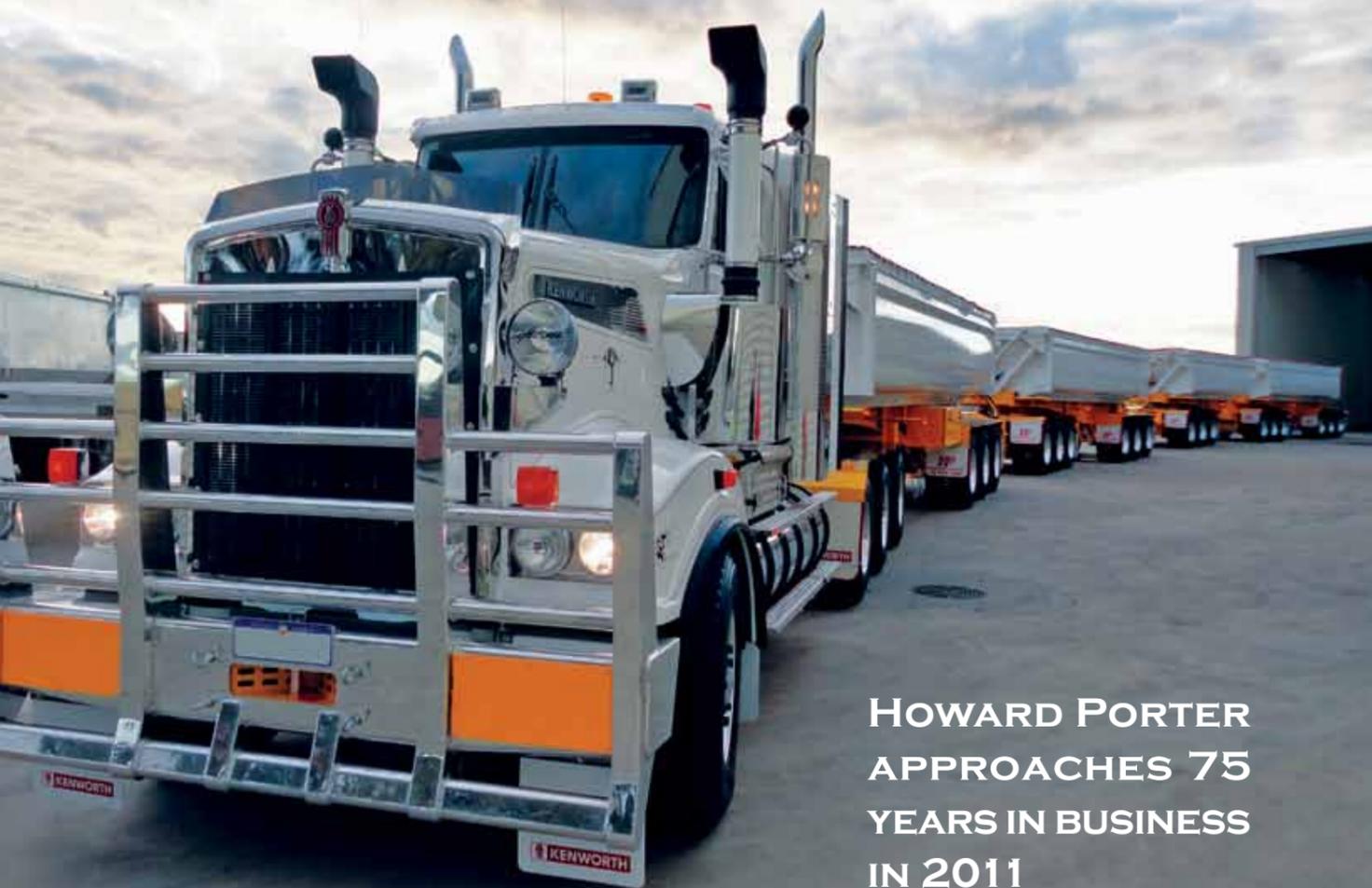


HOWARD PORTER

SETTING THE BENCHMARK

By Mark Donaldson



**HOWARD PORTER
APPROACHES 75
YEARS IN BUSINESS
IN 2011**



Photos by Steph Cormack



SOME OF THE SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENTS IN PLANT AND EQUIPMENT INCLUDE SEMI-AUTOMATED WELDING EQUIPMENT, GAS-HEATED SPRAY PAINTING BOOTHS AND THE LATEST SANDBLASTING AND PROFILE CUTTING EQUIPMENT

As Howard Porter approaches 75 years in business in 2011, change is in the air at the historical WA transport equipment manufacturing company. It is currently undergoing a major reshuffle which will see the company's Bellevue manufacturing and repair facility closed down. They have been operating at Bellevue since 2006 when they bought out SFM Engineering and the lease has now lapsed. Managing Director Roy Lombardi explains it wasn't a matter of Bellevue being inadequate but a matter of efficiency: "Bellevue wasn't holding us back at all it has serviced us very well."

"We understand that some of our repair customers may be inconvenienced with the shift to Spearwood and we will do our best to prove that the extra 30 minutes drive will be worthwhile."

"By consolidating under one roof, expanding the Spearwood site and through heavy investment in plant and equipment we will be in a stronger position to be able to pass on more cost effective solutions to our customers," he says.

The company has been investing heavily in the Spearwood manufacturing facility over the last 18 months. The expansion is almost complete. It will cater for high volume equipment and have a section specialising in custom builds and project specific jobs. Some of the significant investments in plant and equipment include semi-automated welding equipment, gas-heated spray painting booths and the latest sandblasting and profile cutting equipment. The improvements have enabled Howard Porter to streamline their manufacturing processes, reduce lead times and ensure consistent high quality control targets are achieved.

"We have proved earlier in the year that the Spearwood facility can produce at least 3 trailers a day as well as rigid bodies and repair work. When the facility is fully

The team is renowned for their wide product range and this will remain unchanged with the shift. Clients can still expect high quality and durable transport equipment

Their spare parts division will continue to operate as will their production of rigid truck bodies, steel and aluminium semi tippers, side tippers, flat tops, drop decks, skel trailers,

PETER'S COMMITMENT AND LOYALTY TO THE COMPANY OVER THE YEARS IS CERTAINLY WELL RESPECTED BY THE OWNERS OF HOWARD PORTER AND ALSO BY ALL OUR LIVESTOCK TRANSPORT CLIENTS

completed towards the beginning of next year we will improve on that again," Roy says.

They have also constructed a new major semi-trailer repair and service centre. This is located at the Spearwood premises but separated from the manufacturing facility. The repair shop is fitted out with new truck/trailer straightening bays, sandblast facilities and spray booths. Roy says clients can expect a fast turnaround from minor repairs to major repairs and rebuilds.

that Howard Porter pride themselves on, as well as the option to work with the company to produce project specific equipment.

"Much of Howard Porter's success is a result of developing and maintaining long standing relationships with our customers. Understanding customer requirements and providing solutions with a focus on quality, on time delivery and competitive pricing ensures we provide a significant return on investment to our clients," Roy says.

deck wideners, stock crates, water tankers, specialised equipment and dollies.

Production manager for stock crates Peter Thomas has been instrumental in developing the stock crate business over the last 35 odd years. Peter will be pulling back the reins a little in the near future as he approaches retirement. Peter is a well respected industry icon and has dedicated his working career to the continuous improvement of livestock trailers; initially with SFM Engineering and more



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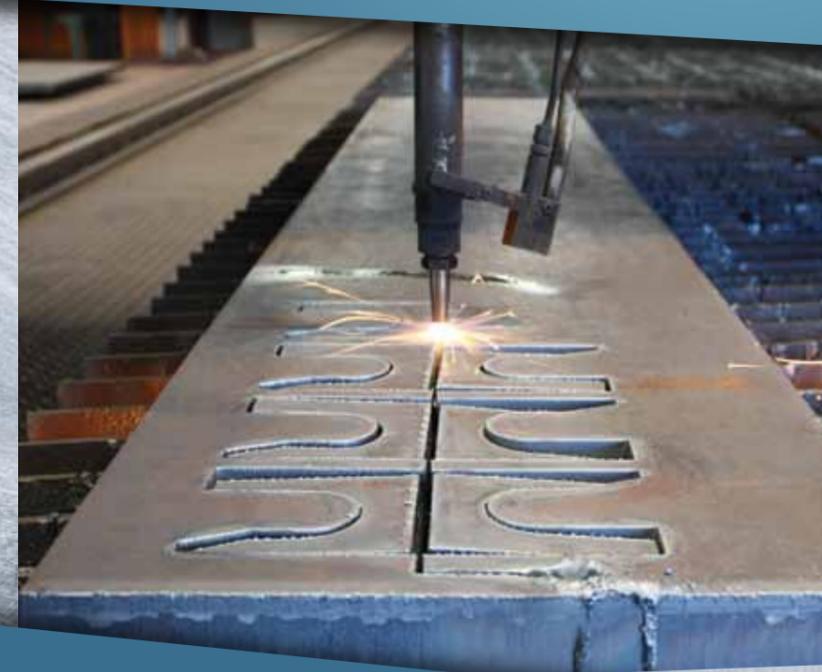
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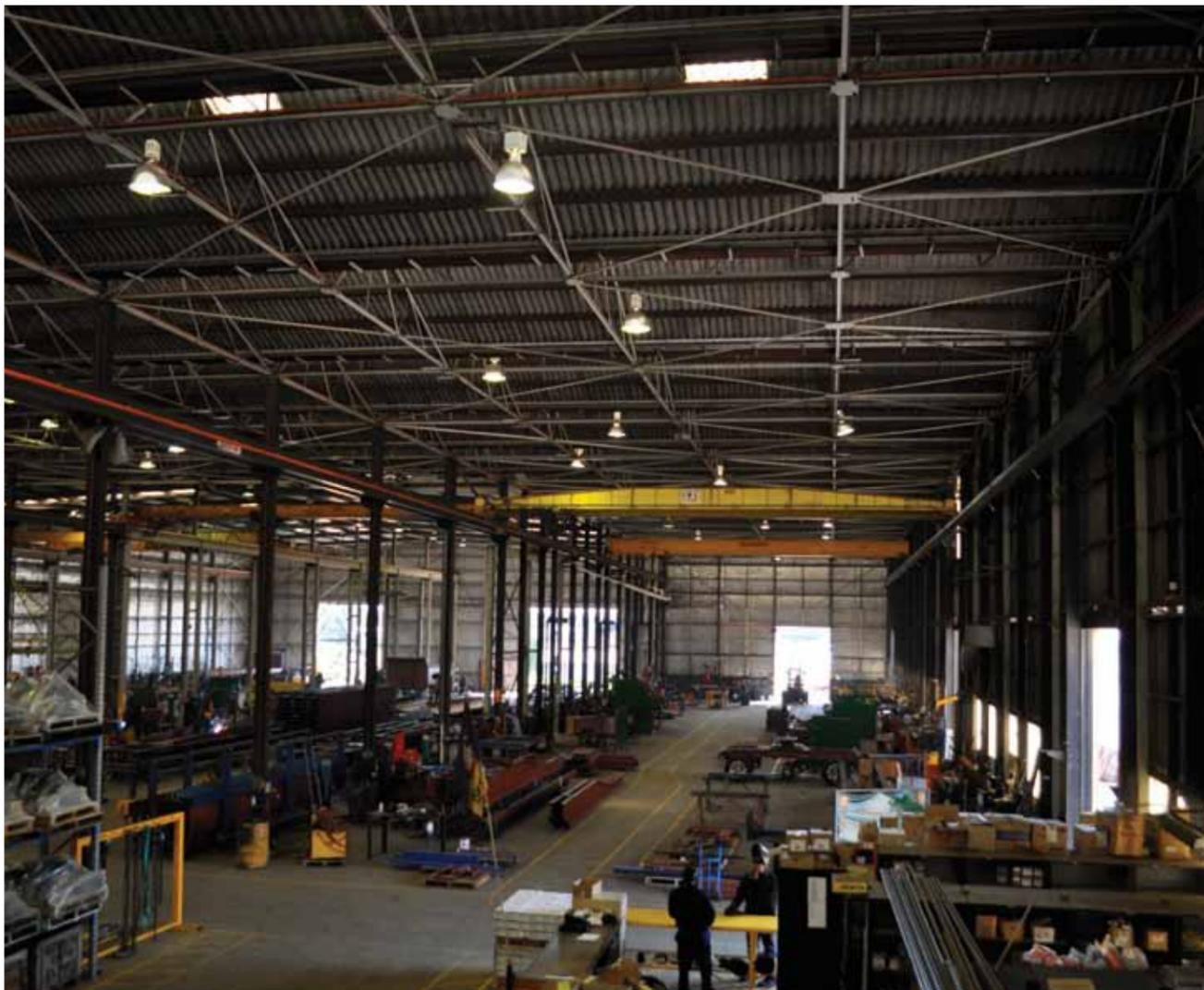
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recently with Howard Porter. There are many features in the crates that Peter has designed and developed over the years to make the units last longer, easier to use and safer to operate.

Howard Porter will continue to build 4x2 convertibles, cattle crates and pig crates at Spearwood.

"Peter's commitment and loyalty to the company over the years is certainly well respected by the owners of Howard Porter and also by all our livestock transport clients," Roy says.

TWO MAIN AREAS WE HAVE FOCUSED ON ARE DURABILTY AND LOWER TARE WEIGHTS

"Peter has been with SFM/Howard Porter for 35 odd years and during that time he has been at the forefront of many new concepts in stock crate design with many of them now holding design patents."

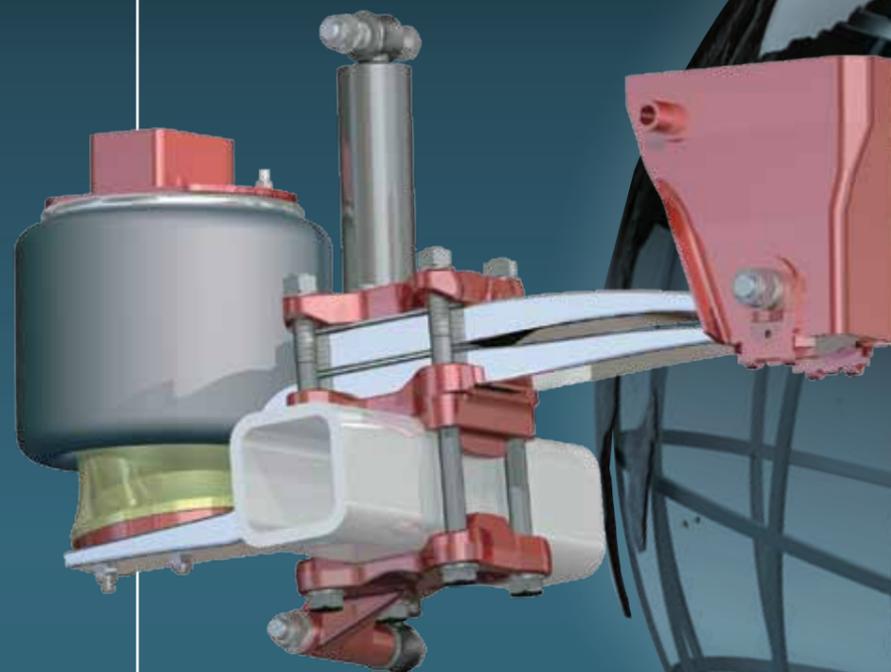
It's all about expansion at Howard Porter in 2010. The company is always looking to improve their products to provide a significant return on investment to clients.



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Howard Porter has recently returned to manufacturing a new range of lightweight bulk aluminium TOA and chassis tippers. They have gone back to the drawing board this year and designed out previous problem areas.

"The two main areas we have focused on are durability and lower tare weights. Our aluminium chassis tippers incorporate a light weight and very durable domex chassis," he says.

VLED PESICH IS THE COMPANY'S LONGEST SERVING EMPLOYEE AND HAS BEEN WITH THE COMPANY HIS ENTIRE WORKING LIFE

"We have dropped off weight in our aluminum bodies by using lighter components and higher grades of aluminium. We can now offer aluminium chassis tippers which are similar tare weight as the previous TOA units."

While Howard Porter is a company that is always



looking ahead, next year will be a time for them to reflect. The official opening of the upgraded Spearwood centre in 2011 will also be a celebration of 75 years in business. This a milestone achieved by few Australian transport equipment manufacturing companies. From English beginnings as a horse-drawn cart manufacturer in 1890, the company was brought to Australia in 1936 by the Porter family. Since then ownership has changed hands a couple of times, but in a

testament to the quality working conditions of the company, some staff have remained with the company for up to 50 years.

"There is no doubt that the driving force in what HP has achieved to date is the dedication and commitment of our employees. Our people are the backbone of our company and will continue to be the key to a successful future," Roy says.

"We are currently working on an honor board to acknowledge the contribution of

both past and present employees who have been with the company for more than 10, 20, 30, 40 and 50 years. The list is massive and we plan to hold a reunion next year in line with our 75th."

Vled Pesich is the company's longest serving employee and has been with the company his entire working life. In 2011 he will have worked there for 50 years. The 64-year-old began as an apprentice in 1962 and worked for many years in the workshop



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before trading the workbench for an office desk and recently moving into sales. He has done just about every job there is at Howard Porter.

"Soon as I finished my apprenticeship I was a foreman, from there I was factory manager, factory supervisor, personnel... you name it I held virtually every position you could have," Vled says.

He says his fondest memories of the last fifty years have been his wife having their daughter and twin sons, but as far as work goes he's very proud of the recent work he did to help Howard Porter organise the biggest transport equipment contract in Australia's history. Last year the company struck a deal with Chevron to produce more than 300 trailers over 6 months.

"That was my biggest challenge and I think the bosses were really happy because 300 trailer orders come once in your lifetime... to be the



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main part of that was a bloody good achievement." Ever the committed worker, Vled says he has plans to stay with Howard Porter for many years to come... as long as they'll still have him.

"If I just stopped and cut it off in one hit it could harm my health," he laughs.

Matt Lazzarich is another who began as an apprentice at Howard Porter in the 60s. He's worked on and off for the company since then totalling almost 30 years of service. He says he loves working in the atmosphere of a family company.

"I enjoy Giulio and Roy (Lombardi) they want to move forward and take the company to the next level

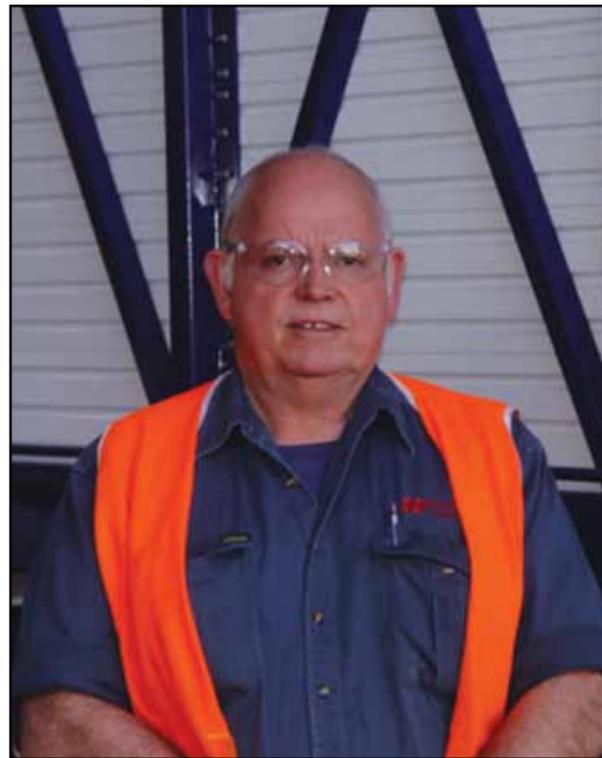
MATT LAZZARICH IS ANOTHER WHO BEGAN AS AN APPRENTICE AT HOWARD PORTER IN THE 60S

and I want to be a part of that," he says.

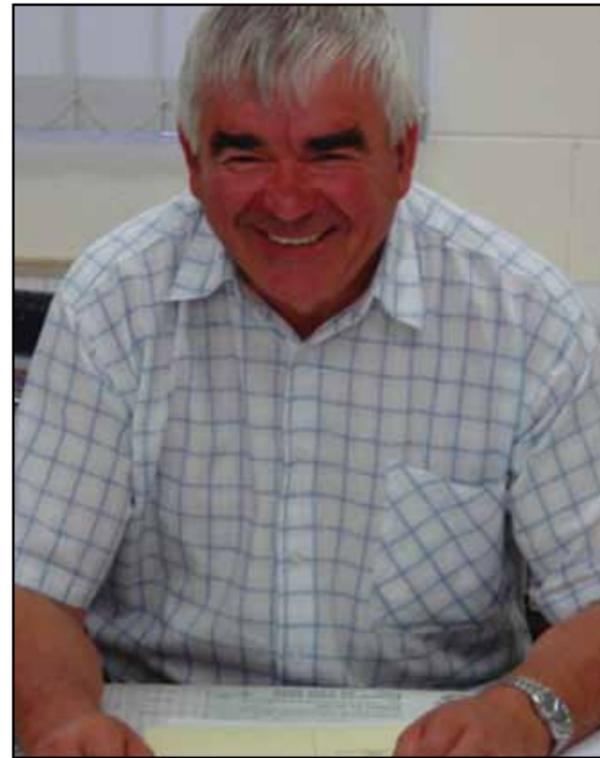
Like Vled he too has moved into sales after filling various roles in the workshop. His experience running his own business through the 70s and 80s meant he was ready made for the job. He says he enjoys working with people in sales and the opportunity it gives him to get out into the country.

"I like the country atmosphere because I do a lot of country work with farmers and shires and I've been involved with that side of it for a long long time," he says.

With dedicated employees like Peter, Vled and Matt and a history embedded in quality workmanship, Howard Porter looks set to continue to be the benchmark for Australian transport equipment manufacturing.



Long term Howard Porter employee, Peter Thompson



Vled Pesich, Howard Porter's longest serving employee. Next year Vled will celebrate his 50th year with Howard Porter which is hardly heard of these days.



Matt Lazzarich



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