

SPARKLING



Serving the road transport industry, 26 year old Ben Hennock has made a success of Wash It Australia.

SUCCESS

A truck washing company has been named as one of Australia's fastest growing companies by business magazine BRW – and success is only one element of the young owner's business plan.

Wash It Australia is a company working closely with some of the biggest

transport companies in this country; providing truck, trailer, forklift, container and all types of heavy equipment washing to ensure a high level of presentation for fleets.

The activities of Wash It Australia are totally different to those envisaged of a company involved in truck washing, long gone are the days of an old clunker turning up with a pressure washer on the back, a few hoses and little care for the equipment to be cleaned. Wash It Australia has gone to extreme lengths to provide the latest in hi-tech equipment, with vehicles superbly equipped with all necessary cleaning tools designed to offer fast turnaround while delivering an excellent result. Its own vehicles are custom finished with accessories and livery promoting a clean industry. This recipe has been so successful that the company has enjoyed increasing and ongoing business from fleet operators. And when BRW Magazine announced its top 100 growing businesses in the country, Wash It Australia was ranked number 70.

Considering it only commenced full operation in 2005, owner Ben Hennock was more than a little surprised and pleased with the result. When you also consider he is only 26 years old, with more than a dose of entrepreneurial skills, you can understand why. Ben has more than his fair share of

dreams and plans for the company and is continually looking to the future to grow Wash It, serve customers better and deliver the most professional wash jobs possible.

Ben's story is interesting, while still in his last years of schooling, he took on a job as a fruit packer for a company doing home deliveries, and on weekends was washing trucks and cars to raise money. While doing that he came into contact with a vending machine refiller who offered him work when he left school. When the business owner took holidays Ben took over the business in his absence.

An opportunity arose to buy his own vending machine refilling business, and a timely \$5000 win in a radio promotion was invested in a small truck. Ben, at the age of 17, became one of the youngest contractors to Coca-Cola Amatil in Australia. Some of his business entailed filling Coke machines at transport companies and it soon became evident there was a real need for somebody offering truck washing services following conversations with staff at these firms.

With experience in the field, Ben could see opportunities and decided to capitalise on it, with him filling machines by day and washing trucks and trailers at night and weekends. Long hours ensued but Ben was determined to make it work and before he knew it, trucking companies were knocking on his door seeking service.

"There were very long hours involved but I was keen to make a success of it. Companies told me they wanted

somebody offering reliable, consistent and environmentally friendly truck washing. My first customer was Toll AutoLogistics at Eagle Farm in Brisbane. At the time I had a huge bag of sponges, but that is far different from how we operate today," Ben laughs.

"To some extent my age has been a plus for me. Initially I was apprehensive dealing with company managers because they were much older than me but it seems most of them had kids my age who go out clubbing and partying and spending their money, while I was focussed on building a successful business. To do this I had to reinvest in the company and do an excellent job into the bargain, something that would ensure I established a good reputation and encouraged repeat business and I think that fact has helped immensely." As the business expanded he looked closely at how things could be done better and even travelled to the US to investigate new equipment for the task, particularly in light of EPA requirements and the drive to provide customers with the best washing services available. He has invested heavily in equipment, continually ploughing profit back into the business and investing in the future and today the company has the best mobile equipment available, continually updated in line with technology improvements.

For example, eight mobile brush machines, each worth around \$30,000, are a hallmark of operations, coupled with the very latest water collection and recycling equipment. Add to this a small fleet of vehicles equipped with



the most efficient high pressure machines, custom made hoses, generators and lighting systems. Also a part of the fleet is a Daysworth yard tractor, custom painted with the Wash It 'bubbles' and with extensive use of mirror stainless steel accessories; as well as a Tuff 45 foot trailer that was recently completed and specially built with an enormous number of features to suit the company's new Melbourne branch. There are currently 46 people working for Wash It and the new facility will initially employ another 12 with further expansion of services in the Victorian capital.

"I ensure that everything we use in the business is the latest equipment available and our people are highly trained, including in water handling best practice, to deliver the best service possible. I am acutely aware transport companies

require the best vehicle presentation possible and all of our gear has been specified to deliver that," Ben points out. "The Daysworth yard tractor has enabled us to give fast turnaround and is an essential tool in most of our operations. We wash around 250 trailers each night and a full B-double express wash takes around 7 minutes with the deluxe wash 15, and 12 people are usually involved in the process. We also use established wash bays at some companies and each wash is tailored to customer requirements, in all cases times are worked out with customers to best suit their scheduling needs. "We are fully accredited, actually we are the only mobile and drive through truck wash in Australia to be HACCP accredited

Ben is extremely proud of how the company operates, its reputation, services and highly visible presence.

and employees are inducted in our own policies including workplace health and safety. Our workplace health and safety demands are extreme with no tolerance whatsoever for unsafe behaviour or practices."

Ben is extremely proud of how the company operates, its reputation, services and highly visible presence. All those within the company are dressed in uniform, in fact he says uniforms alone represent an investment of around \$15,000. His attention to detail means he spends long hours on the job with his people, mostly to continue building customer relations, and freely admits he does have a problem leaving aspects of operations to experienced staff, despite the fact they are capable of doing the job expertly.

"I guess reality is I have put my heart and soul into the business and have definite ideas on exactly how we should service customers. I do have excellent people working for the



company but my desire for perfection is still ingrained," he grins.

Ben and wife Penny have a young son Loclan, now two, and an up and coming truck washer. Ben says family time is important so he is making efforts to cut hours back, but he is definitely a hands-on operator and you can bet he is never far away from the action.

Shortly he will be taking another journey to the United States to investigate new equipment and currently he is introducing a new manner of water management within the business. The usual manner of saving and recycling water is to place a mat on the ground and roll it up after the job is done, but the mat alone weighs around 250kg and mechanical lifting is required. The new system sees booms seal to a concrete pad with no water loss and when pumped out the barriers weigh only around 15kg each, eliminating lifting and promoting safety on the job.



It has been an incredible ride for a 26 year old who has worked tirelessly to make his business a success, but Ben Hennock says he is not finished yet. "I have big plans for the company

and want to grow it into the biggest truck washing business in Australia. I want to be named in the BRW list next year and continue to be ahead of the competition," he says.

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