

# Moving forward side-by-side

AFTER ACQUIRING **STEELBRO** IN EARLY 2015, **HOWARD PORTER** SAYS IT WANTS TO BUILD ON THE STRONG FOUNDATION AND TRADITION THE SIDE-LOADER MANUFACTURER HAS CREATED.

True to the famous 'one door closes and another one opens' saying, Howard Porter believes the acquisition of Steelbro in early 2015 will strengthen the long-lasting brand in the long run. A combination of product excellence, reliability and service quality is what prompted Howard Porter to purchase Steelbro in the first place, and building on that legacy, it now hopes to write the next chapter for the brand that formed such a significant part of Australia's commercial road transport history.

According to Director Roy Lombardi, adding Steelbro to the Howard Porter corporation was an opportunity to expand its portfolio and keep a trusted brand with a strong tradition relevant moving forward. "It was really a win-win for both businesses. We knew Steelbro was a quality side-loader builder with a solid history, a loyal customer base and just a great product overall," Roy explains. "At the same time, Howard Porter is a growing business and we want to

improve our offering not just to our local customers, but to our global clientele. Taking on such a renowned side-loader expert shows the transport industry that we are building towards something special and that we have a very broad product offering and service to back up our ambitions." Expanding Steelbro's global footprint is especially important going into the new Financial Year, says Roy. "The acquisition by Howard Porter gives Steelbro the



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opportunity and backing to fulfil its potential in the global market. It will significantly increase the ability of our company to provide innovative engineering and support to our valued customers." From a sales and marketing point of view, Howard Porter's primary focus are Steelbro's customers in Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Africa and South America, but the company is also aggressively targeting new markets – especially in Europe. "A dedicated design team based in New Zealand has been working closely with customers to develop new concepts and ideas for the future expansion of the brand," Roy says. "It's great to see the Howard Porter management buying into our growth strategy and sharing our commitment to continuous improvement and innovation."

On top of the actual production process, Howard Porter has also taken on the role of selling and servicing Steelbro side-loaders in Australia. "We have listened to customer feedback and focused on improving aftersales service and support for the Steelbro brand over the past half

**Fast Fact**

Howard Porter was established in Fremantle, Western Australia, in 1936. After several ownership changes, Howard Porter was bought by Giulio and Roy Lombardi in 2004, and the new Directors began consolidating its operations into its current facility in Spearwood, WA. The businesses Howard Porter owns include Steelbro, Jackson Transport Bodies and Global Trailer Solutions.

year or so," Roy says. "We have expanded our service and spare parts network and ramped up our production volume. We've also invested heavily in technical support staff and training initiatives to ensure Steelbro customers will receive the same service everywhere in Australia. This will add more local support and confidence in the brand going forward, with the long-

term goal of re-establishing Steelbro as the premier side-loading brand in the world." With Steelbro sales remaining steady through the 2014-15 Financial Year, Howard Porter is anticipating increasing growth in the near future. "Sales volumes in Australia are picking up and the order book is looking healthy. We strongly believe in the product and are confident it will be back to old strength in no time," Roy says. "We have listened to our customers' feedback and put improvement measures in place across the business, with a focus on increasing production and providing a solid Return On Investment to our customers. It helps that Steelbro's business model is similar to Howard Porter's, where we are each striving to continuously lift the benchmark for innovation and quality manufacturing."

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