

# The value equation

TASMANIAN TRANSPORT COMPANY, **DE BRUYN'S TRANSPORT**, HAS A STRONG SET OF VALUES THAT IT SHARES WITH ITS SUPPLIERS, INCLUDING TRAILER BUILDER, **BARKER TRAILERS** AND EQUIPMENT SUPPLIER, **JOST AUSTRALIA**.

Tasmania-based De Bruyn's Transport has a business history dating all the way back to 1910, when General Manager John de Bruyn's great grandfather purchased a boat to transport sand, gravel and heating fuel along the inland waterways in Holland. Settling in Tasmania in 1956, De Bruyn's Transport has now started introducing its fifth generation of family members into the company. In its entire history, John says the productivity of the transport industry in Australia has been the biggest change he has witnessed.

"When our business started, a delivery to the West Coast mines in Queenstown from our depot was a two day round trip, so the

trucks would do three trips per week in a single axle truck with single axle trailer," John recalls. "Now, we do the same run with a tri-tri B-double carrying 40-plus tonnes in nine hours. This is an enormous jump in productivity made possible thanks to improvements in the roads here, and the advancements in technology in the vehicles and trailers."

The De Bruyn fleet now counts around 120 trucks and 150 trailers, plus 60 forklifts, and a number of other plant and ancillary equipment, as well as the light vehicle fleet, across four depots in Burnie, Devonport, Launceston and Hobart. "We started in Tasmania working in the mines, and

mine logistics is still a strong part of the business to this day," John says. "We supply everything the mines need, from delivering a loaf of bread to class one explosives and everything in between."

As well as its aquaculture and marine divisions, De Bruyn's also runs a bulk haulage fleet of tankers, tippers and general freight of palletised goods all over the island, plus freight forwarding for the goods that come across the Bass Strait from Victoria to the

Ports. "We've become a substantial business, but we keep those family business values close and make sure we don't dismiss what has been part of the success."

Part of those family values is loyalty, John says. "One of our philosophies is to be a loyal company," he says. "Once we establish a relationship with a supplier and it works well, we stick with them. Like any relationship you have your little issues but I always say 'it's not the problem you remember, but how it was fixed'."

Two suppliers that now have well established relationships with De Bruyn Transport are Victoria-based national trailer manufacturer, Barker Trailers, and component specialist, JOST Australia. "Our first trailer from Barker was fitted with JOST landing legs and is still operating today, 22 years after we first took delivery, which speaks highly of the quality of the equipment," John says.

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"It's important to work with companies that have common values, where you can talk directly to decision makers and get things done."

John says that over the years of working together with as a loyal customer of JOST and Barker, De Bruyn's Transport has added a number of unique trailers to the fleet – all using JOST landing legs and turntables as a standard. "Barker has been a good supplier, and has a strong brand legacy based on its engineering prowess and family values," John says. "It's innovative, willing to come up with unique designs and has the

engineering experience to make it work. We have some strange requirements from time to time and Barker is always willing to look at an idea and see what's possible."

One unique trailer example that John shares is a custom fish transporter as part of its agriculture division. The curtain-sider has a stainless steel tanker inside it that lifts up in the roof space when it is empty, making space to carry fish feed underneath to the farm. Once the feed is unloaded, the stainless steel tank is lowered and loaded with fish for the trip back to the factory. "We came up with the concept and talked



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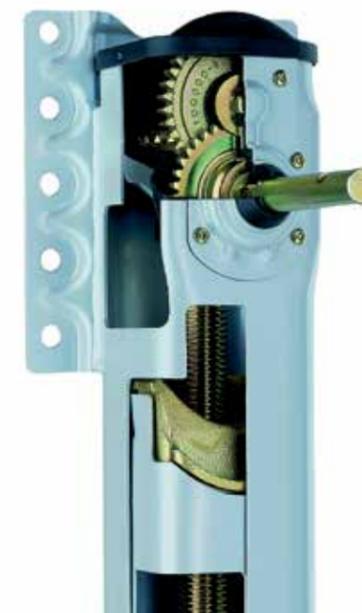
to Barker, which came up with a way to do it,” John says. “We’ve got seven of those trailers in the fleet now, in a unique set-up that works well for us and the client.” Another type of fish transporter John describes is built for live fish transport, and is therefore fitted with extra pumps to oxygenate the water and monitoring systems to make sure the fish are “happy and comfy and survive the journey,” John says. “What we all know is that it’s the trailer that wins you the business. At the end of the day, you need something a little different or

innovative to give you the competitive edge and over the years, Barker has done a great job of developing unique trailers for us.” Regardless of the unique features of the trailers in the De Bruyn’s fleet, John says it’s important to create a commonality in components. “We like to use the same components across the fleet, and not swap and change,” John says. “We use JOST landing legs and turntables as a standard. One reason is because commonality allows you to do your maintenance more efficiently and in a more cost-effective manner. We do



all our own maintenance and we can store spare parts easily.”

John adds that using a variety of different equipment makes it very difficult for the staff to be properly trained. “Training is a huge part of what we do, so much so that we have won a number of awards for our training programs,” John says (see breakout box). “Part of our philosophy is to bring young people into the business and train them up. If you’re not willing to train people yourself you can’t complain about shortage, so we actually employ young people and start them in the yard. We have a new apprentice in the workshop every year, every one of our maintenance crew started as apprentice, even the workshop manager.” As part of its training programs, De Bruyn’s gets Registered Training Organisations (RTO) involved, and also relies on its equipment suppliers to provide training to its mechanics. “We have a buddy system that ensures we pass on knowledge from experienced team members internally, and JOST sends specialists to do training with our people, too,” John says. “That’s important to us because the turntable is a critical component that needs to be maintained and adjusted correctly, so our mechanics have been trained by JOST to ensure we have the proper maintenance procedures for components.”



**Fast Fact**

De Bruyn’s Transport was heralded for its training programs at the Australian Trucking Association’s (ATA) National Trucking Industry Awards, where it was presented with the National Training Excellence Award. “TruckSafe, National Heavy Vehicle Accreditation Scheme (NHVAS), Mass Management and Basic Fatigue Management accredited, De Bruyn’s strong training philosophy helps achieve the aim of ‘Safely Delivering the Goods’ productively and efficiently,” says ATA Chair, Geoff Crouch.

The training on how to best work with the quality equipment is an important part of running a safe fleet, John says, which is another core value for the De Bruyn’s business. “Safety is incredibly important and we want to make sure we contribute to the safety of the overall industry,” John says. “Our Risk and Compliance Manager, Ferdie Kroon, was elected as Chair of the Australian Trucking Association’s (ATA, ed.) safety management program, TruckSafe in June and we think it’s a worthy investment to the industry at large.”

To manage the diverse nature of the De Bruyn’s business, John says the key is employing good people, training them properly and aligning with suppliers that share its same core values. “You can’t do it all on your own, it’s a team effort and we think we have the right players to continue the success we’ve seen since the company started.”

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