

DYNAMIC, INNOVATIVE... AND NO BULL

With an automotive aftermarket career spanning close to five decades, Mr Ron Pedder's reputation as a genuine, honest, straight-shooter is acknowledged widely within the industry

Mr Ron Pedder is an Australian automotive aftermarket icon. The chairman of Pedders Suspension has had a long and high achieving career in the Australian Automotive Aftermarket industry and is an early pioneer of Australian franchising, having established his first franchise agreements in the late 1970s.

The Pedders organisation began back in 1950 when Ron's father, Mr Roy Pedder, opened Pedder's Die-Cast Welding Service in Hawthorn Road, Carnegie (Victoria) and soon after, moved to Claremont Avenue, Malvern.

An ex-RAAF World War II aeroplane welder, Roy began the business by fixing general household items, but with his skills in welding die-cast materials, found his niche in the automotive market in smash repairs and shock absorbers.

With the weakness of the early lever-type shocks in Australian conditions, coupled with the demand for his services in this area, Roy decided to specialise in the repair and reconditioning of shock absorbers and subsequently the business grew rapidly. The workshop was moved to a factory in Wren Road, Moorabbin, while sales continued in Malvern.

In the mid '50s Pedders became renowned for reconditioning shock absorbers that the rest of the trade said were unrepairable. By the late '50s Pedders had 15 people servicing more than 3000 shocks per month.

Pedders moved with demand and its reconditioning work gained wide acceptance. In 1964 Pedders was mass producing its own brand of shocks by simply modifying overseas designs to suit local needs. Soon the shocks took on the distinctive red colour for better identification, and by the end of the '60s, Pedders shock absorbers had grown in reputation and popularity.

In 1972, Roy's eldest son Ron, took over the company and he was quick to demonstrate his innovative ways, for just two years later, he implemented the next significant step – utilising what the company had learnt from reconditioning other companies' shocks, Pedders began designing its own.

To support this radical step, Ron saw the only way to ensure good distribution of his product was to open Pedders own stores, the first of which was opened in Adelaide in 1974.

This strategy paved the way for the commencement of aggressive franchising to support Pedders' own home-grown brand. This move made Pedders unique worldwide in that it developed, manufactured, distributed and installed its own product through its own retail chain.

In 1978 Pedders distribution was boosted when Ron appointed specialists in steering and suspension repairs as Pedders agents: Mr Graham Pitt in Launceston; and Mr Bill Bennett and Mr David Jones from Melbourne Suspension.

Pedders also expanded its retail outlets to the Victorian suburbs of Brunswick and Mitcham. Then, in 1982, the Pedders Suspension Franchise System was developed and the first full-franchise operation, Pedders Frankston, was opened.

Showing no signs of slowing down, between 1984 and 1990 Ron also established warehouses in Adelaide, Sydney, Perth and Brisbane. During that time (1985) the first Pedders television advertisement was shown featuring a Pedders sponsored Datsun 1600 in the Rally of Canberra.

The second production was the Dr Shock ad, which depicted the drive-on Boge Shock absorber tester. This advertisement was very successful, giving Pedders enormous awareness in the steering and suspension marketplace.



As the company expanded, Ron rolled out a point-of-sale (POS) system across all stores. In 1987, the system featured 300 part numbers – today, Pedders has tens of thousands part numbers and is still growing.

In 1988, Ron moved the corporate headquarters from Moorabbin to its present location at Bridge Road, Keysborough.

In the '90s, the Pedders organisation implemented three new innovations – firstly, the company introduced the Authorised Dealer network, starting with Ward Motors in Griffith NSW. It then opened the coil spring manufacturing plant in Keysborough (Vic) and in 1995, the Reliable Rack and Pinion subsidiary was launched, giving Pedders the ability to remanufacture steering gears, steering boxes or steering racks, to O.E. specifications. Also that year, Pedders opened in New Zealand.

Pedders celebrated the year 2000 by focussing on creating opportunities to export product to the



world, with the first distributor being based in Thailand. The Pedders group has now grown to have distribution warehouses in countries such as China, Dubai, England, Poland, Indonesia, Malaysia and South Africa.

In 2014 the Pedders online store was born, offering 2,100 part numbers, along with a dedicated online 'Live Chat' enabling you to talk to an expert in real-time regarding the purchasing of Pedders products.

A year later, Pedders introduced brake parts to the product line-up – it was a major diversion from its past exclusive steering and suspension marketing strategy.

A true visionary, Ron also made Pedders Suspension an equal opportunity employer and instilled a family-oriented work culture. Being a family business, Ron set the parameters that allowed the company to treat its personnel and customers like they were part of his extended family. This is further facilitated through the

company's internal workplace policies and the provision of higher-than-standard working conditions for Pedders personnel.

In more recent times, (2009) Ron was honoured by the Australian Automotive Aftermarket Association, which bestowed its award for Outstanding Service to Industry. Pedders also won the Gold Award for Best New Aftermarket Product in the performance category for its new range of eXtreme XA adjustable coilover shock absorbers. It also scored the Gold Award for Pedders new television commercial called, Neil's Surprise Hoist, after it appointed motoring and car racing celebrity presenter, Neil Crompton, as the Pedders Group's brand ambassador. In 2015, the company won the AAAA Award for Excellence in Marketing.

In addition to being an enthusiastic AAAA member, Pedders is also a member of the Franchise Council of Australia.

While not involved at board level, Ron's support of the Victorian Chapter on its inception and

throughout its early years was second to none. At the Victorian Chapter's request, he started and organised, at Pedders' expense, a motor industry franchise sector in Victoria which included suppliers, manufacturers and servicing organisations. Ron also supported the FCA in its numerous submissions to Government over a considerable period; he has been – and still is – a role model for ethical, honest and successful franchising.

Like his father before him, Ron (in early 2006) handed the company reins to his eldest son, Mark, who took on the role as managing director after commencing as a technician at Pedders Footscray in 1993. In 1998, Ron's younger son, Scott, joined the company after completing a degree in accounting/marketing - he is now Pedders' marketing director.

Today, Pedders has more than 120 locations Australia wide, most of which are franchised. The company has recently expanded its export markets to now include distributors in Korea, Mauritius, Thailand, Indonesia, Kenya, South Africa, UK, Poland, Malaysia, Cyprus and the USA.

This large, multinational automotive company has come a long way from a backyard welding shop, and most, if not all, of this growth has been due to Ron's determination, dedication and foresight to franchising. Creating job opportunities for hundreds of people who have flourished in their careers over time, Ron has led his company into worldwide expansion of his products and service, using franchising as the key business model.

While he no longer holds the position of managing director, he remains a valued contributor to the business and heads it up the company's chairman. This role is more of a part-time role for Ron as he now spends most of his time travelling the world liaising with Pedders' suppliers.

When home in Melbourne, Ron also takes an active role in product design, research and development and is constantly meeting with the company's product managers who are responsible for selected product ranges. He also plays an active role in Pedders' USA, Asia and European operations, and frequently visits the regions to meet with their overseas partners.

Away from work, Ron and his wife Lynne have offered their time and financial support to charity organisations such as Jane Foundation, Cancer Council, The CEO Sleepout, Royal Childrens Hospital and St Vincent's Institute of Medical Research, something that provides the couple with a great deal of satisfaction.

A humble family man, Ron is proudly admired by his peers and those in the industry. He has turned a small, family-owned shock absorber business into a multi-franchise operation in Australia and throughout the world.

For more information visit www.pedders.com.au

