Connect Event provides the opportunity for business leaders to collaborate and build trusted relationships.  
 Left: Site visits to member companies provides practical learning.

SA Leaders images: Supplied.

## Mongolia upskilling to be driven by SA leader group

### SKANPPE UNVEILED

THE South Australian Government has announced a new partnership with Mongolia to support the development of the country's business sector. The partnership, known as SKANPPE (South Australian Knowledge and Network Partnership for Mongolia), is a joint venture between the South Australian Government and the Mongolian Government. The partnership will focus on providing training and support to Mongolian business leaders, as well as facilitating trade and investment between the two countries. The partnership is expected to create significant economic benefits for both countries.



ILLUSTRATION: SA Leaders' Andrew Staines and A.S. Global director Ben Coe



*"Coming along to SA Leaders each month has been invaluable to us. It's a chance to step back and think about important things that often get lost or put to the side in the day to day running of business; it's very empowering to understand and action what we previously had not considered"*  
 Emma Kardachi (Director - The Food and Wine Collective)

Collaboration leads to tangible business opportunities.

# Clarke Energy changes the power game



*The Moranbah North Coal Gas Power Station.*

**C**LARKE ENERGY is building a reputation for being one of the most agile and innovative power generation suppliers in the country as Australia transitions to multi-source power generation.

The electricity generation systems Clarke Energy has developed are today being used across Australia in applications as diverse as temporary power solutions for mines and manufacturers, methane-powered co-generation at water treatment plants, coal seam gas supplementary powerplants, and landfill biogas-fired power stations.

Increasingly, Clarke Energy is stepping into the breach to provide bridging solutions for regions transitioning their power requirements to accommodate more renewable energy sources, according to Clarke Energy general manager Michael Jones

And Clarke Energy's portable shipping container-based power generation engines are also in demand for power-critical operations such as hospitals and water treatment plants, while also underpinning emergency back-up power systems.

One of the most appreciated of these applications has been for the Adelaide Meals on Wheels operation. Clarke Energy decided to support the operation as feeding the poor and disadvantaged is something dear to the organisation's heart, and integral to what the company does for communities internationally.



*Clarke Energy is supporting Adelaide Meals on Wheels with backup power generation.*

Clarke Energy's Australian head office for the South Pacific region is also based in Adelaide, a spokesperson said, "so we welcomed an opportunity to support the Meals on Wheels organisation that was established in 1952 and has over 8000 volunteers, providing 4250 people three-course nourishing meals each day".

## POWERING INNOVATION

As efforts are being made in city environments to reduce emissions, Clarke Energy is increasingly finding projects in establishing tri-generation and other power plants that provide electricity, heating and cooling from integrated plants. And these are just the latest in a long line of innovations.

For example, back in 2013 Clarke Energy won the Energy Developments Limited (EDL) contract to engineer, procure and construct (EPC) the expansion

of a Waste Coal Mine Gas (WCMG) power station at its Moranbah North Power Station in Central Queensland.

The facility was designed to utilise gases liberated during the mining process which would otherwise have been flared. These gases are now used to generate electricity and reduce operational costs. In fact, the power plant delivered better than 18 megawatts and it simultaneously helped prevent the release of mine's gas into the atmosphere.

Not only did the Moranbah North plant abate a total of 1.3 million tonnes per year of carbon gas emissions, it used that gas to supply the local electricity grid, helping generate additional revenues for EDL.

## VAST EXPERIENCE

One of the main reasons Clarke Energy has had such a variety of successes in Australia has been its global experience in a wide range of different gaseous fuel applications including natural gas, biogas, landfill, furnace and coal gases.

"Gas based power generation projects are present in a variety of different applications," Mr Jones said. "Natural gas systems focus on high efficiency generation from natural gas, which has the lowest carbon emissions of all fossil fuels. Biological gases are renewable fuels and originate from the degradation of organic matter by microorganisms and include biogas, sewage gas and landfill gas.

"Gases associated with coal deposits provide the opportunity for the generation of power whilst avoiding carbon emissions. Finally special gas applications are some of the most challenging gaseous fuels including syngas from biomass and waste and gases originating as a by-product from metal furnaces."

In 2011, Clarke Energy fulfilled a contract with Xstrata Copper to provide 5MW of power generated by its high-efficiency, containerised GE Jenbacher reciprocating gas engines to the Mt Isa Mine. Also in Queensland that year, QGC contracted GE Water and Laing O'Rourke to develop a water treatment plant to convert saline water to fresh water for use by local residents near its Kenya gas field – and Clarke Energy supplied, installed, and commissioned power modules to provide a reliable source of power for this plant using local coal seam methane.

In 2017 Clarke Energy engineered, procured and constructed APA Group's 45MW gas-fired power station in Western Australia, utilising 11 of GE's high-efficiency Jenbacher J624 gas engines to power the Gruyere Gold Project. In early 2018, Clarke Energy supported energy solutions provider Zenith Energy to provide operator Dacian Gold to deliver a 17MW gas fired power station at Mt Morgans Gold Project, also in WA.

Increasingly, Clarke Energy's solutions are being engaged in environmental fitments at wastewater plants, landfill sites and for general co- and tri-generation. Examples include Blackwater coal seam gas power station in Queensland; Adelaide's largest wastewater treatment plant co-generation system at Bolivar utilising exhaust methane; Melbourne Water's Werribee sewage gas-powers wastewater treatment plant; and the Dakabin landfill gas power station in Victoria.

But perhaps a real indicator of where Clarke Energy's expertise in sustainable power systems may come into its own in Australia is the example of a sustainable power loop system developed for the Royal Air Force at its Marham base in the UK.

Over 95 percent of RAF Marham's electricity is provided by bio-gas emissions from food scraps and bio-waste, utilising three Jenbacher 420 gas en-



RAF Marham.

gines, engineered and installed by Clarke Energy. At the plant, 4.5MW of electricity is generated, enough to power about 7650 households, while reducing the Ministry of Defence's (MoD) carbon dioxide emissions by 14,000 tonnes per annum. The new green energy supply is also on target to deliver the MoD around £300,000 of annual electricity savings. The scheme provides the UK's military with its first renewable, resilient and reliable green power supply.

It makes sense that Clarke Energy would have a long record of innovation in the UK, from where it has developed since founder Jim Clarke took a controlling stake in the company in 1989. The company has continued to grow and now provides employment for more than 1,000 people across 17 countries. Clarke Energy's Australian operations were formally established in 1999 and initially located in Braeside, Melbourne. Due to the success and continued expansion and growth within the Australian and New Zealand markets, March 2006 became a significant milestone in the company's history with the office being relocated to customised premises at Thebarton in Adelaide.

**EDUCATING POWER**

So when cities, townships and even large organisations such as resources companies want to make the most of their environments, and yet have reliable power, more often than not the development consultants call in Clarke Energy to offer custom-fit solutions.

In fact, Clarke Energy has been at the leading edge of education in managing such diverse power generation options.

To help energy and town planners, along with engineers, Clarke Energy recently hosted a Hybrid Power Solutions networking event at the Hilton Hotel in the centre of Adelaide city. More than 30 power industry professionals attended from various sectors ranging from waste management, energy utilities, oil and gas, and engineering consultancies.

In fact, Clarke Energy's work on Hybrid Power Solutions, led by product manager Leo Jin, stimulated wide discussion within the room. The attendees were vocally interested in Australia's transition phase to a renewable energy future and the role that hybrid solutions would play to ensure energy security, stability and the most importantly, affordability.

Most came away from the event both surprised and reassured that so many different power generation options were not only available but had been successfully implemented already in Australia, according to the feedback.

Clarke Energy's Australian innovations over the past 20 years in all sorts of environments are many and have been picked up for use in projects around the world.

[www.clarke-energy.com/australia](http://www.clarke-energy.com/australia) ■

Images: Clarke Energy.



The Jenbacher J624 two-stage, turbo-charged gas engine, can power up to 10,000 Australian households.



A Clarke Energy portable container-based power generation engine (Jenbacher Standard Containerised Unit).

**ClarkeEnergy**<sup>®</sup>

A KOHLER COMPANY

Engineer - Install - Maintain

# 1847 Wines: Australia's most innovative vintage



An 1847 Wines outlet in China.



Anthony Grundel.

**T**HE GROWTH of Barossa Valley-based 1847 Wines and its signature Australian label—Chateau Yaldara—and China signature label 1847 Wines, is akin to the carefully-crafted vintages the business produces and sells worldwide.

It comes down to working hard, working smart—and making the right choices at precisely the right time.

This is certainly true for general manager Anthony Grundel, who was attracted to the historic business just over two years ago, when 1847 Wines had just acquired a larger winery facility with a deep local history.

“The opportunity to be a custodian of that history, and to lead a team to re-establish what once was, is a rare opportunity in the wine game,” Mr Grundel said. “We are currently returning to the wine market with the Chateau Yaldara brand in Australia and it is honestly like being a 70-year-old start-up.”

The group currently has 100 hectares of property in the Barossa Valley, employs 60 staff across all aspects of the wine and tourism business, and sits at 150 1847 Wines stores in China, with a target of 250 by 2020 focused on selling 1847 Branded Wine.

“This year, we have a two-part focus,” Mr Grundel said. “The first is to continue building a high-value tourism offer in the Barossa and the second is to accelerate the growth plan for our 1847 Wines Store network in China.”

“We have embraced the history of Chateau Yaldara and developed intimate ‘high value’ tour experiences based on fortified wine master classes and sparkling wine making classes,” he said. “We have offered high end options for clients to attend the winery and produce their own wines to bottle in our boutique wine making facilities. This has been very popular for some time for us.

“In response, we are increasing our private accommodation offers here in the Barossa,” Mr Grundel said. “The days of just having a cellar door that only tastes wine are gone.

“Immersion, experience and connection are all key words that should play a part in your go-to-market plan now. It doesn’t need to be elaborate or finessed, it just needs to be true to you and your brand.”

## GENUINE APPROACH

1847 Wines was originally a small boutique label, started in 1998 by former Coca Cola Amatil Asia CEO John Curnow. Its portfolio of Barossa wines was focused on the European market.

Current owner Arthur Wang and John Curnow met through their Sydney real estate connections and Mr Wang purchased 1847 Wines in 2010, with a strategy to showcase premium Barossa wines through a private network of stores in China.

To facilitate consistent quality and future supply, Mr Wang purchased Chateau Yaldara from Australian Vintage Ltd (AVL) in 2014.

Chateau Yaldara was founded by Hermann Thumm in 1947 after he migrated to Australia from Europe. The chateau was named ‘Yaldara’ after the local Aboriginal word meaning

‘sparkling’. The site chosen for the winery was on the banks of the North Para River at a flax mill dating back to 1855.

Mr Thumm’s vision is kept alive today with estate grown, hand-crafted award-winning wines, locally-produced artisan foods and a truly ‘Barossan’ visitor experience, highlighted by Chateau Yaldara’s beautiful riverside restaurant.

## BOTTLING INNOVATION

1847 Wines has been a leader in educating the China market about wine appreciation—and especially, of course, Australian wines.

This innovation has opened up the China tourism market even more quickly than managing director and owner Arthur Wang expected—but it is a welcome development that the company is intending to literally ‘bed down’ for the long haul. That is what has inspired 1847 Wines to develop its experiential tourism packaging.

With 2018’s innovations producing the desired results—and with an eye on any market disruptions that may come down the line—1847 Wines is looking to build repeat visitation by constant development of the visitor experience, appealing to both national and international markets.

“Now, it’s more about what we have planned,” Mr Grundel said. “AR (augmented reality) and virtual reality (VR) accessibility are coming to the fore. Self-guided tours for the new era are coming. Watch this space.”

[www.1847wines.com](http://www.1847wines.com) ■



## 1847 WINES

**Best-known brands:** Chateau Yaldara, 1847 Wines.

**Industries:** Wine, tourism. 60 staff. A\$14 million turnover last financial year.

**Leadership team:** Arthur Wang (Owner, MD), Anthony Grundel (GM), Sue Hemmerling (CFO), Daisy Zhang (China Sales) and the Chief Winemaker.



Images: Chateau Yaldara.



# Ikon Institute explores new frontiers of learning



Brad Seaman keeps Ikon Institute's learning programs at the cutting edge.

**I**KON INSTITUTE of Australia is continually learning ... about learning. That's because since its inception Ikon has at its foundation the belief that continual learning is at the core of successful societies around the world.

It is why Ikon's leadership places the institute's own research and learning at the head of all training and education they provide. What students learn at Ikon is based on the very latest scientifically-proven education hallmarks, right across the institute's many disciplines.

It was this very focus that attracted the attention of current CEO and managing director, Brad Seaman, who bought into the company and started in the top role with Ikon Institute 11 years ago.

"I had a background in working with young people in education settings. I wanted to contribute to the sector to specifically build on young people's skills and bolster employment outcomes," Mr Seaman said.

"I was looking for an opportunity that had more leverage than working one-on-one or running groups myself. I felt strongly about education as an agent of social change and I wanted a vehicle to drive this, hence developing the Ikon Institute of Australia."

Doctor Rafael Locke established the

Ikon Institute of Healing Arts in 1988. Since inception, Ikon has been a nationally accredited Registered Training Organisation (RTO), started primarily as an institute to study and educate practitioners in the transpersonal worlds, within a therapeutic framework.

"In the main, the inspiration for the original courses came from Dr Locke's extensive experience gained in Australia and the US through research, training and practice in anthropology, psychoanalysis, humanistic and transpersonal psychotherapy, holistic and nutritional medicine, behavioural medicine as well as parapsychology and neuroscience," Mr Seaman said.

In 2005 the South Australian branch was established. In 2008, Brad Seaman bought into the business.

"We were the Ikon Institute of South Australia, an RTO in its own right," he said. "In 2010 the Institute expanded into Queensland and Western Australia, becoming the Ikon Institute of Australia."

The head office is now located in Adelaide, with training centres in Adelaide, Brisbane, Perth, Melbourne, Sydney and Northern New South Wales. The Ikon Institute of Australia has also evolved to incorporate training in the areas of Creative Therapies, Psychotherapy, Counselling and Community Services.

In 2018 the Ikon Institute of Australia became part of the UCW Group, incorporating the Australian Learning Group and 4LIFE education.

"This will help achieve greater scale and accelerate our growth in the international education market," Mr Seaman said.

## IKON BECOMES AN ICON

Ikon is fundamentally focused on humanity, "with the goals to facilitate healing, improving wellbeing and achieving our potential" according to Mr Seaman.

"Ikon believes that education and training represents one of the greatest social change agents available. Ikon strives to develop strong partnerships with industry stakeholders including training organisations, universities, research organisations, government, professional associations and service

providers. Improving knowledge and skill acquisition are not enough, Ikon values quality experiences, relationships and learning," Mr Seaman said.

Ikon continues to develop new and meaningful qualifications that address existing and emerging social needs. Over the past year, Ikon launched a new Advanced Diploma of Transpersonal Therapy, providing an opportunity to specialise in either Transpersonal Counselling or Transpersonal Art Therapy.

Ikon remains aware of key issues in society and business when formulating its prospective courses, tailoring them to suit. Observations of societal concerns about mental health are an example.

"Mental health and wellbeing continue to be significant social issues that we need to address as a society," Mr Seaman said. "People need more and different opportunities to improve their wellbeing."

With specialist higher education in creative therapies, psychotherapy and counselling, the Ikon Institute of Australia is focused on seeing graduates have the skills to move forward with rewarding careers as professionals in the mental health and wellness space.

"The future of Ikon is bright and Ikon continues towards its vision 'to enhance individual and collective wellbeing through education,'" Mr Seaman said.

"The ripples of healing and change are felt long and far from the completion of an Ikon qualification and this is what Ikon is about—transforming individuals to facilitate wellbeing within themselves and within society." ■

# Ikon

Institute of Australia

Higher Education | International Education | VET

## Ikon Institute of Australia

**Brands:** Bachelor of Arts Therapy, Bachelor of Counselling & Psychotherapy.

Ikon operates across the fields of higher education, international education, vocational education & training.

Brad Seaman is Chief Executive and Managing Director.

<https://ikoninstitute.edu.au/> ■

Image: Supplied.

# Ideas and innovations that **Resonate**



Matthew Stead and Darren Jurevicius.

**R**ESONATE Consultants are renowned in construction and engineering circles for hearing things that are vitally important.

“We aspire to be a world class consulting company with the business centred around relationships that resonate with clients and employees ... pun intended,” managing director Darren Jurevicius said.

Matt Stead and Darren Jurevicius had this mission statement vision from day zero when they wrote the initial business plan together at a café. Both are fully qualified engineers and, having worked within acoustic consulting for over 15 years each, they had a vision to provide a client-centric service which was innovative, adaptive and quick to respond.

“Our agility is paramount to our success—we are not bogged down by big company processes, and to be a market leader, we must have a culture that inspires our staff to always innovate,” Mr Jurevicius said.

Innovation keeps marching on at Resonate and the company’s skills in engineering and science are today applied to a variety of areas including acoustics, structural dynamics, marine acoustics, air quality, electromagnetic fields and lighting impact assessments.

## PING.MONITOR

Over the past year, one major innovation really took shape.

It all led to the commercialisation and realisation of Ping.Monitor and the creation of allied company Ping Services, which is also headed up by Matthew Stead as CEO.

Ping Services came about through the specialised development of acoustic

monitoring of wind turbines as it was realised that measuring changes in the acoustics of the turbines were an ideal way to pre-empt service faults and conduct early preventative maintenance.

“The Ping.Monitor is a world-first device which continuously monitors wind turbines to detect blade damage,” Mr Stead said. “The patented technology uses an algorithm that can rate the health of the turbine based on its acoustic signature and monitors changes over time.

“There are an estimated 3,800 blade failures globally per year and that adds up to total repair costs of about \$2 billion. Any undetected damage can become more serious over time, increasing the cost of repair and maintenance and also increasing the risk of catastrophic failure.” Ping.Monitor is in demand and Resonate’s intelligent listening systems are cementing the directors’ global vision to be a world-class organisation, with international prospects.

## CULTURE RESONATES

Resonate joint managing director Darren Jurevicius has always maintained a strong focus on growing the business’s “culture and people”.

Resonate’s leadership team and staff all share a strong vision for growth, he said. The directors are in for the long-haul and making practical moves in work-life balance to sustain their efforts.

“We are balancing wellness through the growth stages,” Mr Jurevicius said. “We are working both on and in the business to maintain a steady flow of work while also investing time on management, innovation, employee development and the wellbeing of all team members.

The depth of Resonate teams’ focus on commercialising the company’s innovation was the key to success, Mr Jurevicius said.

Mr Jurevicius himself was the key consultant who drove innovation on the Torrens Road to River Torrens project (T2T) which resulted in the acclaim of the 2017 Association of Australasian Acoustical Consultants’ Hugh Vivian Taylor Award for a new approach to scoping acoustic treatments to houses.

The T2T project was Resonate’s largest and longest lasting project, result-



A wind turbine tear (right) detected by Ping Monitor’s blade health monitoring and (above) the Ping.Monitor version 2.0 prototype.



ing in the innovations which saved a major transport project client more than \$1 million in managing noise abatement façade development for properties abutting a major road way.

“We amalgamated the use of multiple cloud-based tech solutions and apps, implemented significant automation and cut our high-touch consulting time down as a result,” he said. “All team members could, at any point, log-in and see the project progress in real-time, enabling the team to contribute, while also offering a great way to help train junior staff members.”

Resonate leaders’ cultural approach to business of ‘principles over policies’ is paying dividends. No wonder Resonate is such a resounding success. ■

## Resonate Consultants

Best-known brands are Resonate Consultants, Ping.Monitor and Resonate Systems. Resonate has 40 employees and an annual turnover of \$5m.

Resonate is led by Managing Director Darren Jurevicius, CEO Matt Stead, and Managing Director Deb James.

Ph: (08) 8155 5888.

### Recent awards and recognition:

- 2019 Client Choice Awards finalist
  - 2018 Impact Awards
  - 2018 Innovative Manufacturing Accelerator Program, Flinders University
  - 2018 New Venture Institute Venture Dorm 2018 Metro, Silver eNVle
  - 2018 Inventium Financial Review Most Innovative Companies, ranked 94th
- www.resonateconsultants.com ■



Debra James.

**Resonate**



Above: Ollie Autonomous Shuttle at a Matilda stop, Glenelg, SA. Centre: Matilda Smart Transit Hub. Right: CDS board member and SAGE Group Managing Director Andrew Downs, CDS Executive Chairman Brett Duncanson, and CDS Development Engineer Patricia Moreno load up a Bulk Redemption Terminal prior to shipping to the customer in Queensland.



## SAGE human approach to technology

**S**AGE GROUP is an organisation that looks futuristic, mainly because it is steering Australians there.

SAGE intelligent transport systems are used to guide the latest autonomous passenger shuttles being tested in Australia. It is SAGE that developed the Intelligent Transportation System for the Monash Freeway in Melbourne—the company’s largest single project so far.

And it is SAGE that recently engineered the technology behind one of the world’s most progressive ‘container deposit’ public recycling programs now operational in Queensland.

For this, SAGE won the Best Industrial IoT Application at the 2018 Endeavour Awards—and the 2018 Design Innovation of the Year Award in the Beverage Category, Machinery and Equipment, at the 2018 Packaging and Processing Innovation and Design Awards (PIDA)—for the smart container counting and sorting solution it has developed with Container Deposit Systems (CDS).

That solution brings together the Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT) and automation technologies to fight the war on waste. The Bulk Redemption Terminal (BRT) was developed by SAGE to improve the container refund process under the Australian Container Deposit Legislation scheme—and it has transformed the way Queensland household recycling operates.

“We see success with sustainability from both sides in our business,” said Andrew Downs, who founded the organisation 25 years ago. He has astute-

ly let his role evolve as the company has grown and morphed.

“We also see the sustainability of our business from continued diversification and by establishing offerings that complement our traditional automation market, such as Nukon, our data analytics offering. For our clients, we worked with Container Deposit Systems to develop an exciting new business model to design, build and support the growing recycling industry to be more effective and efficient.

“I founded SAGE Automation in 1994. The extraordinary growth and success of SAGE has been an incredible journey—and it all started with an unbounded passion and enthusiasm that still burns just as brightly today.”

### SAGE IDEALS

The ideals behind the company came from Mr Downs’ experiences running the electrical department for Bridgestone.

“I was constantly disappointed with the poor service on offer from contractors,” Mr Downs said. “This frustration sparked the launch of SAGE. I knew that a new, energetic company with the right attitude could do better.”

From day one, he said, SAGE has been totally committed to excellent customer service and finding ways to do things better for clients.

“I know, every company makes that claim—but SAGE cemented that promise by ensuring we only hired people who shared the passion to drive exceptional outcomes for our clients,” Mr Downs said. “Our team members are hard-working, loyal and love per-

forming at a high level. As a result, our reputation has grown and so has our business, with the most iconic, successful brands among our customers.”

SAGE is now the largest independent systems integration company in Australia and ranks among the world’s best.

You only have to take a look at the various businesses and brands—like Skills Lab, Nukon SAGE automation and Embedded Expertise—to see how SAGE Group’s expertise in one sector has often been invited into another by clients who trust SAGE’s capacity to both engineer and innovate.

SAGE Group teams are engineering technological solutions across industries including manufacturing, transport, resources, utilities such as water and energy, food and beverage—and for the Australian defence sector.

“And so the journey towards excellence continues—for our clients, our team and for me. I wouldn’t have it any other way.” ■

### SAGE Group

Sage Group’s best-known brands include SAGE Automation, Nukon, Embedded Expertise and Skills Lab. The company, based at Adelaide’s Thornley Innovation Precinct, operates primarily in the Manufacturing, Transport, Resources, Utilities (Water, Energy) and Defence sectors.

Sage Group’s leadership team includes Chief Executive Officer Adrian Fahey, Chief Financial Officer Dion Draper, Chief Operations Officer Adrian Spencer and Chief Strategy Officer Paul Walker. The organisation has 385 staff and turns over more than \$98 million a year.

[www.gotoSAGE.com](http://www.gotoSAGE.com) ■

Images: Supplied/SAGE.

# Training x Design reinvents training: people first



Gina Brooks presents Training x Design's innovative ORANGES program to leaders.

**T**RAINING innovator Training x Design was founded on the belief that the key to business success is in maximising the potential of the people in any business. Its own success is its proof of concept.

Director Gina Brooks is both the owner and founder of Training x Design, which started in November 2013 and has ever since been forged in that very personal 'people-first' belief—and experience.

While the original purpose of the business remains the same—"maximise the potential of people"—what has changed is the application of that as Ms Brooks and her leadership team discover new ways to make it happen.

"I believe the key to business success lies in maximising the potential of people in the business," Ms Brooks said. "What started with providing skills in leadership, sales and service has evolved into developing people personally and professionally so that they can continue to bring the best version of themselves more often," she said.

"This means helping people build personal development skills that they can apply in every aspect of their lives."

A case in point is the recent partnership of Training x Design with the ORANGES toolkit, becoming the exclusive South Australian provider of the wellness program, ORANGES, which is used to build optimistic and resilient cultures in business.

Crucially, the profit proceeds of this alliance go to the Camp Quality organisation, supporting children and families dealing with cancer.

For more than 20 years, Training x Design has been designing and deliver-

ing customised learning solutions for all types of businesses, ranging from global enterprises to small local firms. And it is all backed up by research and the sciences.

"Using the robust and impeccable science from positive psychology, emotional intelligence studies, and behavioural science in all of our programs, we give our clients access to the best ways to inspire action and encourage employee engagement," Ms Brooks said.

## IMPRESSIVE RESULTS

Over the past year, Training x Design has successfully worked with 37 businesses and delivered programs for leadership development, customer experience and wellbeing. There have been impressive results.

"We helped a business experiencing the poorest customer satisfaction results, for their national organisation, to achieving the best in four months," Ms Brooks said.

"We helped over 600 people, through our ORANGES program, to develop a more optimistic mindset and improved their resilience so that they can bring the best version of themselves more often to work and to their personal life."

Training x Design was able to save one business \$4 million in costs, for external training providers, by designing an in-house program and skilling the company's in-house trainers to deliver.

"The participants rated the in-house program as being significantly better than the previous external training provided," Ms Brooks said.

The results for Training x Design have been spectacular.

"We've doubled our growth for the past three years," Ms Brooks said. This has been mostly through word of mouth recommendations and repeat business.

The ORANGES program has been a particular source of pride for Training x Design staff. Businesses have had great results, developing a more positive workplace culture including improvements in productivity, staff engagement and the wellbeing of their people.

## EXPERTISE TO LEAD

For 2019 and beyond, the direction for Training x Design is as clear as the day the business was founded.

"Training is only successful when the business achieves results," Ms Brooks said.

"We want to partner with like-minded businesses. Those that know that putting people first is the most sustainable way to grow their business," Ms Brooks said. "Those who want to invest in the well-being of their people, not just for profit but for the benefit of individuals, families and communities."

Gina Brooks' message to business leaders is to take business planning back to basics and focus on their people.

"The best strategies won't work if the people can't make it work," she said.

"Create a unique workforce that thinks, feels and acts differently ... Think, feel, do—different." ■

**Training x Design**  
Customised learning solutions

## Training x Design

**Brands:** Customised Learning Solutions, Learning and Development Partner Program, Sales Training and Train-the-Trainer.

Training x Design operates across all industries and is led by Founder and Director Gina Brooks.

Recent awards and recognition include Runner-Up 2017 Learning and Development Professional of the Year; FIML—Fellow, Institute of Managers and Leaders; and Industry Expert, South Australian Leaders.

[www.trainingxdesign.com.au](http://www.trainingxdesign.com.au) ■



Gina Brooks.

Images: Supplied.

# Workspace makes interiors from outer space

**T**O BOLDLY go where no manufacturing company has gone before may seem like a play on words from a television space adventure—but in Workspace’s case it is based on fact.

Workspace Commercial Furniture is breaking into new space every time it explores a new layout to suit a particular business. From new front desks to new frontiers, Workspace is flying the flag for innovative Australian manufacturing.

Workspace teams not only have to design in functionality to suit the business operation itself, helping it to achieve new efficiencies, but must incorporate current and future technologies, materials that look and perform well for the work space’s design life and, perhaps most important of all, the space should be comfortable and effective for people spending long periods of time there.

Sometimes, a work space might need to be created in a way that leaves a ‘brand impression’ for people who are only there for a short time—and Workspace has successfully risen to challenges like that many times.

Workspace chief operations officer, Tom Clark has been with the organisation for five years, gravitating to his current role in 2017 after first serving as general manager for sales and marketing.



Tom Clark.

Two key aspects attracted Mr Clark to the business, “the heritage of the business and its commitment to Australian manufacturing and employment”.

“Continued growth has been a focus for the business for the past five years,” Mr Clark said. “Importantly growth has been underpinned by continued investment in capital and technology. Increased productive capacity and also upgraded planning technology have driven significant change.

## INNOVATION HERITAGE

Workspace, formerly known as TH Brown, was founded in 1911 and spent its first 70 years of trade as a manufacturer of domestic furniture.

“The TH Brown name was carried on by members of the Brown family, until management changes throughout the 1970s and 1980s,” Mr Clark said.

“Since the 1980s, the business has morphed both in product and service offering and, of course, transitioning into Workspace Commercial Furniture.” Workspace is a business that is energised and excited by its projects.

Perhaps Workspace’s most rewarding moments come from seeing the successful finalisation of each and every project—for the company’s teams are continually pushing the boundaries to find new levels of excellence.

“While continued sales growth is important, we count success as being the positive reactions of our clients at the conclusion of their projects—and we completed some exciting major projects over the past year,” Mr Clark said.

## OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Like all innovators—and especially on the besieged Australian manufacturing scene—Workspace must continually challenge itself and test new methods and systems. It must research, test and risk temporary failure in order to find sustainable success. Workspace must boldly go ...

“There are lessons each and every day,” Mr Clark said. “Design, commercial construction and procurement evolve at a rapid rate. Critically Workspace needs to stay abreast of these processes, whilst also maintaining a high level of quality product and market leading service.

In the spirit of innovation, Workspace moved into a new



Image: Supplied.

Workspace has won client accolades for its interpretive furniture designs.

area of manufacturing in 2018 with the creation of its own-design office chair system: Max. Mr Clark said, “In March, Workspace was pleased to officially launch Max, a chair solution comprised of in house design and international partnering to ensure Australian production and assembly.

Workspace is doing all it can to progress in the challenging manufacturing space that is beset by cheap imports and copied designs.

Workspace in the meantime will keep developing and going against the flow of international products into the country. They will keep doing what they do best, which Mr Clark identifies as ‘Growth, Change and Customer Centricity’.

“Our aim is to bring a multi-faceted approach to the business to gain growth, diversification and closer core client focus,” he said.

And continue to lead Australian furniture manufacturing into the future. ■



The Max chair.

## Workspace Commercial Furniture

**Best-known brands:** Workspace, Forma 5, Cerantola.



Workspace operates across all commercial workplace environments. It is a beacon for innovative Australian manufacturing in a highly competitive sector that is constantly battling cheaper imports. Workspace has 155 employees and has national operations and is headquartered in South Australia.

The Workspace leadership team is Managing Director Trevor Gould; Director and NSW State Manager Peter Byrnes; and Director and COO Tom Clark.

**Recent awards:** Design Institute of Australia Hall of Fame 2018. Federal and State Government preferred supply panels.

[www.workspace.com.au](http://www.workspace.com.au) ■

# Victoria's leading companies in search of solutions, not just information



CEO Robert Ford welcomes the network to the Year End Graduation dinner.

By Robert Ford, CEO  
Victorian Leaders >>

**C**ELEBRATING its fifth year, Victorian Leaders has thrived on building a longstanding and sustainable network consisting of the State's business, industry and government leaders across a variety of different industries, sectors and backgrounds.

Each of these business Leaders commits their time and expertise to support the next generation of leading companies across two separate Series.

The Executive Leaders Series selects 25 businesses each year, representing more established companies that are entering their next stage. This could include growth, investment, expansion, new product innovation, or succession as examples.

The Future Leaders Series selects 15 companies each year, typically at an earlier stage in their journey. The primary purpose is to surround each with the leading expertise and networks to build a sustainable and profitable business long term.

Each year Victorian Leaders provides these Members with a variety of workshops, mentoring, connect events, alumni events and other activities all designed to drive their business success.

Over the past 12 months, Victorian Leaders has provided Members with:

- Access to monthly personalised one-on-one mentoring sessions with true industry experts across a range of expertise and industry sectors;
- Provision of Knowledge Workshops and Facilitated Roundtable Conversations, focused on exposing growth companies to fresh ideas, emerging trends and opportunities, and different thinking to take full advantage of their opportunity;

Victorian Leaders general manager, Wendy Born chatting with Jess Lascheit from BPO Heroes.





**Top left:** Pact Limited CEO Malcolm Bunday, Grayhouse Partners managing partner Andrew Beck, and (right front) Beyond19 managing partner Tony Hall.

**Top right:** Tim Barsony of Internal Consulting greeting Emily Bloomfield from Melbourne and Brisbane Management Rights.

**Above left:** Former Australian Army officer and current Fox Sports presenter, Mollie Gray presenting the keynote address at the recent Graduation Dinner.

**Above right:** Former Australian Cricket Coach and current Victorian Leaders Advisory Board member John Buchanan hosting an Alumni boardroom session.

- Attendance at monthly networking Connect Events with industry leaders, experts, and more than other growth companies;
- Over 75 companies attending Growth, Strategy & Innovation Forums in conjunction with our Industry Experts in these sectors—focused on innovation, collaboration and commercial opportunity;
- Social events and networking opportunities bringing business leaders together in a social setting to further cement relationships and cross-opportunity.

During 2019, Victorian Leaders will be focused on making sure that each company involved is receiving direct access to the knowledge, networks, and resources they require to achieve their full potential.

Other notable outcomes in recent times from within the Victorian Leaders network include:

- Three companies achieving sizeable capital raisings;
- Two companies achieving sales to larger listed entities;
- Six Victorian Leaders Member companies directly accessing sister-Series interstate/overseas via reciprocal rights to open offices and/or create new business opportunities in other regions;
- Continued relationships with all three levels of government to ensure companies are gaining access to all possible opportunity, grant opportunities and other key outcomes;
- Full reciprocal rights access through the International Leaders network including across Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom;



Graduation trophies.

- Access to China via the launch of an annual China Trade Mission in conjunction with AustCham Shanghai. Victorian Leaders welcomes enquiry from all companies who are seeking growth, national or international expansion, succession/exit, or investment opportunities.

[www.vicleaders.com.au](http://www.vicleaders.com.au) ■



Victorian Leaders®

Images: Supplied © Beckton Media; photographer Jesse Spezza.

# From HR Gurus to millennial who-do

**F**OR SOMEONE like Emily Jaksch, who helps businesses to evolve, it makes perfect sense for her own business interests to continually evolve.

While she is probably best known for her recruitment, people management and leadership training group—HR Gurus—Ms Jaksch’s two other businesses are taking on lives of their own. Even the one that is personally branded: Emily Jaksch.

Ms Jaksch started HR Gurus in 2010 as a human resources (HR) consulting business for the SME market and that entity has now morphed into a ‘leadership coaching’ business offering business transformation and culture change services. Today it employs three people.

“The vision behind the business was that small business is the biggest employer in Australia—and they don’t have the budget for or they don’t need a full HR function, but they definitely have HR issues,” Ms Jaksch said. “HR Gurus became an outsourced HR function for SMEs.

“I was 32 and I had worked in corporate HR for 11 years before that,” she said of her time with Royal Bank of Scotland, General Motors Holden, Wesfarmers and Coles, “so I’d seen the problem emerging.

“Our biggest product at HR Gurus is a virtual HR manager service. That allows small business to get access to a qualified experienced HR manager level person—without having to employ them. Which worked really well and that business has been relatively successful.”

While HR Gurus is still ticking along nicely, the way HR has changed—in an economy that is increasingly opting for ‘gig’ employment—and the way Emily Jaksch’s own business aspirations have evolved, new doors have also opened.

“That business we are now morphing more into a leadership coaching business, where instead of getting the call from the business—when they are in trouble and need a quick fix—the whole philosophy has changed into *we want to be more proactive*,” she said.

“We now work with pro-active clients that are interested in what we are doing for them in terms of taking a leadership

approach—and doing preventative work that pre-empts HR problems.”

## AGED, HEALTH CARE RECRUITING

It was a client, impressed with the work that HR Gurus was doing, that led Ms Jaksch and her team into a whole new specialised area of recruitment.

“In 2016 started We Care Recruitment, which is a specialist aged and health care recruiter, which employs two people,” Ms Jaksch said.

“One of our biggest clients that we were doing HR consulting for was building five aged care facilities. They asked if we were interested in doing the recruitment for them.

“We did so and got amazing results in terms of our time-to-deal and our placement ratios. It was about 1.4-to-one, so they only had to do 1.4 interviews to get a placement. The industry standard is three-to-one.”

The reason We Care Recruitment is successful is the firm has a unique approach in values-based recruitment.

“So we help them (the clients) to find their value and we now embed that in the recruitment interviewing process,” Ms Jaksch said. “We only hire people that are aligned with their values.

“That business is growing and we are trying to expand into health care now, at which we are doing quite well. It is a big growth industry.”

## EMILY JAKSCH, HERSELF

In 2018, Emily Jaksch launched her self-branded speaking and coaching business “with a goal of changing the dialogue around Millennials”.

“Through a commitment to research and data, my passion is around creating the next generation of Millennial leaders,” Ms Jaksch said.

“I was getting asked to do a lot of speeches around Millennials and I had a lot of my clients asking the same questions: How do I get into millennials, how do I understand them?

“I embarked on a research journey myself. I made it really specific. A lot of the research out there is very general and is actually from the US.

“So I commissioned my own study called *The Australian Workplace Millennial Study*. I really delved down into



Image: Supplied.

## EMILY JAKSCH

what Millennials want in the workplace, what are their motivations, what are their values, how long they have been with their current employer.”

Emily Jaksch explained all that data and research in an e-book.

“I have also written a book which I am about to launch called *Why the Gap?—Are Millennials the Most Misunderstood Generation of Our Time?*

“What I have done is to create coaching programs for Millennials, because a lot of them are leaders now and need to be the best that they can be.”

Importantly, Ms Jaksch has also created coaching programs for leaders who are managing Millennials.

“If you think about game changing Millennials who have disrupted industries you think about Mark Zuckerberg and Facebook; you think about Nick Molnar, an Australian who is one of the founders of Afterpay—now that is an extremely disruptive business model. Uber was created by American Millennials. We misinterpret some of that drive and disruptive nature as them being upstarts and them not being respectful, is the way I see it.”

Emily Jaksch’s businesses may not specifically revolve around her any more—but they certainly evolve around her.

[www.hrgurus.com.au](http://www.hrgurus.com.au)

[www.wecarerecruitment.com.au](http://www.wecarerecruitment.com.au)

[www.emilyjaksch.com](http://www.emilyjaksch.com) ■

**hrgurus**

# NCS Group brings to account true strategic financial advisory services

**N**CS GROUP Chartered Accountants was founded in 2003 on the belief that good small to medium sized businesses could grow more effectively with the benefit of financial accounting advice that was in the league of the Big Four accounting firms.

Founders Sharryn Carey-Nicholls and Andrew Nicholls also believed that their family business approach—highlighted by as much partner-client personal service as possible—and a dedication to forward looking, actionable advice would be the way to deliver a great service relationship.

“Sharryn and I founded the practice on July 1, 2003,” NCS Group Chartered Accountants Director and CEO Andrew Nicholls said.

“We established the practice with a view that SMEs and professional individuals were missing out on true strategic financial advisory services,” he said. “This was mainly the domain of the Big Four accounting firms and perhaps some of the next level firms.

“Most sub-corporate businesses were simply dealing with their accountants on a form filling exercise—BAS, tax returns and financial statements. From day one, we have been fully involved with our clients in forecasting, risk management and strategic business decision making.

“We consider ourselves ‘boutique’ by design. Our feedback from clients has always been, that they want access to partners and expertise within their accounting suppliers.”

“We can’t provide that level of service with a large number of clients. Therefore, we are as selective in taking on new clients as potential clients consider their options in taking on an accounting service provider” Mr Nicholls said.

“In saying that, we are far from arrogant. It’s all about best fit. We are looking for clients whom we can partner with, respect our experience and advice and, likewise, will take advice from us in the future direction of our client’s business. We listen a lot and see ourselves as partners our clients’



Andrew Nicholls.

businesses—not merely compliance service providers.”

Prior to founding NCS, Sharryn had previously worked for large and small Chartered Accounting firms in the tax advisory space. Andrew’s background encompassed strategic risk advice within large Chartered Accounting firms, Trading and Investment Banks and Management Consulting firms.

So both were well briefed in the demands of accounting for various sized business across many industries.

## NEW WAYS FORWARD

NCS Group is continuing its general program of moving to an increased mix in its fee generation towards forward looking advisory services such as cash forecasting, budgeting, business finance for growth, and industry analysis.

In fact, research and development (R&D) opportunities continue to emerge for NCS’ clients.

“Whilst we don’t practise in the R&D Incentives space, we have fantastic partners who assist our clients in this area,” Mr Nicholls said of the often complex Federal Government incentive programs for R&D. However, in its own area of R&D, NCS continues to evolve.

“Identifying and managing the various risks involved in running a business has always been a major part of our work,” Mr Nicholls said. “This continues to grow each year.

“We carefully manage the growth in our business each year. We established our practice with a view to providing on-going partner access to all clients. Accordingly, in addition to a managed approach to introducing new clients to our firm, our growth also tends to come from providing additional value-adding services to existing clients.

“We have had a specific strategy over the past year in increasing our practice in the Sydney market. With the



assistance of the Leaders Network, our expansion into Sydney has been most satisfying. The support of members, experts and advisory board members has been enormous.

## AGILE APPROACH

NCS Group knows that its real value to clients is not in completing compliance tasks but in researching the business, finance and taxation environment and assisting clients to navigate them effectively.

One area NCS cannot influence, but can help clients navigate, according to Mr Nicholls is “the current state of Federal and State Governments in terms of passing legislation quickly”.

Mr Nicholls advised, governments should “reduce the complexity of tax legislation and associated compliance issues for all taxpayers. That’s the way to help small and medium business.”

NCS Group will stay true to its original mission of providing true financial advisory services to the SME and professional individual sectors nationally.

“Our advice is typically forward looking whilst at the same time ‘painlessly’ looking after historical compliance matters,” Mr Nicholls said.

“Our mantra is ‘Respect for the Past, Focused on the Future’. Today, our mission remains firm.” ■

Image: Supplied.

**NCS Group Chartered Accountants** specialises in providing the type of well informed accounting and financial advice to small and medium businesses that major accounting practices provide, but in a personalised way. The practice’s best-known brands are NCS and NCS-Nicholls, operating across the Accounting, Taxation and Finance sectors for businesses across a wide spectrum of industries.



NCS Group is led by Director-Principal Sharryn Carey-Nicholls and Director-CEO Andrew Nicholls. The company likes to describe its size and style as ‘boutique’.

[www.ncs-group.com.au](http://www.ncs-group.com.au) ■

# Marketable Video Production sets the scene

**V**IDEO stories can be one of the most powerful marketing methods for an organisation. Telling those stories effectively is a challenge Marketable Video Production rises to with a remarkable record of success, because the company's experienced team intimately understands the art form.

And Marketable Video Production (MVP) has also mastered the vital art of straight-talking with clients about what stories to tell—and how to tell them with authenticity.

“We’re really aspiring to cut through the bullshit in our industry,” MVP founder Joel Buncle said, “There’s a love of buzz words around ‘story’ without people even really knowing what that means, or how to do it authentically.

“Story isn’t a style of video, it’s a philosophy you adopt as a business.”

This can mean MVP teams offering guidance as well as alternative views—and always collaborating with a client’s business goals in mind.

“Where most production companies focus on just the creative, we look at commercial opportunities through partnering with public relations and digital partners too,” Mr Buncle said.

“Going forward I could see us trending to become more than a video production company, and becoming more of a B2B media company that helps clients distribute their content in a better way.

“Our growth has mainly come from reinvesting our thoughts and ideas in our current clients—whilst we add a number of corporate and marketing clients per year, we’re never looking at getting comfortable with our clients



*No matter what screen an MVP production is viewed on, the team’s storytelling philosophy comes to the fore and new connections are made for the client.*

and just producing the status quo over and over again.”

It has been that way from day one, when owner Joel Buncle founded the business in January 2014. He is unusual in that he decided right off that he did not want to work for ‘a boss’ and went into business for himself direct from university.

“I’ve never had a full time job from out of uni, it’s always been about building a business around something that I’m passionate about,” Mr Buncle said. “Over time the passion in various areas of the field has changed, but the vision in running a successful business—that helps our clients succeed—has always been front and centre.”

## **NEVER CONTENT WITH CONTENT**

MVP found its niche early by focusing on three types of content—documen-

tary, brand and marketing videos.

Joel Buncle may be the sole founder and owner, but today he relies on a core leadership team of three to deliver commercially-focused yet authentic videos.



*Joel Buncle.*

MVP sustains itself through a relatively small core team for good reason: quality.

“We’re a small team—we don’t have a philosophy of growing for the sake of growing,” Mr Buncle said.

“We have three key roles—Creative Director, Relationship and Strategy and Lead Video Producer—and we bring in other specialists as we need them. We’ve found that focusing on what we’re best at, and keeping that at a manageable size, is what produces the best results for our clients.



Behind the scenes: Marketable Video knows how to tell real local stories and bring across the character of local people.



Telling stories from all angles and giving new perspectives are part and parcel of Marketable Video's approach.

"We're not interested in running a staff of 50 and churning out 200 videos a week.

"Our creative director Ben Carpenter-Nwanyanwu is a powerhouse," Mr Buncle said. "He's American and is constantly travelling the world in a digital nomad kind of way ... a lot of people had warned me against having a remote worker in such a key role for the business, but in reality it's the best arrangement I could create.

"Ben's outside perspective on stories and videos provides invaluable insight, and his location allows him to be kept at a distance from any politics."

MVP's lead video producer Nick Hancock joined the team in mid-2018, and Mr Buncle said he was credited with "lifting our production quality and standard, as well as improving our post-production workflow and processes".

"Nick has really been the enabler for us in terms of creating the capacity for a large volume of work."

### AUTHENTIC STORIES

Perhaps the biggest advantage MVP has in the market today is its ability to collaborate, interpret and work with a variety of stakeholders to achieve their aims on any project.

"There's been a progression from the early 2000s when 'video' became the must-have item, that then evolved to 'content'—and having a lot of it. In recent years it's moved towards 'story'—but I think the next evolution will be 'authentic stories' because people are starting to see through the hype and excitement of the new buzzword—and so they should."

Now Marketable Video has expanded its focus through documentary-style

storytelling, which seems like a natural fit.

"We've really expanded our documentary offering in the past year, getting businesses to understand how documentary can help their business by using strategies like collaborative marketing as our focus over the year," Mr Buncle said.

"We produced a one-hour TV documentary, *Walkabout Wickets*, about Indigenous cricket in 2018," Mr Buncle said. "It tells the story of Australia's first sporting team to tour overseas—a team that was all-but-one Aboriginal.

"This was a very powerful story that has allowed people to start a dialogue about Indigenous relations in Australia. The doco was picked up by Channel 7 and broadcast in February 2019 before the annual indigenous Big Bash cricket match."

*Walkabout Wickets* led to other documentary-style productions, relating to sport as well.

"In the last year we've achieved a lot in the sports field—we've worked with one of our key clients, Cricket Australia, in producing community focused stories for the 'Community Champions' that highlights the remarkable efforts and triumphs people have had around the country," Mr Buncle said.

"This integrated campaign which included PR and digital elements was something that we conceptualised along with PR agency, Greenpoint Media." The campaign has since been viewed by more than 150 million people worldwide and given MVP the impetus to chase similar impact levels for other clients.

"But always, success is really all about telling authentic stories well." ■



Bruce Paulson in Cricket Australia's collaboration, *Community Champions*.



### Marketable Video Production

Some of the key brands MVP has produced video stories for include Cricket Australia, Travel Associates, William Adams CAT, Carlton Football Club, Carman's Kitchen, and Tipple. The company tends to focus on the sectors of sport and recreation, industrial, corporate and tourism.

The leadership team is Founder and Relationship Strategy Joel Buncle, Creative Director Ben Carpenter-Nwanyanwu, and Lead Video Producer Nick Hancock.

Ph: (03) 9071 1800.

[www.marketablevideo.com.au](http://www.marketablevideo.com.au) ■

Images: Supplied by MVP.



Father and son team Adam and Leo Norich celebrate the company's 30th anniversary, 1988 to 2018, with colleagues and family.

## UGT International: it's all in the family

**U**GT INTERNATIONAL is a second-generation family business transitioning from being a traditional importer and wholesaler of homewares into a specialist product developer, brand builder, and supply partner to major retailers in Australia.

Adam Norich has been with his family's business, UGT International—formerly Universal Gift Traders—for more than 16 years and has been its managing director for the past nine, after being asked to step into the role by his father, Leo Norich, the business's co-founder.

"Universal Gift Traders was founded by my father, Leo Norich, and uncle Braham Zilberman in 1988," Mr Norich said. "As an importer and wholesaler of gift and homewares, the original purpose of the business was to earn enough money to put bread on the table and provide a great education for their children.

In 2010, Leo and Adam Norich bought original founder Mr Zilberman out of the business. In 2018, while celebrating 30 years in business, the family re-branded the business to UGT International, as part of a growth plan. Adam also stepped up in 2018 to become a 50-percent partner in the business with Leo.

"After 30 years in business, our purpose is still to provide our family with financial security, lifestyle and provide

education to the next generation," Mr Norich said.

Adam Norich has not only watched and experienced the company's growth, he has first-hand insights into what it takes to succeed and how the business must keep reinventing itself.

Mr Norich plans to continue to innovate and grow the family business started in 1988, pressing for "smart growth, and to stay relevant in an industry in the midst of mass disruption".

He said, "We are also now looking to cement our position as an innovative family business and market leader in our field.

"The traditional importer/wholesaler model has been under increasing pressure for several years with major retailers attempting to pursue a direct sourcing model and smaller retailers being squeezed out of the market through increased competition including online retail and overseas retailers opening in Australia," Mr Norich said. "We realised we had to change to stay relevant."

### STRATEGIC CHANGES

Mr Norich and his team developed a concise pecking list of the things UGT International needed to achieve—and they nailed it with some hard decisions in the mix.

First, UGT became focussed on fewer product categories—and to become the market leader in these categories.

Then they concentrated on product development and brand building.

They realised they had to introduce new technology to make the business more efficient and improve communication—which they did—followed by a streamlining of processes.

A key development that came out of discussions was the outsourcing of the company's warehouse and a corresponding reduction of overheads. There was also a necessary reduction in team size through the use of technology, automation and outsourcing. This made the business more financially secure and agile.

"We set about diversifying our customer base," Mr Norich said. "That was no mean feat."

Then came some even bolder moves.

We set up an office in Ningbo China, we felt we needed to have a man on the ground in China to assist with building relationships with new factories and also for quality control purposes," Mr Norich said. "We have recently built a full showroom replica of our Melbourne showroom as a convenient location to meet existing Australian buyers and potential buyers from international markets."

A great highlight of 2018 was investing in a joint venture to build a new factory with one of UGT's long term suppliers.

"The new factory, 'UGT International China Manufacturing' which will open mid 2019 is a specialist manufacturer of photo frames, mirrors and wall art," Mr Norich said. "Having ownership in a factory really sets us apart from our competition as major retailers look to source direct.

"With our factory they get to source direct with the added benefit of Australian product design, quality control and incredible customer service. We are extremely excited and believe this is a real game changer for UGT."

### ENERGISING MARKETING

As UGT International ticked off all its chosen strategic boxes, the company began new marketing activities "to support our retail customers and build awareness of our brands".

The results have been almost immediate and the benefits became apparent over the past year.

"We have been focussing on brand building within fewer product categories, and streamlining all aspects of the business," Mr Norich said. "Now,



The UGT team together with their Chinese Factory Partner (above left) visit the site of the future UGT International factory in Huaibei, China, and (at right) with their Ningbo Office Manager, in front of a display of some of UGT's highly successful product in their showroom in Ningbo, China.



celebrating the business's 30-year anniversary, we are confident of a very bright future.

"In recent times we have been 100 percent focused on building our brands and becoming market leading suppliers to Australian and overseas retailers.

"Some of our brands include Unigift and Frame Depot, building Australia's most recognised brands of photo frames," he said.

"UGT International also developed the brand Botanica in 2015 after seeing a growing trend in 'artificial' plants as a decorator accessory," Mr Norich said. "This category is now booming and it is amazing to see how real and lifelike the latest faux plants look. You can now see faux plants featured in every magazine, hotels, offices and homes around Australia. We expect this trend to continue."

Another key brand UGT International developed is Cooper & Co Homewares.

"Cooper & Co Homewares develops on-trend homewares including clocks, mirrors, wall art and tabletop products," Mr Norich said.

UGT International is still focussed on its home Australian market and carving its own niche even deeper, meeting the demands of a challenging retail environment. But it has the ca-



The UGT International China Manufacturing Facility is over 9000 square metres in size and is due for completion in August 2019.

capacity and capability now to grow internationally as opportunities present.

"The key to our success is ongoing product development, brand building and providing incredible service to our retail partners," Mr Norich said.

"Now that we have streamlined our business, we are primed for growth. We will continue to invest in marketing of our brands and to build communities around these brands."

UGT International is also evaluating new product categories as it looks to grow internationally. But it will be measured development, based on a few key learnings.

"We will focus on our strengths and outsource our weaknesses," Mr Norich said. "We will certainly listen to opportunities—most importantly though, we have learned when to say no." ■

### UGT International

UGT International is a sourcing, distribution and homewares specialist. The family company has developed and distributes brands including Unigift, Frame Depot, Cooper & Co Homewares and Botanica. UGT also works with numerous Australian retailers on exclusive private label programs.

UGT has forged strong relationships with China-based manufacturers and has recently invested in a joint venture to build a purpose built manufacturing facility to handle global product distribution.

**Leader:** Adam Norich, Managing Director.

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**T:** 03 9584 4155 ■

# VaultID brings financial inclusion to the ‘unbanked’

New technology uses a blockchain-based know your customer (KYC) process

**A** NEW financial technology venture developed from Melbourne is providing a global solution for people who struggle with safe digital verification for financial transactions.

Digital verification is a legislated element of all financial transactions as institutions are required to comply with national and international know-your-customer (KYC) and anti-money-laundering laws (AML).

Named VaultID, the company is able to solve the most pressing of all financial problems in developing economies, where almost 2 billion people (the unbanked) have no digital footprint to verify themselves and participate in the digital financial economy, performing such tasks that we take for granted like transferring money to family members .

Existing companies offering to verify Consumers are failing both the Consumer and the Financial institutions.

Firstly, these companies have not identified the fastest economically growing sector in APAC—the Unbanked.

Secondly, the existing banked consumer digital footprint is fading, VaultID CEO Jason Edwards said.

“Consumers have lost trust in verification platforms that involve third party data suppliers who hold and disclose outdated personal information without appropriate consent, so they are withholding their details,” Mr Edwards said.

Thirdly, in-country and cross border legislative compliance has increased greatly over the last five years.

Mr Edwards said, “Enabling consumer verification supporting a financial transaction within a framework of personal data sovereignty, security and transparency is the new challenge that VaultID has solved. VaultID has been developed by some of Australia’s brightest fintech minds to solve this very real problem and has created *myVault*.”

VaultID technology includes optical character recognition (OCR) verification



Jason Edwards.



The myVault app verification confirmation process on a mobile phone.

and facial recognition biometric verification built into a simple to use application called *myVault*. Built on this core, VaultID has added social and semi-official touch point (for example, post office) verification scoring, all of which adds up to a new non-traditional approach to creating a digital footprint owned by the consumer.

VaultID’s onboarding service for financial institutions is an API that links the institutions with the consumer through *myVault* and allows the institution access to the consumer

Diagram 1

## MyVault wallet personal verification System Architecture

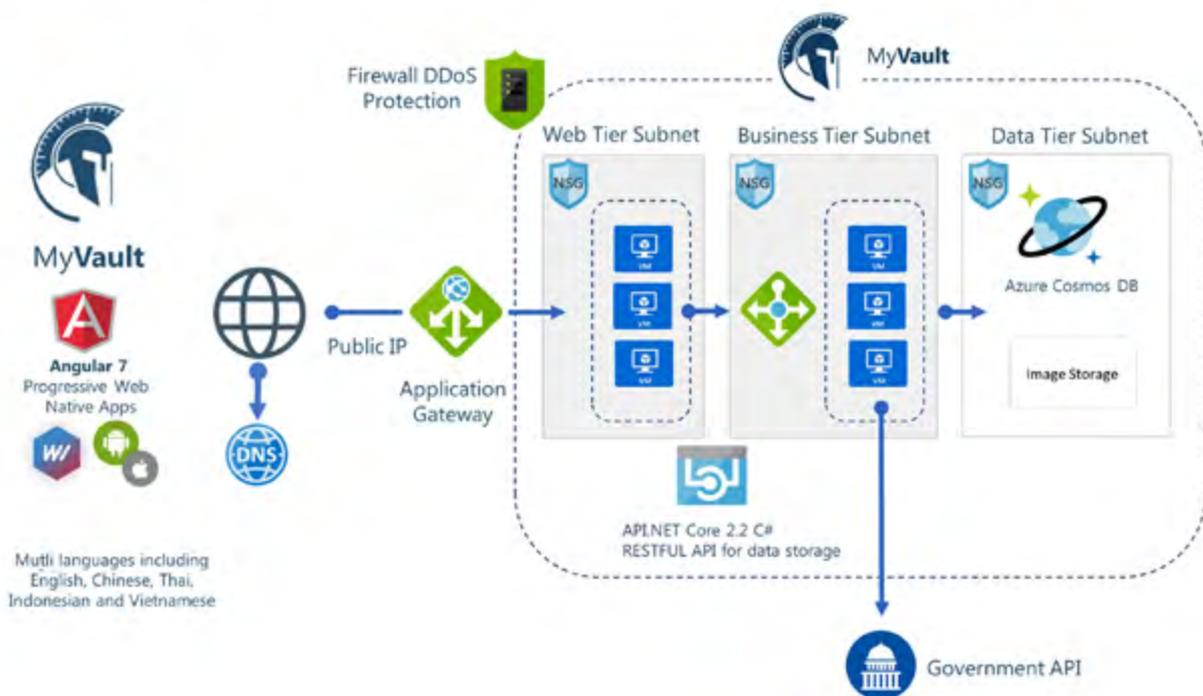
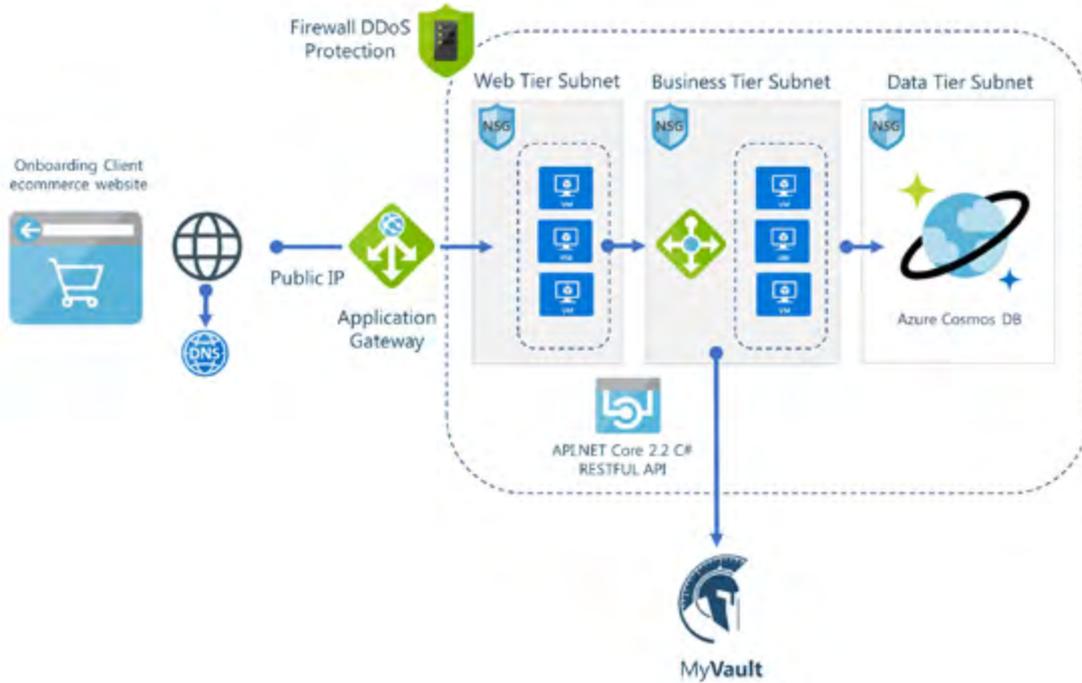


Diagram 2

### VaultID Consumer Onboarding System Architecture



verified score if authorised to do so by the consumer.

#### HOW VAULTID WORKS

VaultID’s *myVault* application creates a financial digital footprint for the unbanked driven by inbuilt services enabling a bank account, money cards (debit and credit), micro-loans, lending, online purchases and money transfers.

By applying personal biometric verification, and core financial services through the *myVault* application, VaultID provides the ability to create a ‘true’ real time and appropriate know-your-customer and anti-money-laundering (KYC/AML) profile.

Mr Edwards said, “Above all we leave the verification process in the hands of the consumer; *myVault* is about consumer ownership and trust.

“VaultID builds trust with consumers through the *myVault* account which ensures they, and only they, control the contents of their *myVault*. (Refer diagram 1.)

The VaultID institutional API is embedded in the company transactional customer onboarding web page. The consumer simply provides their email or mobile number to the web page and they are then prompted in *myVault* for authorisation to pass on their verified score to the institution.

“Think of this part of the process as two factor authorisation similar to re-

covering a lost password with an SMS code”, said Mr Michael Peel VaultID CTO. “Consumers have total control over whom they authorise access to *myVault* for verification purposes.” (Refer diagram 2.)

“VaultID brings a new level of consumer verification services to any company wanting to onboard new or existing customers and complete legislative compliance to an unprecedented level of accuracy,” Jason Edwards said.

#### THE VAULTID GO TO MARKET STRATEGY

The VaultID go to market strategy is simple: distributing its core technology through existing partnerships with unbanked service providers in such countries as Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, and East Timor reaching the Unbanked.

#### IPO PLANNED

Mr Edwards said the process is underway for an IPO in the fourth quarter of 2019.

At present the milestones set are for the *myVault* banking integrated app to launch in May–June, following on from the successful launch of its beta version in December last year. The blockchain-enabled platform is expected in August, 2019, and the IPO through the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX) in September.

Mr Edwards said, “We have also recently had it confirmed that East Timor has agreed to be a foundation client.

“Revenue in 2018 was \$418,000 and the company delivered a net profit of \$150,000,” he said.

VaultID is currently raising seed capital of \$750,000 on a \$3.5 million market valuation, with an estimated IPO/RTO raise of \$5m on an \$8m–\$10m valuation.

“We believe this Australian fintech innovation will help to solve a real and growing problem in national and international financial markets,” Mr Edwards said. ■

**VaultID** is a financial technology company being launched to resolve vital issues of digital verification of ownership in financial transactions that exist in most developing economies.

VaultID’s main branded product is the app *myVault*. The company is planning an IPO on the ASX later this year. Leading Vault ID are CEO Jason Edwards, Chairman Jitto Arulampalam, CTO Michael Peel, and Cloud Infrastructure Manager Stephen Dendtler. VaultID is headquartered in Melbourne.

Ph: 1300 249 070.  
E-mail: info@vaultid.com  
www.vaultid.com ■



Images: VaultID.



# WA Leaders grows from strength to strength

WA Leaders CEO Rupen Kotecha addresses an enthusiastic crowd at the monthly networking event.

By Rupen Kotecha, CEO,  
WA Leaders >>

**F**ROM A STANDING START in 2016, WA Leaders now has over 100 of the State's business, industry and government leaders across a variety of different industries, sectors and backgrounds.

As WA Leaders launches into its fourth year, we have curated a business community that is highly engaged and focussed on supporting the growth of business in WA.

The Executive Leaders Series selects 25 businesses each year, representing more established companies that are entering their next stage. This could

include growth, investment, expansion, new product innovation, or succession as examples.

The Future Leaders Series selects 15 companies each year, typically at an earlier stage in their journey. The primary purpose is to surround each with the leading expertise and networks to build a sustainable and profitable business long term.

Modelled and based on the success of WA Leaders, South West Leaders launched in 2018. Hosted in Bunbury, this Series is also focussed on inspiring leading companies in the South West Region of WA.

Each year WA Leaders provides these Members with a variety of workshops, mentoring, connect events, alumni events and other activities all designed to drive their business success.

Over the last 12 months, WA Leaders has provided Members with:

- Facilitation of more than 400 personalised one-on-one mentoring

WA Leaders boardroom events tackle the most challenging issues in business.





sessions with true industry experts across a range of expertise and industry sectors;

- 45 Knowledge Workshops, focused on exposing growth companies to fresh ideas, emerging trends and opportunities, and different thinking to take full advantage of their opportunity;
- 10 high-quality networking Connect Events with industry leaders, experts and special guests.
- Increased engagement with academia through field trips to leading research centres with Industry Partners Edith Cowan University—the Australian Cyber Security Research Institute (ASCRI)—and Curtin University—The Agency and The Luxury Branding Research Cluster—to gain unique access to their facilities and understand the value of a research and industry relationship.
- Over 50 companies attending Growth, Strategy and Investment Forums in conjunction with the CCIWA and City of Canning—focused on innovation, collaboration and commercial opportunity;
- Social events and networking opportunities bringing business leaders together in a social setting to further cement relationships and cross-opportunity.
- Two WA Leaders Teams are also riding in the



Rupen Kotecha.



*WA Leaders events are always thought-provoking because the sessions are delivered by people with real world experience in handling business challenges. That holds true for Members, Industry Experts, Industry Partners, Advisory Board members and Future Leaders alike.*

MACA Ride to Conquer Cancer raising over \$50,000 for Industry Partner, The Harry Perkins Institute for Medical Research.

Other notable outcomes in recent times from within the WA Leaders network include:

- One WA Leaders member picking up a \$500k Commercialization Australia Grant.
- 12 WA Leaders Member companies directly accessing sister-Series interstate/overseas to open offices and create new business opportunities in other regions;
- Continued relationships with all three levels of

government to ensure companies are gaining access to all possible opportunity, grant opportunities and other key outcomes;

- Full reciprocal rights access through the International Leaders network including across Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom;
- Access to China via the launch of an annual China Trade Mission in conjunction with AustCham Shanghai.

WA Leaders and SW Leaders welcomes enquiry from all companies who are seeking growth, national or international expansion, succession/exit, or investment opportunities.  
www.waleaders.com.au



Western Australian Leaders

Images: Supplied.



Above: Joanna Wu, Shani Rai Sinha, Shadi Kheder and Jacqui Robb. Centre: Jason Marriott. Right: The Alphabiz team. At AlphaBiz, great minds gather regularly to find better methods and systems for their customers.

## AlphaBiz charts 10 years, strides into the future with certainty

**F**OR ALPHABIZ it has been a 10-year journey from inception, with a handful of clients with an ambition to help business owners and CEOs take back control of their business, using a range of modern whole-of-business software solutions to future-proof their organisation.

For AlphaBiz clients, the team has worked closely with innovative operators to better equip their staff with the right tools and provide better service, and it has paid off all round.

It sounds simple, but the ‘smarts’ behind AlphaBiz are more about the interpretation of useful software into business processes and to optimise them rather than about the technology itself.

“At AlphaBiz, our mission is to equip businesses with modern software solutions to help them operate with greater control, efficiency, visibility and future proofing the organisation,” co-founder and Director Shadi Kheder said.

“Together with our skilled and dedicated team, we provide our clients with powerful software solutions that solve the everyday challenges faced by growing companies with the visibility to key focus information to help business owners, executives, and management make informed and effective decisions.”

### TAKING ‘HARD’ OUT OF SOFTWARE

AlphaBiz Solutions understood the growing need for fully integrating software solutions from day one in 2009 when the company was kicked off by Shadi Kheder.

“After months of planning, it all became a reality on August 1, 2009,

in a tiny office space with a small team, working with limited resources but high optimism and passion,” Mr Kheder said. “We had one vision, the same as today, to help businesses take control by centralising and streamlining these business systems.”

AlphaBiz has developed its service and training offerings for the past decade and the business continues to go from strength to strength.

“We are true believers that when it comes to business software solutions there is no ‘one size fits all’ approach,” fellow Director Peter Coole said. “We understand that buying a business system can be a big investment for companies and despite significant costs, software sometimes fails to meet critical requirements..

“To combat the frustration and hardships that can stem from implementing unsuitable systems or multiple softwares, we follow the 80/20 principle of software selection. Through our careful needs analysis process we help to select the right software which caters to 80 percent (or more) of the business’s critical needs and the final 20 percent is accomplished by customising or enhancing the software to suit the client specifically.”

### MANAGING CHANGE

Matching and tailoring the software is only part of the challenge for both AlphaBiz Solutions and their clients. Managing and interpreting the change to the business the new software represents is the truly challenging part.

“It is critical that when you need to assist in the change management process that you work with your audi-

ence, to gain their trust so they come down the path of change with you,” Mr Kheder said.

“Our teams are continually working to refine the process of change in a friendly non-confrontational way, yet ensuring that the path to required outcome is followed in an effective manner. Currently we have a team of 20, comprised of extremely adept and enthusiastic individuals to deliver on this promise,” Mr Kheder said.

Mr Coole outlined the challenge: “As solutions like electronic trading (B2B & EDI), artificial intelligence, IoT, automation become readily available and affordable to adapt, we want to empower our clients to stay ahead as the business landscape becomes more competitive and demand for reduced operational costs impacts us all.”

At the end of the day it is the people that make the difference in this innovative tech company.

“People have always been at the centre of everything that we do,” Mr Kheder said. ■

Images: Supplied.



### AlphaBiz Solutions

Started in 2009, AlphaBiz Solutions is a fully owned and operated Australian consultancy specialising in ERP solutions, Payroll/HRM, Time and Attendance, Custom Applications, Business Intelligence and Software Automation and Integration for small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Ph: (08) 9277 2226

[www.alphabiz.com.au](http://www.alphabiz.com.au) ■

# Excel Robotics develops vital production machinery

**E**XCEL ROBOTICS may have started small, but the company has always had big ideas about developing Australian advanced manufacturing services that would drive success for its clients across the agriculture, automotive, petro-chemical and resources industries.

Dan Leech founded Excel Robotics in 2006 and has been its managing director—and sole owner—since its inception, having focussed on the automotive sector initially. His background in the steel industry then set him thinking about creating better and more specialised production machinery and that, naturally, led to the field of robotics.

“I started with one robot and one customer and a huge dream and desire to succeed,” Mr Leech said. “Money was limited back then when I worked on my own so I made the decision that a fork lift would add more value to my company, rather than build an office—so that’s what I did.

“Move on two years and I had saved enough money to build my own office. Then we took the unit on next door and put a powder coating plant in to give our customers a complete package.

“Another year on I had eight staff and generators running out the front to give us more power as we were so busy. We then moved into Wellard Street Bibra Lake with eight staff and a turnover of \$1.2m. Move forward five years and last financial year we turned over \$6.7m.

“We now employ 39 staff over two shifts, have four accreditations with Lloyds Register, six safety awards, four running robots, three saws, the largest plasma cutting, drilling and oxy cutting machine in WA and predict turnover in the next financial year of \$9.5m.”

Key to success, Mr Leech said, was his concentration of face-to-face meetings with customers.

“I strongly believe this was a critical component in gaining trust and creating opportunities for customers to take a chance on a new supplier.”

## LOOKING WELL AHEAD

After making its name rapidly from a standing start in the automotive sector then into agriculture and mining, Excel Robotics’ expertise and reputation opened doors in other industries.

Now Excel Robotics has its sights set on venturing into the oil and gas sector and the company is planning to expand eastward into locations such as Tomago and Gladstone.

The installation of the largest plasma cutting machine in WA over the past year was a paradigm shift for Excel.

“The installation on the plasma (cutting technology) was a real turning point for us,” Mr Leech said. “We also commissioned our biggest robot Number 4. This is a five-axis robot mounted on a 10-tonne horizontal gantry system.

“We use this mainly for 1554.5 high fatigue welding work. Our customers love seeing this technology in action. And we can weld continuously for up to 12m.”

Excel Robotics’ diversity of capabilities, and the way the company continually develops new efficiencies in its manufacturing systems by utilising robotics, is paying off in how it is able to transition between industry sectors.

In fact, Excel Robotics has now become the largest supplier to the Australian and New Zealand wool industry of fabricated components—most notably its latest technology wool presses.

Excel Robotics has also become one of WA’s leading companies in the de-



Top: Excel Robotics founder Dan Leech builds diverse capability via robotics. Above: Excel Robotics’ impressive plasma, drilling and oxy cutting machine is the largest in Western Australia with a vast cutting area of 5.1m wide by 24.5m long.

velopment of apprenticeships, working with At Work Australia, Curtin University, and seven state high schools to give people the chance of gaining an apprenticeship “and come to our facilities to give the industry a try,” he said.

“We also take part in Indigenous employment and training.” The company has also helped to rehabilitate people back into the industry after imprisonment, addiction, or illness, Mr Leech said.

It shows how paramount the development of people is for success—even for a robotics company. ■

Images: Supplied | Photos by Adrian Tan Photography.



**Excel Robotics** is best known for its development of highly specialised production machinery across the agriculture, automotive and resources industries—and the company’s related capabilities in high quality welding, steel fabrication, powder coating, plasma cutting and rubber lining.

Excel Robotics has grown to 39 staff over two shifts, led by Managing Director Dan Leech and Operations Manager Tom Poupouare, and is expected to turn over \$9.5 million in the 2018–19 financial year.

Excel Robotics has won many awards over the years: 2019 WA Govt. WorkSafe Plan Platinum Certificate of Achievement; 2018 IFAP Safety Innovation Award 2nd Runner up; 2018 IFAP Safe Way Achiever Award Gold Category; 2017 IFAP Safe Way

Achiever Award Gold Category; 2017 WA Govt. WorkSafe Plan Gold Certificate of Achievement; 2015 WA Govt. Work Safety Award—Best Workplace Safety & Health Practices in Small Business.

Accreditations Excel holds include Quality Management ISO 9001:2015, Environmental Management ISO 14001:2015, Safety Accreditation AS/NZS 4801:2001, and Safety Accreditation OHSAS 18001:2007. [www.excelrobotics.com.au](http://www.excelrobotics.com.au) ■

# CFO Centre gives companies a new analytical edge



Image: iStock | Copyright © Zsolt Nyulaszi. All rights reserved.

*The advice that a good CFO can bring to bear on charting a business's future, at the right time, is invaluable.*

**T**HE ROLE of the chief financial officer (CFO) in today's challenging and fast-changing business environment cannot be understated or underestimated.

The CFO has transitioned rapidly from a person who 'kept tabs on the money' to someone who constantly analyses a business to put finance and assets to best use in order to both secure and grow a business.

It was this realisation, after many years of working in a wide variety of companies as CFO, that spurred Rupen Kotecha to co-found the CFO Centre network in Australia over a decade ago.

Ever since, he has been on a mission to introduce the value of a modern CFO to as many businesses as possible, "to spread our vision that one day every small and mid-tier business will have a part time CFO".



Rupen Kotecha.

"I co-founded this business in Australia based on my desire to have freedom from corporate life and a

work-life balance, having spent many years as a corporate CFO," said Mr Kotecha, whose main role today is as the CEO of CFO Centre WA.

"The original concept for the CFO Centre was to provide the skill sets of experienced chief financial officers of large corporations to the small and medium sized enterprise (SME) sector, allowing smaller organisations to benefit from the expertise of a highly experienced chief financial officer without incurring the expense of hiring someone full-time."

Mr Kotecha said the concept was launched in the UK in 2001 through a venture named the FD Centre, referring to the more common title in Britain at the time of Finance Director.

"Colin Mills, founder of the company, is a former chief financial officer of large multinationals and Plc companies," he said. "His was the first business to provide part-time CFO services in the UK.

"The part-time CFO concept caught on quickly and the business has grown rapidly on a national scale. Over the last 15 years the CFO Centre Group

has become the largest and most respected provider of part-time chief financial officer services in the world.

"The CFO Centre is now the global number one provider of part-time FD and CFO services."

## RAPID AUST. GROWTH

The CFO Centre has grown rapidly across Australia and the group is a major supporter of networks that help businesses and their leaders to grow and develop—especially through WA Leaders where Rupen Kotecha is also the organisation's CEO.

The CFO Centre continues to innovate in WA and has introduced new services that have taken a lead in assisting clients in ways that other CFO Centres are also adopting.

"As well as offering the Part-Time CFO model we have expanded into providing Interim CFOs, either to fulfil the role until a full-time CFO is employed or assist the current CFO to provide more fire-power," Mr Kotecha said. "This has worked very well."

The CFO Centre has also developed a new free workshop series as a cata-

lyst for business improvement across the state.

“We are running free workshops for our clients and prospects as part of our business improvement series, focusing on Value Proposition and Strategy,” Mr Kotecha said.

The CFO Centre has also stepped into the world of online learning for a very specific market.

“We have developed our new online learning platform for our new joiners—to accelerate their knowledge about our values and framework and help them settle in quickly,” Mr Kotecha said. “It is working very well in that context.”

The CFO Centre globally uses a business analysis system it calls 12 Box Architecture.

“We use our unique 12 Box Architecture to review every area of your current company finance function to include your current and future requirements,” a CFO Centre spokesperson said. “This approach means that we dig deep at the start of any new client relationship with the aim of identifying every problem area and getting everything out on the table.

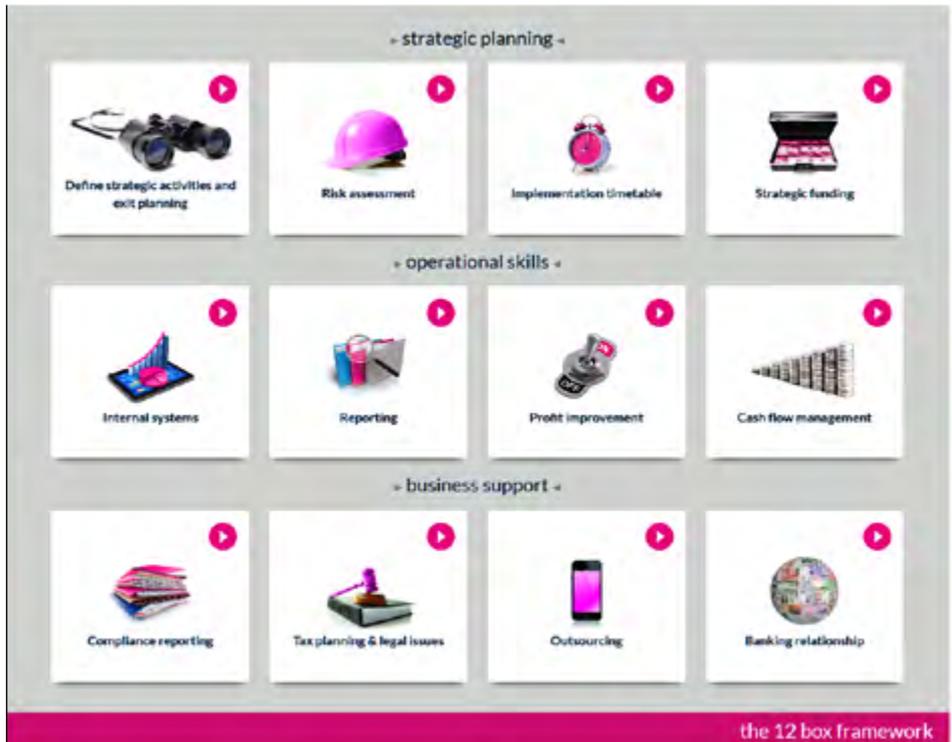
“This is a highly therapeutic approach for the business owner—and senior team—because it means you can de-clutter your head of issues which may have been circulating for months or even years and emerge with a clear roadmap and a top quality part-time CFO to manage the implementation of the plan.”

CFO Centre’s own progress is solid and matches the impressive growth of the companies they assist.

“We have taken on 15 new CFOs in the last year, growing the WA team from eight to over 50 across Australia,” Mr Kotecha said.

“As our client businesses grow in size, our growth rates tend to settle. We are seeing growth rates for the group at 30 percent-plus.

“Given we are not capped by our market opportunity—there are millions of SME businesses globally for us to partner with—and this movement of team-based portfolio working is gaining momentum as more and more individuals seek freedom from corporate life, we certainly have the opportunity to sustain and increase these growth rates well into the future. In a way we are only just beginning,” he said.



*The CFO Centre makes a range of tools available to help businesses better map out their futures ... and avoid crises.*

**FOUNDATION ETHOS**

While growth and development are integral to the CFO Centre’s DNA, it is more the organisation’s foundation ethos for helping business and business leaders that underpins its long-term success.

Mr Kotecha said what drove the centre’s CFOs was “the sense of achievement we get from seeing the genuine difference we make for our clients”.

“We continue to focus on building relationships with our clients that can last a lifetime—essentially a ‘Client for Life’.

“Every engagement is similar but different. You’re dealing with individuals and personalities and that, therefore, has its challenges.”

Mr Kotecha said helping clients navigate an unstable business environment—in which the impact of events such as the Royal Commission into Australia’s banking, finance and insurance sectors has sown mistrust throughout the market—has become part of a good CFO’s daily focus.

“In an age of mistrust, we have to ensure our approach stands unique with each client,” Mr Kotecha said. “We deliver our best to ensure the owners have trust in the whole process and they can get the freedom to do other pieces, which accelerates their growth.”

To achieve that, Mr Kotecha said his teams at CFO Centre WA also had to focus closely on their own fundamentals and motivations.

“We constantly attract, select, energise and retain the very best CFOs,” Mr Kotecha said. “We also strive to keep identifying and developing great aligned leaders.

“At the CFO Centre we stick to our values—of being Open, Progressive and Passionate. And with those values behind us, we continue to build a fantastic sales and marketing machine that is centred around finding, winning and keeping clients.

“We drive our team ethos continually: Together We Win. It’s what makes us special.” ■



**CFO Centre**

CFO Centre operates across all industries and provides part-time, interim and specialist CFOs to companies of all sizes.

CFO Centre leaders are Western Australia CEO Rupen Kotecha and Eastern Australia CEO David King.

**Contact:** [www.cfocentre.com.au](http://www.cfocentre.com.au).  
Ph: 1300 447 740 ■

# Global Drone Solutions: getting business airborne



GDS airborne camera. Global Drone Solutions is helping to open up new commercial applications for drones—such as more cost-effective forms of aerial photography—and training drone pilots in safe, innovative use of the ever-advancing technology.

**D**RONES can be high-level problem solvers. That is the premise behind Mahmood and Laura Hussein’s founding of Global Drone Solutions in Perth in January, 2016—and it is resonating in the market.

Global Drone Solutions harnesses state-of-the-art drone technologies to solve both social and business problems and create new business opportunities, according to Mahmood Hussein.

“We help individuals and organisations understand the benefits of drone technology, and how they can integrate drones into an existing business, start a drone business, or gain employment in the Remote Piloted Aircraft (RPA) sector,” Mr Hussein said.

Global Drone Solutions is an innovative growth business that helps introduce drone technologies to benefit other businesses. Global Drone provides tailored drone pilot training and solutions to a broad range of industries, reducing operational costs, lowering risk, improving operational efficiencies and, most importantly, improving safety.

The company’s aim is to build a global brand which is respected for its professionalism in the drone industry.

“Our strategy is to use pilot training as a platform to launch a drone consulting service,” Mr Hussein said.

“To fast-track this, we have forged alliances with other like-minded organisations that already have good reputations in the marketplace and share a similar business ethos and culture.”

The company is literally ready for take-off.

“We plan to go national this year and international in 2020,” Mr Hussein said.

According to the latest research, Mr Hussein said, the global drone industry will be worth an estimated US\$127 billion by 2020. The industry is growing rapidly, and he expected it would positively impact large numbers of people and “transform industries across the world”.



Mahmood Hussein.

## UPWARD TRAJECTORY

If the flightpath of Global Drone Solutions is anything to go by, the industry may be accelerating even faster in Australia—a country which can historically boast a fine record of aviation technology early adoption.

Over the past year, Mr Hussein said, the company has doubled in team members and revenue. It has also introduced both an online learning option and its *Certificate III in Aviation* certification.

“We see a lot more organisations recognising drones as a valuable tool, rather than a toy,” Mr Hussein said. “The reduction in the price and improvement in reliability and quality of drone platforms over the past 12 months have been key factors in this change.

“Furthermore, the risk from a customer’s perspective has been reduced dramatically, as companies like Global Drone Solutions offer consultancy services to help organisations establish compliant drone operations within their businesses.”

Drone aviation is an early-stage industry that is developing fast—and innovating even faster.

“I am always surprised with some of the applications our clients are using drones for,” Mr Hussein said.

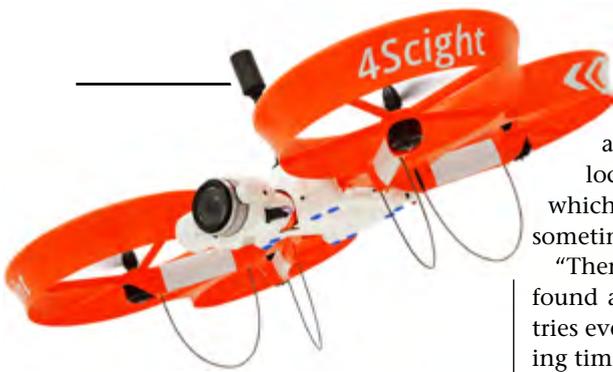
“For instance, we recently trained a client who was using drones to muster cattle. This has been done before, but in this example, the client was using a thermal camera with the drone and was able to get live data on the head of cattle (total) in any paddock at any time—but more importantly was able to tell when an animal was either ill or pregnant, due to the increase in the heat signature.”

This increased the farmer’s operational efficiency dramatically.

Some of the innovations Global Drone Solutions has brought through have been specifically to meet the challenges facing businesses wanting to utilise drones. This was a strong impetus for developing an online training curriculum.

“We understand that some of our clients will not be able to take five days away from work,” Mr Hussein said. “So we introduced an online learning option, where the theory training is

Drone images supplied. Image of Mr Hussein supplied. photo by Lighbent Images & Photography.



completed online and then we catch up for two days to complete the practical training and assessments.

“This has been an overwhelming success. Already 50 percent of training is completed through the online portal.”

Global Drone Solutions also overcame certain pre-existing barriers to develop the certification.

“We are also pleased that we have been approved to deliver the *Certificate III in Aviation—remote pilot qualification*,” he said. “This is a VET qualification, which opens up new opportunities in the education sector.”

### FUTURE ARRIVING FAST

Although the drone technologies themselves have come to market rapidly and had an impact across many business sectors, fundamental new technologies are also impacting the drone sector.

One of the big ones is ‘lidar’—sensors using light detection and ranging—which opens up the drones to new environments where they can have a big impact on workplace health and safety.

“The use of lidar technology and applications are increasing due to miniaturisation of components, improvements in technology and price reductions, making it a commercially viable option,” Mr Hussein said. “This opens up the potential for some very exciting applications in underground mining, for example.”

He foresaw drones leading inevitably to so-called ‘air taxis’.

“Jetsons, here we come,” Mr Hussein smiled. “There is a considerable amount of talk and action about the use of air taxis both in Australia and globally.

“In Australia, Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia’s state governments have started discussions about the possibilities of drone taxis in the next 3–5 years. As a matter of fact, a local Perth property developer has just lodged a planning application for an apartment block in South Fremantle, which includes an air taxi landing pad on the roof.

“In Dubai and Singapore—they have just completed successful trials of

a two-seater drone taxi by Volocopter ([www.volocopter.com](http://www.volocopter.com)) which I expect will be in operation sometime in 2019.

“There are new applications being found across a broad range of industries every day. It certainly is an exciting time to be in this industry.”

Global Drone Solutions is gearing up to meet anticipated demand in Australia’s drone industry, no matter what direction it takes.

“We have more than doubled our turnover in the past 12 months, signed up new partnerships and tier one clients, and it’s looking like we will beat this in the coming 12 months,” Mr Hussein said.

“We have more than doubled our team, with new trainers, marketing personnel and admin staff.”

### LANDING PARTNERSHIPS

Importantly, Global Drone Solutions has also struck up some important partnerships and alliances, to help the company achieve its humanitarian goals. The latest is a partnership with WeRobotics.

“Our partnership with WeRobotics allows us to deliver on our company’s ‘why’ which is ‘making a real-world difference through drones’,” Mr Hussein said. “It also allows us to pay forward and use technology to make the world a better place.

“We chose WeRobotics as our goals are aligned. We wanted aid to reach disaster-affected communities more quickly, meet the health needs of remote communities more rapidly and help achieve sustainable development goals faster.

“We believe we can accelerate and scale the positive impact on these communities using drones. And we both want to build local capability.”

The alliance in Africa with FlyingLabs began in late 2018 and was an immediate success.

“Since our partnership in September 2018, we have trained pilots in

FlyingLabs in Tanzania, Kenya and South Pacific, with another 15 Flying Labs taking the online training in early 2019,” Mr Hussein said. “The online component focuses specifically on the theory section required for a drone pilot licence.”

Upon completing this training, Flying Labs pilots are issued a certificate of completion by Global Drone Solutions, which already carries weight in many countries in which Flying Labs operate.

“We are exploring ways to expand this meaningful collaboration further to bring additional services to the global network of Flying Labs,” Mr Hussein said.

Last year proved to be a big year for the commercial drone industry as a whole and it certainly was for Global Drone Solutions.

Australia’s Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) sent out the draft *Manual of Standards (MOS)* seeking feedback, and Global Drone Solutions participated.

“The MOS will help standardise the drone’s industry by setting specific training and operational requirements,” Mr Hussein said. This aligns with regulatory frameworks which are being introduced globally.

“Those are just a few of the highlights,” he said. “I believe that 2019 is set to be even bigger for the industry, as major developments with regulations, new products both in hardware and software and Unmanned Traffic Management have been predicted to come together in a big way over the next 12 months.

“We are very excited about 2019. Our services are in high demand, the partnerships we made during 2018 are starting to bear fruit, we have been approached by international organisations to explore new opportunities and our team is growing,” Mr Hussein said.

“Let’s go ahead and making a real-world difference through drones” ■



### Global Drone Solutions

**Operates in:** Drone space, education, mining, oil and gas, construction, utilities, asset inspections, agriculture.

**Leadership team:** Mahmood Hussein, Founder and CEO; Laura, Vanessa and Dee. 10 staff.

M: 0499 085 777

E: [mahmood@gdronesolutions.com](mailto:mahmood@gdronesolutions.com)

**Awards and official recognition:** Rising Star Awards, Pitch at Palace. ■



The NSW Leaders Series is now in its fifth year and has almost 100 Alumni companies regularly engaged within the series. Each year the NSW Leaders series offers up to 400 personalised one-on-one mentoring sessions, 45 Knowledge Workshops and 10 Connect events, along with extra social events and networking opportunities.

## Developing the next generation of NSW's leading companies

**L**AUNCHED in 2014, NSW Leaders develops the next generation of leading companies headquartered in the State.

NSW Leaders brings together best of breed business, industry and government leaders from across a variety of different industries and backgrounds.

Growing a business in the most populous State in Australia has its own unique challenges, and all of our business leaders engage to provide mentoring support, educational workshops, and broad business networks—and profile from which growth companies leverage.

The NSW Leaders Series is now in its fifth year and has almost 100 Alumni companies regularly engaged within the Series.

Each year NSW Leaders engages 25 new Executive Member and 15 Future Leaders Members to participate in the Leaders Series.

In addition to the support and strategic guidance in growing a business, each of these Members receives direct access to a variety of workshops, mentoring, connect events, alumni events and other activities.

Each year, NSW Leaders provides up to:

- 400 personalised one-on-one mentoring sessions with industry experts;
- 45 Knowledge Workshops, focused on exposing growth companies to fresh ideas and new thinking;
- 10 Connect Events networking with industry leaders, experts, and Alumni;
- Social events and networking opportunities bringing business leaders together in a social setting.

During the year ahead, NSW Leaders will be focused on driving connectivity between companies, creating access to national and international markets, and providing the knowledge, networks, and resources

our Members need to achieve their full potential.

If becoming part of NSW Leaders may be of interest, you are encouraged to nominate directly or enquire to learn more.

[www.nswleaders.com.au](http://www.nswleaders.com.au) ■



New South Wales Leaders



Garry Lowrey.

Images: NSW Leaders.

# Adora Handmade Chocolates break the mould

**A**DORA Handmade Chocolates has one of the most remarkable back-stories of any Australian confectionery maker.

Adora started out as a simple homemade chocolates business in 1993, designed to make some extra money for sisters Tina Angelidis and Katerina Stavropoulos, as they supported their partners in raising their families. Over a quarter century later, the business has developed in both size and brand reputation to be poised for steady expansion.

“Over time, the business has had to be the main income for both families,” director Tina Angelidis said. “Now the children have grown, the business has taken on another phase. We now can see the potential beyond just an income and would like to explore the possibilities.”

And those possibilities seem ripe for the picking, right now, for Adora Handmade Chocolates.

## ADORA COMES OF AGE

Over the past few years, consequently, the Adora leadership team has focused on laying the groundwork for expansion—and this has rapidly paid off.

First came the decision to install new equipment and restructure Adora’s manufacturing site, a couple of years ago, supplying a broad range of customers and four Adora Cafés in

Sydney’s CBD, Earlwood, Parramatta and Newtown.

“Significant technologies and systems introduced include ordering systems, purchasing, stock management, and making accountability more visible,” Ms Angelidis said.

But perhaps most rewarding was the relocation of Adora’s original Earlwood store.

“After 22 years in Homer Street, last year we relocated our Earlwood store to 118 Wardell Rd Earlwood, corner of Bass St,” Ms Angelidis said. “It was a big step for us, but we were able to relocate our business of 25 years to a new location and, at the same time, increase sales immediately.”

Ms Angelidis said she learned to “never underestimate or overestimate people’s potential”.

Furthermore, incentive rewards have successfully been introduced for staff at all levels.

## MEETING CHALLENGES

The company’s financial turnaround over the past year has been solid and confident, as a result of Adora’s innovative but measured approach. That seems even more remarkable in a retail environment rife with challenges.

“Currently the chocolate café industry has suffered due to the high rents, high staff costs and increasing costs from food suppliers,” Ms Angelidis said. “We have had to try to renegotiate all areas more regularly.”

An area that needs special attention, Ms Angelidis and her leadership team agree—because it has such a negative effect on the retail cost of products—is the hurdle of payroll tax, often described by economists as a ‘tax on employment’.



Director Tina Angelidis.

“Payroll tax must be addressed for the hospitality industry,” Ms Angelidis said. “The industry hardly allows you to grow the business, pay staff correctly and still make a profit.”

Another challenge has been the quest to use more sustainable and ethical products, and the logistics.

“We are also using more and more natural ingredients in all our products,” she said, mentioning its impact on the bottom line. Indeed, the public has reacted enthusiastically to all Adora product innovations so far.

For 2019 and beyond, Tina Angelidis’s primary goals are to consolidate the manufacturing with the retail.

“I want Adora Handmade Chocolates to be a recognised, reputable and sustainable business,” Ms Angelidis said.

With that solid foundation—hand-built by sisters Tina and Katerina from the ground up, over 25 years—Adora Handmade Chocolates continues to innovate and foment ever-more heavenly chocolate experiences.

[www.adora.com.au](http://www.adora.com.au) ■



Image: Supplied. Photo by WS Avenue - Sydney

## Adora Handmade Chocolates

**Best-known brands:** Adora Café, Adora Signature Truffles made with natural ingredients, Special Order chocolates and Hampers, Handmade High Tea, Chocolate Classes as team building for clients or colleagues.

Adora Handmade Chocolates operates across the manufacturing and hospitality industries, and is led by director Tina Angelidis.

Adora has one manufacturing site and four retail and café outlets across Sydney. There are 24 staff producing a turnover of \$2.8 million.

**Awards:** Adora’s chocolates have won many awards at the Sydney Royal Easter Show. Adora has also been awarded Business of the Year for the Canterbury region. ■



# Lights, camera ... Cato Location Services into action



ONE OF THE KEY reasons international film and television productions flock to Australia—when the economics permit—is the technical skill and support services of the Australian industry.

CATO Location Services is one of Australia's great innovators in screen production and major event support services, with an extraordinary fleet of mobile support vehicles ranging from dressing room, catering support and rest vehicles to on-site mobile technical support studios.

Kieran Cato established CATO in March 2012 and remains the company's managing director. Last year he happily presided over an increase in sales — and the company bought the complementary business, Honeywagons.

CATO operates in four key markets today—the film and TV industry, fashion and still photography, local government support and major events—and the company's ability to transition between these sectors has allowed it to thrive through the regular ups and downs in those sectors.

In the film and TV industry, CATO has a healthy majority of the market—about 70–80 percent.

"Our main challenge is the loss of major productions to other states or countries," Mr Cato said. "This is heavily dependent on the Australian dollar in comparison to the US, China, India and the UK. Government grants and incentives are also a major contributor to whether a production shoots here opposed to other locations."

In the fashion and stills industry, CATO has made solid inroads through the 2018 purchase of another market-leading local business, Honeywagons.

"We are now the major provider of production service vehicles within this industry," Mr Cato said. "The main challenge now is to retain the existing Honeywagons clientele."

In the Local Government sector, CATO is now energetically targeting its support services to major events produced by Local Government Associations (LGAs).

"We are a very attractive option as we are pre-approved for Local Government procurement (state-wide) and have successfully managed one of the largest events in Australia two years running, City of Sydney's New Year's Eve event" Mr Cato said.

## EVENTS AND TV LOCATIONS

In the events sector, CATO may be a relative newcomer, but it has been able to transition its film and TV location expertise.

"We are relatively new to this field, but we have the track record in more challenging market places, such as film and TV, so we can be a very competitive player in this field," Mr Cato said. "Our main challenge now is down to business development."

This is hardly new territory for Mr Cato, who started the business in 2012 with his eyes wide open to opportunity that would be facilitated by hard work and careful expansion.

"I knew I didn't want to work for

anybody else and saw an opportunity to start a small business. I never imagined it would grow to what it has today," Mr Cato said.

"My purpose seven years ago was to start something of my own which I enjoyed doing. I had recently returned home from 12 months of travel and I was unsure what to do next, or even if I wanted to stay in Australia.

"It was definitely a very important cross road in my life, as a life of travel was a likely alternative if things didn't work out."

Fortunately, Mr Cato has insights into support services on film and television locations.

"I started the business when I saw a gap in the market. Initially my intentions were to stay small, however this changed after 12 months when CATO went head to head with its sole competitor, (maybe explain why) which had been established for over 20 years.

"We made a conscious decision to develop relationships that would increase return business and focused on several TV series that would shoot every year such as *Home & Away*, which films for 42 weeks of the year, *My Kitchen Rules*, *Rake* and *Doctor, Doctor*."

As the business grew, Mr Cato introduced key people to sustain growth.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES

CATO Location Services has in the past been sought out for on-site mobile support services for local government events. The company has developed new capabilities in this area which CATO intends to extend in coming years.

"In 2019 we are focusing on business development within the Local Government sector," Mr Cato said.

"We've had a lot of success in this sector already and provide services to eight Local Government Authorities (LGAs). City of Sydney is our main client and New Years Eve (NYE 2018) has been our largest event."

CATO successfully looked after traffic management for what is the largest event in Australia—the City of Sydney 2018 NYE—along with numerous events in the Northern Beaches area on the same night.

“This was our second year working on the event and it was twice the size this year,” Mr Cato said.

“Known as one of the largest events in Australia, and with the most complex traffic management requirements incorporating over 30 locations, this was such a great achievement after only five years in operation.

The number of personnel required last year almost doubled, Mr Cato said, with security requirements increasing.

“We hope to use the success of NYE to get our foot in the door with several other LGAs and major events. We recently engaged an operations manager with extensive events and local government experience who will help drive this.”

**SCREEN INDUSTRY CHALLENGES**

Overcoming the ebb and flow of the screen production industry continues to be something to be managed.

“The most surprising challenge was the inconsistency of the film and TV industry,” Mr Cato said. “If several large films shoot over the same period we may have 150-plus staff to find and manage. Then, a few months later, we may have lost films to other states or to other countries and if no major films are shooting in Sydney our staffing requirements could drop to as low as 25–30 ...

“Managing this has been hard—initially we had a very high turnover of staff—and costly. We have since changed the type of employee we engage so we don’t lose them when no work is around. This has been working for the last few years.”

Broadening CATO’s operational base was a major reason for purchasing Honeywagons.

“We acquired Honeywagons in May 2018 with an aim of increasing sales in the fashion and stills photography industries,” Mr Cato said.

“It was a business that had been established for over 30 years and was the go-to services provider for luxury production vehicles within its industry.”

It has been a neat fit.

“We have been able to use the Honeywagons vehicles with the existing CATO clientele and likewise for the CATO vehicles and services with the Honeywagons clientele,” Mr Cato said.

That had the benefit of garnering CATO some unanticipated publicity—the right kind of publicity.



CATO Location Services is a versatile business that ranges across providing production service vehicles for film and TV production to crowd control for Sydney’s New Years Eve celebrations.

CATO received coverage in *Vogue* magazine, after managing all logistics for the largest *Australian Vogue* shoot ever, with famed fashion photographer Mario Testino. CATO was also noticed for its work with the premiere event for the latest *Mad Max* instalment.

“The *Fury Road: Mad Max* premiere event on the Cahill Expressway received international coverage, and CATO managed all the logistics including obtaining permission to close off one of the major roads in Sydney,” Mr Cato said.

**BUILDING THE FUTURE**

Mr Cato said he put into action a sage piece of advice delivered by Sean Collins of Encite Partners, at a NSW Leaders event: “If your staff and partners aren’t aligned, then they aren’t going to focus on the right activities.”

He has always kept this top of mind as the business has grown and it has influenced the type of people employed and CATO’s induction and communication processes. It has also opened up new opportunities for key staff and some have progressed to ownership stakes.

“Since 2017 we have gone from a casual base of 70 to 200,” Mr Cato said. “The number of team leaders has increased from five to 13.

Although CATO has successfully diversified, the business is still focused on helping Australia’s screen industries to thrive—and it obviously needs help.

“It is time that our government took the film industry seriously,” Mr Cato said. “NSW has all the advantages and capabilities to be taking the lead in this industry, not letting it slip by.” ■

Images: Courtesy of CATO.

**CATO Location Services and Honeywagons Location Services**

CATO and Honeywagons operate in the Events, Entertainment, Film and TV, Stills and Fashion sectors. The companies are members of NSW Leaders and is pre-approved supplier for NSW Local Government procurement. The group has 160 casual employees and eight full time employees.

Leadership team is Managing Director and sole Founder Kieran Cato; Operations Manager Mick Darda; Traffic Manager Michael Parker; Office Manager Kylie Peterson; Unit Manager/Partner Andrew Pacholski; Unit Managers Craig Hunter, Dawn Farquharson; Accounts Manager Della Stein; Traffic Control Team Leaders Emerald Kinnerson, Robyn Pink, Cody Talbot; Traffic Control Team Leader and Security Supervisor Hal Baddock; Security Supervisor Thor Carlerbo.

**Ph:** (02) 9517 1313. **Email:** bookings@catolocationservices.com.au; info@catolocationservices.com.au; info@honeywagons.com.au.

**Websites:** catolocationservices.com.au and honeywagons.com.au. ■



Kieran Cato.



# Ceramisphere technology goes global

**C**AN CERAMIC micro-encapsulation technology—a new materials process originally developed by the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation—change the world for the better?

Not only can it happen but New South Wales company Ceramisphere has been established to make it happen.

Ceramisphere has developed two quite different product lines that utilise ceramic micro-encapsulation technology.

Ceramisphere itself manufactures green, smart additives for paints and coatings that provide unrivalled corrosion protection. Ceramisphere Health—an offshoot company that operates specifically in the health and medical sector—is developing a new type of transdermal patch for pain relief and wound healing. Trials so far have given the company great confidence in the ability of this technology to have a successful impact on post shingles pain treatment and help fighting the opioid crisis.

The year ahead is expected to be a busy, fruitful one of commercialisation and stepping up sales for Ceramisphere smart pigments, according to CEO and founder, Chris Barbé, although there are certainly major challenges to be met.



Chris Barbé.

“Our target for Ceramisphere in 2019 is to increase the market penetration for our smart anticorrosion pigments (known by the registered trademark, Inhibispheres) in North America and Europe,” Dr Barbé said.

“We will try to capitalise on the momentum created by our first sale in the USA and keep growing our pipeline through our network of nine distributors. We have more than 100 companies currently testing our products worldwide.”

At the same time, Ceramisphere Health is looking to raise capital and conduct clinical trials with a view to fast-track progress through the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

“For Ceramisphere Health, we are looking to raise capital to take our

ground breaking zero-waste nanocomposite patch technology through clinical trials,” Dr Barbé said. “We should benefit from an accelerated pathway through the FDA and potentially reach commercialisation as early as 2023, which is extremely rapid for Healthcare.

“This makes it a very attractive proposition for potential investors.”

## INNOVATION PEDIGREE

Investors looking at Ceramisphere are likely to be heartened by the company’s strong innovation pedigree and the way the company’s teams ‘keep finding a way’ to commercialise.

Dr Barbé likes to quote from inventor and electricity entrepreneur Thomas Edison, whenever the going gets tough: “Nearly every man who develops an idea works it up to the point where it looks impossible, and then he gets discouraged. That’s not the place to become discouraged.”

Ceramisphere was created in 2007 as a fully owned subsidiary of the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO), as a vehicle to spin-off ANSTO’s novel ceramic micro-encapsulation technology. This first step to commercialisation was achieved in early 2010.

“Originally, we positioned ourselves as a micro-encapsulation company, with a service business model where the client brings a substance to encapsulate and we would develop the encapsulation process for them,” Dr Barbé said. The initial plan was for Ceramisphere to license the technology back to the client to manufacture—or contract the manufacturing of—the final product.

“We worked with a wide range of companies, all around the world, for various applications ranging from the encapsulation of flavours for chewing gum, to enzyme for washing powder, biocide for aquaculture all the way to RNA (ribonucleic acid) therapy.”

Dr Barbé founded Ceramisphere in 2007, working as the company’s technical director, and he became increasingly concerned by the slow commercial take-up of the technology, wondering if another business model should be explored.



Micro-encapsulation.

Image: ANSTO.

“The development of smart additives for paints and coatings started in 2007 as a collaboration with (aircraft manufacturer) Airbus,” Dr Barbé said. “They were interested in developing a replacement for the toxic chromium primers currently used in aerospace to prevent corrosion.

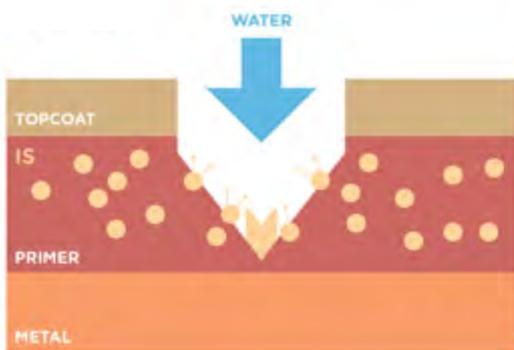
“After several years, we realised that our microencapsulation business model was not applicable to the paint industry. Paint manufacturers, being formulators, were interested in buying microencapsulated additives but not volunteering substances to be encapsulated. Like good cooks, they want to buy their ingredients not grow them ...

“So, we changed our business model and became a smart additive manufacturer. This entailed building a manufacturing facility in Mt Kuringai, north of Sydney, and setting up a sales and distribution network in Europe and North America.”

“In 2014, when I took over as CEO we decided, being an SME with limited resources, to focus on two key areas where our patented technology presented some unique key competitive advantages: smart additives for paints and drug delivery for healthcare,” he said.

“On the healthcare side, after a number of collaboration projects with large pharmaceutical companies, technically successful but which did not progress commercially, we decided to take our destiny in our own hands,” Dr Barbé said. “We chose to push through the clinic a ground breaking transdermal patch technology that we have developed in collaboration with a small company in the Czech Republic.

“The preclinical data is extremely positive with 30 times more efficient patches, with no residual waste—in



Released inhibitors diffuse rapidly to the corrosion site.



Direct to metal coatings.



Chris Barbé gets up close and personal with Ceramisphere research.

contrast to 50–95 percent of the drug typically remaining inside current commercial patches when you discard them. We are currently developing a pipeline of three patch products: One, an extended release lidocaine patch for post-shingles pain; two, a new fentanyl patch for post-surgical and cancer pain; and three, a bioactive wound healing dressing with faster and better healing properties.

“To better focus our effort, we have recently spun off the new company, Ceramisphere Health, which is solely dedicated to developing those novel nano-solutions for skin delivery.”

### BREAKTHROUGHS

Two breakthroughs over the past year have been milestones for Ceramisphere.

The company made the first sale of its ground breaking Inhibispheres anticorrosion technology in North America in 2018. At Ceramisphere Health, positive preclinical data of the lidocaine patch confirmed superior efficiency and ease of disposal.

“We are constantly expanding a modifying our range of Inhibispheres products to better address our customer’s needs,” Dr Barbé said. “In response to some specific demand from customers working in aerospace applications, we have developed two new products which are being evaluated in Europe and the US.

“The Inhibispheres technology is a rupture technology for the paint and coating industry. This patented technology is unique and offers significant increases in efficiency, with 30 times less chemical used for a better corrosion protection.”

Sustainability is part of Ceramisphere’s DNA, Dr Barbé said. The Inhibispheres products are a natural extension of that philosophy, finding a

more sustainable way to manufacture anticorrosion pigments. They provided a novel, eco-friendly alternative to toxic chemicals, such as Chromium VI and other metals, currently used for corrosion protection.

And there has been significant commercial progress across North American and European markets with the establishment in 2018 of nine distributors.

Ceramisphere is also learning that even a new, sustainable—and in many ways revolutionary—product must keep ‘showing up’ and weave its way through to industry acceptance.

“The paint and coating industry is a crowded place with a lot of consolidation occurring both for paint manufacturers but also distributors and suppliers,” Dr Barbé said. “This makes it harder for a small entrepreneurial company based in Australia to enter the global market.

“Large companies tend to be benchmarking new technologies rather than adopting them. We rely on early adopters, to demonstrate the commercial potential of this novel technology and with this concentration happening throughout the industry, their numbers are dwindling.”

Nevertheless, recognition is coming Ceramisphere’s way and sectors of the

industry are taking note. For example, Ceramisphere received early acclaim from the Scandinavian Paint Association in Copenhagen, being named the Most Innovative Technology of 2018.

That sort of notice is appreciated by the hard-working teams at Ceramisphere who believe their products in development can genuinely change industry for the better.

“Our success is the result of close team work,” Dr Barbé said. “Every member of the team from the junior chemist to the business development manager contributes to the success of the company.

“Our plan is to increase our sales into Europe and North America. Once we will have established our beachheads in these two markets, we will turn our eyes to Asia, which represents both a substantial opportunity—as the highest growth region for the paint industry—and a significant challenge both commercially and from an IP protection perspective.”

While he admits the challenges are big for a small Aussie company, he believes the capability and the determination are there to see Ceramisphere succeed and become another great global company from Australia.

[www.ceramisphere.com/inhibispheres/](http://www.ceramisphere.com/inhibispheres/) ■

### Ceramisphere Pty Ltd and Ceramisphere Health Pty Ltd

**Best-known brands:** Ceramisphere® Inhibispheres®.

Started in 2007 as an offshoot company of ANSTO, Ceramisphere companies operate in the ‘paints and coatings’, manufacturing and healthcare (human and animal) sectors. The businesses are led by founder and former technical director Chris Barbé—who became the CEO in 2014—Ceramisphere today is what he refers to as a ‘mature start-up’ with a permanent staff of 12 people and a turnover of more than \$600,000. The leadership team is CEO Chris Barbé, Chief Scientific Officer Dr Aparajita Khatri for Ceramisphere Health, and Business Development Manager Ron Cozijnsen for Ceramisphere. ■



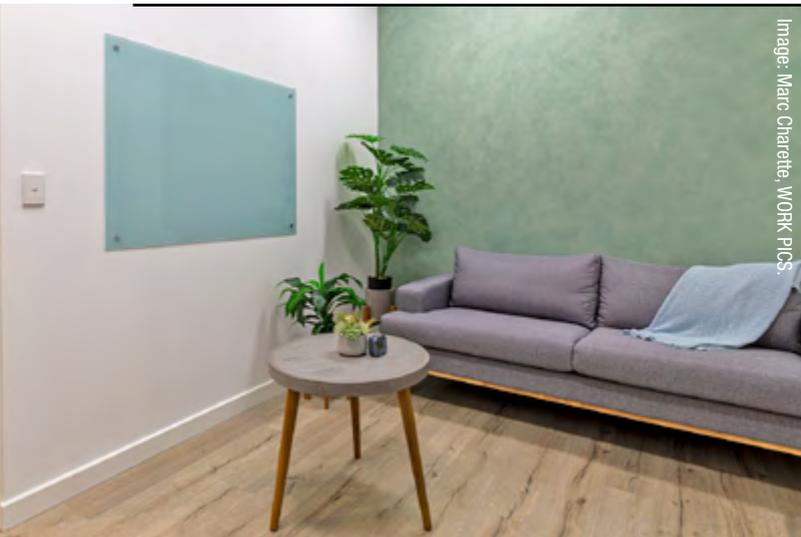
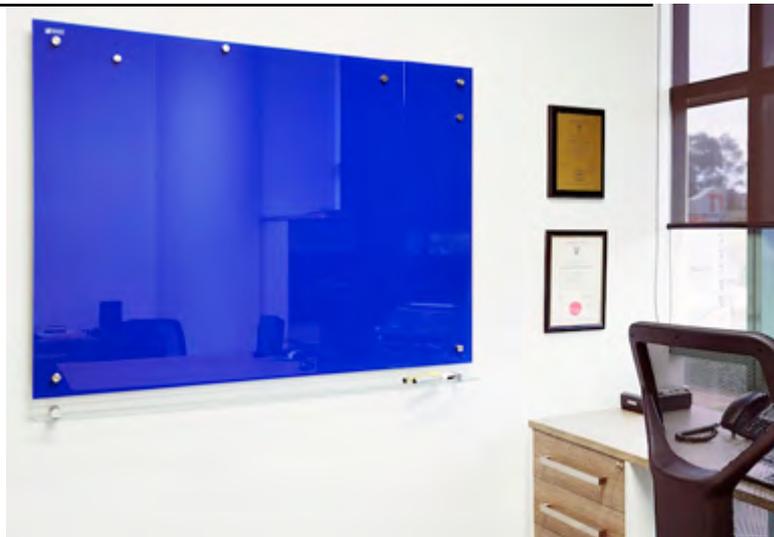


Image: Marc Charette, WORK PICS



# Silverscreen: Reflecting words that can change the world

**E**ACH Silverscreen designer glassboard that leaves the factory has a sticker on it that resounds with these words: ‘What You Write Here Could Change The World’.

It is no trifling marketing boast. Custom-made screens by Glass Whiteboards Pty Ltd—branded as Silverscreen Designer Glassboards—adorn the halls of power in Canberra, in major hospitals, multi-national corporations and increasingly in the boardrooms and design studios of Australia’s new breed of fast-moving start-up and scale-up businesses.

These 100 percent Australian designed and manufactured writing screens—that range from hand-tablet size to wall-size and are often shaped to suit specific business requirements—are emerging as one of the most creative elements of Australian office design in the 21st century. And they all come from a relatively small and creatively motivated business in Gosford, NSW.

Once an organisation has used Silverscreen glassboards—especially those that have been incorporated into an office design specifically to help stimulate creativity—they come back for more with every expansion and re-fit. Patti Wolf and Iain Logan understand this effect better than anyone—in fact, it is what drove them to buy the company in 2010.

“I saw a small glass whiteboard in my chiropractor’s office and fell in love with the product,” Glass Whiteboards managing director Patti Wolf said. “I went off to Ikea and bought

one the next day and we put it up in our kitchen. This was in 2008 (when the business started). In 2010 we discovered that this business was for sale, we were compelled to own it and by August 2010 it was ours.”

It started out as a labour of love and it continues to this day as Iain Logan, who is an artist, is exploring ever-more creative ways to develop the screens.

From day one, the husband-and-wife team have played to their strengths, with Patti focusing on sales and administration and Iain in design and manufacturing.

“We have always listened to what our customers want which gives us the drive to continually reinvent our products and ourselves,” Ms Wolf said. Reacting to feedback—and with a strong dose of national pride—was what drove them to not only make screens in Australia but also source glass locally.

“We used to import our glass from overseas but in 2016 we negotiated with Australian suppliers and in 2018 we became certified as ‘100% Australian Made and Owned’,” Ms Wolf said.

## CUSTOMER-INSPIRED INNOVATION

The business has thrived on creativity and found demand for ever-larger Glassboards.

“When we bought the business in 2010, the usual size of glass was about 1200mm by 900mm,” Ms Wolf said. “As time has gone by, that size has become a small piece for our market.

“We offer Glassboards with a magnetic backing. We offer to match the Glassboard’s colour to the wall behind it. This has revolutionised our manufacturing process and our offerings to the market. Instead of customers receiving what *we have*, we provide what *they want*.”

This approach has initiated Glass Whiteboards’ best innovations—some of those later patented.

“Over the years we have changed methods of fixing the boards to the walls, for example,” Ms Wolf said. “We invented and patented Glassboards where the background information is easily changeable; from a single piece of A3 paper to a Glassboard holding eight A3 pieces of paper. This invention was at the request of a coal mine in Queensland.

“This has opened a new market for our business where hospitals can change their patient care information. This has also opened the market for mines where a 24-hour manufacture cycle needs to be updated frequently.

“Our goal this year is to not only improve our current products but to introduce two new, unique products to the market in 2019,” Ms Wolf said.

With architects using Glassboards as interior design features, it occurred to Mr Logan that they could be used in a new way.

“We have recently introduced a brand new idea to the market—Art on Glass,” Ms Wolf said. “Iain is the artist who is producing the most beautiful artwork. The painting is done

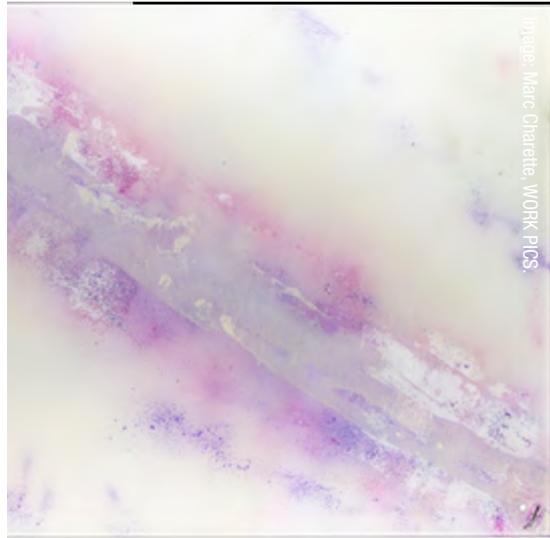


Image: Marc Charette, WORK PICS



Images: Silverscreen.

behind the glass, which makes Iain's final product unknown until he turns the glass over (for example his 'Purple Haze' Art design pictured above).

"This method of painting is counter to how art is usually created. The most exciting part of this is making Glassboards as pieces of art which can be 'defaced' or written on. We are in the final stages of photographing Iain's current portfolio."

Even that has called for an innovation that will become of long-term marketing benefit: a special booth for photographing glass.

"Photographing glass is very difficult and Iain has taken months to design and built a photo booth," Ms Wolf said. Over recent months a comprehensive product shoot has taken place utilising the booth and Iain's "fantastic Art on Glass" products are currently being launched, she said.

Ms Wolf said Silverscreen teams were also working on Projection Glassboards "which is something that we have worked on since 2011".

In action, these add a space-age element to interior spaces, where projected images and hand-written messages can be combined in creative and educational ways.

**MEETING CHALLENGES**

While sales have been impacted in recent years and growth has been steady but slow, Silverscreen is bracing for a spike in growth judging by recent interest—especially in the new product offerings.

Keeping staff informed about the market challenges had an unexpected positive result.

"We found 2018 to be a challenging year with inconsistent sales, especial-

ly around August and September," Ms Wolf said. "We met with the staff and together we worked out a plan to reduce their hours while business was slower.

"This improved the business's cash flow but also led to the factory staff becoming more invested in the success and future of the business and therefore more efficient. We approached our glass suppliers who had also experienced a downturn in turnover. Together we came up with new products and manufacturing ideas which have added to our range and to what we can offer people.

"So 2019 has been like the good old days where the level of sales and enquiries about our product has returned," Ms Wolf said.

"My biggest challenge has been acquiring new business and competing with imported glassboards from China. I have learned that our market is a high-end one with clients who want bespoke, beautiful products and appreciate the high level of customer service and attention that we love to provide."

Yet Silverscreen's key advantage resides in being a creative local supplier that can innovate to help clients.

"We have construction companies and fit-out companies that love work-

ing with us as we really take care of them," Ms Wolf said. "Glassboards are one of the last products to go into projects and these companies are often under pressure to hand the projects over to their clients."

A good example was an urgent request by a Canberra company.

"We were asked to manufacture over 100 of our boards by a company in Canberra who needed the product in a very short amount of time," Ms Wolf said. "They were under pressure from their customer, a government agency who were very particular in their requirements.

"Iain and I personally delivered these on time. Our customer raved, not only about our product, but the level of customer service and communication that she experienced."

But beyond the physical appeal. Silverscreen Designer Glassboards offer that promise of something more.

"Our vision is that one day, somebody will write something on one of our Glassboards and that will change the world," Ms Wolf said.

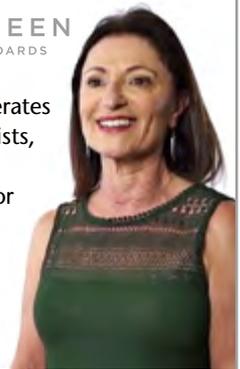
"In keeping with this vision, every Glassboard goes out with a sticker that says 'What You Write Here Could Change The World'." ■

**Glass Whiteboards Pty Ltd**

Leading Australian designer and manufacturer of glass best-known for its brand Silverscreen Designer Glassboards. Glass Whiteboards operates business-to-business with architects, builders and fitout specialists, mainly in the corporate, hospitals and small business sectors.

Glass Whiteboards' leadership team includes Managing Director Patti Wolf (pictured at right), Director Iain Logan, Factory Manager Darrin Richardson and Sales and Customer Service Manager Elaine Hodgkinson.

www.glasswhiteboards.com.au.  
E-mail: sales@glasswhiteboards.com.au ■



# Women's Community Shelters: a vital lifeline

**F**EW CEOs would take a significant pay cut, lose their 15 percent annual superannuation entitlement, ditch an assured career pathway and take on a start-up organisation that would never hold the prospect of big financial rewards down the track.

Annabelle Daniel not only did it, she did so with relish when she became the inaugural CEO of Women's Community Shelters (WCS). In fact, she was the organisation's first employee on day one of operations in 2013.

"It was exactly what I was qualified for and wanted very much to do," Ms Daniel said. "In 2011, I'd taken a year out of my Australian Public Service (APS) career to run Elsie, Australia's oldest women's refuge, supporting women and children who were homeless or leaving domestic violence.

"I saw pretty quickly that more than one in two women who were looking for a safe bed were turned away due to a lack of space. I couldn't believe that was the case.

"I had to return to the APS after a year, and spent 2012 being a bit grumpy and looking for a way to continue the good work. The WCS opportunity, creating new shelters and providing those desperately needed beds, came along at exactly the right time.

"So I took a deep breath, and a big risk, and walked away from my assured career track, my 15 percent superannuation and my long service leave to follow a calling in a raw start-up. The Founding Board created the organisation the year before, and I was the inaugural CEO and first ever employee.

"Everything about Women's Community Shelters attracted me. And still does."

Just six years later, the organisation has shelters including Hornsby Kuringgai Women's Shelter, Northern Beaches Women's Shelter, The Sanctuary-Hills Women's Shelter, Great Lakes Women's Shelter, The Haven-Nepean Women's Shelter and Bayside Women's Shelter, all in NSW.

It is a spectacular growth story, but while Ms Daniel is pleased with the progress, she is far from satisfied.

"I always say that it's sad we need to do what we do, but awesome we can do something to solve the problem," she said. "I hope we continue to grow sensibly and sustainably, and that we stretch ourselves whilst avoiding mission creep.

"We are starting a couple of new projects this year, including a schools education and engagement program, and corporate volunteering, and I'd very much like those to be successful. I also hope we never lose our scrappy, start-up mentality, where we can turn on a dime to take advantage of emerging opportunities. That's my favourite thing ..."

The WCS Founding Board created the organisation in 2011 to assist communities across NSW to establish new shelters for women who are homeless or leaving domestic and family violence. The model was based on several founders' experience in setting up the Manly (now Northern Beaches) Women's Shelter.

"They believed there might be other communities, similar to Manly, which might be seeking assistance to establish these services and to have assistance in remaining sustainable," Ms Daniel said. "Their initial hunch was right. Six shelters are open and, with four more in the pipeline, communities are more than ready to help solve the problem."

## PICKING UP PACE

Last year was a huge leap forward for WCS.

"We've worked our behinds off and grown our network by 50 percent—from four to six shelters in 2018," Ms Daniel said. "That means that each night, more than 100 women and children are sleeping safely.

"We've also built a host of great relationships with donors and supporters, and had a record year for philanthropic support. This is really heartening as it shows me that the Australian community cares deeply about women and children affected by domestic and family violence."

The key to managing such growth has been the attention to detail and managing the people leading the transition.



Image: altanaka - Fotolia.

"We've grown by three staff in the last year to a total of seven, which has created a slightly less flat structure," she said. "Maintaining that amazing start-up culture is something I've been keen to do, and with more people it takes more work. Beyond that, I tend to expect challenges, so nothing much surprises me."

The shelters are funded by a mix of NSW State Government funding, community fundraising and philanthropy. Like most of these kinds of arrangements, there was some trepidation when the contract needed to be renewed last year.

"Our contract with the State Government needed renewing and it took longer, and a lot more negotiation than we expected to come to fruition," Ms Daniel said. "Patience, professionalism and a methodical approach have been key to dealing with this.

"We realised after working with communities to establish new shelters that we were doing so much more than just providing more safe beds for women and children," Ms Daniel said.

"We were actually teaching and empowering communities to respond to women's homelessness and domestic and family violence. Organically, local schools, community groups and businesses were contacting our local Shelter Boards and asking them to come and talk about these issues.

"And so this year, we are launching 'Walk the Talk', a high school education program, which will engage local schools in supporting their local shelter whilst learning positive messages about relationships. We are also expanding our transitional housing program to ensure women leaving our shelters after two-to-three months have a few years

of affordable housing to ensure stability and get back on their feet.”

**GROWING SERVICES**

For some, Women’s Community Shelter arrived just in time—and Annabelle Daniel is ever conscious that, if WCS had not been there on the spot, outcomes for some of those women involved could have been catastrophic.

“We have grown from four to six operating shelters and are working on shelters 7–10,” she said. “We’ve also grown by two extra staff and built our internal capacity, which has had huge benefits for us.

“Again, nothing is better than those two new shelters open, which of course are regularly full. Another 40 women and kids sleeping safer every night, who otherwise would not have a safe place to go, is unbeatable.”

At the same time as the shelters have been established, the systems surrounding them have also developed to improve outcomes.

“Maybe it is not visible from the outside, but our processes and procedures are way better,” Ms Daniel said. “We’ve had two new shelters, each with around five staff, and I’ve grown the hub with an additional two staff. It’s been a huge year for us, as we’re a lean organisation.

“Everything that we achieve in the WCS network, both our head office hub and our shelters, is due to extraordinary people going over and above. Our boards, managers, volunteers, shelter staff, donors and supporters have a buy-in to our mission that is extraordinary.

“This has ranged from staff in our hub leading innovative transitional housing projects, to board chairs leading crusades for permanent homes for our shelters. From businesses loaning their time to help women move into new homes, to the local butcher providing meat trays once a week.

“I can’t single anyone out. This is 110 percent a group effort.”

In 2019 WCS is working to bring another two shelters on line, roll out its Walk the Talk program and start a Corporate Volunteering and Ambassador program.

“It’s going to be a busy year,” Ms Daniels said. “Beyond 2019, we want to do more of what is needed, but remain alive to emergent opportunities that are adjacent to our core mission of opening shelters and providing low-cost accommodation.”



**LOTS MORE TO DO**

Annabelle Daniel is the first to acknowledge that WCS has made “a good start” at helping to ease a problem that has “much, much more work to be done’.

Ms Daniel has been surprised to find herself nominated for a string of awards—including being honoured as a finalist in the Australian Human Rights Commission’s annual awards and being granted a very useful scholarship—but she prefers to look beyond such aspects of her work to the prospects ahead for WCS. As it turns out, the scholarship is helping her to do this.

“I was fortunate to win a scholarship to Harvard in a highly competitive field to study, not-for-profit leadership,” Ms Daniel said. “It was a career and life highlight and I’m still sucking the marrow out of it.”

One of the things she is urging is for better research into the problems of domestic violence forcing homelessness in Australia—and WCS is active.

“We’ve known since WCS was established that homelessness in Aus-

tralia is under-reported by at least 20 percent,” Ms Daniel said. “There is also no strong culture of outcomes measurement across the domestic violence and homelessness sectors yet.

“As such, we’re about to bring to fruition a three year project to measure our outcomes and feed our data into Australia’s national dataset with a bespoke program. This has been a huge undertaking by a very small organisation and we’ve gained a lot of learning and expertise from doing it.

“I’ll heave a huge sigh of relief when our data extracts are finally talking to the national system. It will mean not only that the demand we are meeting is visible for the first time at a national level, but also that we are not afraid to measure how we are tracking against other, more established organisations in terms of what we do.”

“As an NFP, our ‘marketplace’ is the NSW housing and homelessness sector, where, as inequality grows and housing becomes increasingly unaffordable, people are squeezed out.” ■

Image: Supplied



**Women’s Community Shelters**

Women’s Community Shelters (WCS) operates properties and programs in the NSW housing and homelessness sector and has seven staff at WCS headquarters, along with several hundred volunteers across the network and staff in each shelter. The leadership team includes CEO Annabelle Daniel (pictured at left), COO Simone Parsons and interim chair Peter Hunt.

WCS locations so far are Hornsby Kuring-gai Women’s Shelter, Northern Beaches Women’s Shelter, The Sanctuary–Hills Women’s Shelter, Great Lakes Women’s Shelter, The Haven–Nepean Women’s Shelter and Bayside Women’s Shelter.

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