

# SETTING THE BAR HIGH

HOLLOW CORE CONCRETE IS A MASTER PRECASTER MEMBER OF NATIONAL PRECAST CONCRETE ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA. *ROADS & INFRASTRUCTURE* CATCHES UP WITH MANAGING DIRECTOR PETER HEALY TO SEE HOW THE PRECASTER SUPPORTS MAJOR RESIDENTIAL, COMMERCIAL AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS IN VICTORIA.



The Hollow Core Concrete plant in Melbourne's Laverton North.

It pays not to burn your bridges, as Hollow Core Concrete Founder and Managing Director Peter Healy came to learn back in the 80s.

As one of his early engineering career posts as Branch Manager for McConnel Dowell, he managed projects in water well drilling and industrial pavements in the middle east. It was here that he first had the idea for setting up a manufacturing plant for pre-tensioned hollowcore planks after coming across the technology from Europe.

Impressed with the possibilities that pre-stressed precast concrete and the new hollowcore concrete extruders offered, he thought it would be a great opportunity to set up a plant in the Middle East. But then,

the oil prices dropped overnight.

"The company moved back to Australia, and I moved with them," says Healy.

An opportunity arose and Peter took the plunge to commence his business. He bought the piece of land in Melbourne's Laverton North, where Hollow Core Concrete sits today, and the rest, as they say, is history.

"Interestingly, the first contract that I won was with the company that I had left. That's why they say never burn your bridges," says Healy.

And not just that, Hollow Core Concrete has helped build bridges too – among a host of major commercial, residential and infrastructure projects delivered since its establishment in 1988.

#### THE COMPANY TODAY

Though started purely with manufacturing pre-stressed hollowcore planks, Healy says he soon realised more was possible, and required, with the precast technology. Since then, the company has expanded its capabilities to produce pre-stressed concrete sections in all shapes and sizes, from T-beams to columns, staircases, wall sections and any odd shapes that projects may require. If requested by clients, the team also designs and manufactures post-tensioned T-beams and slabs.

The hollowcore concrete casting extruder in the plant runs across a production line 120 metres long, with ability to produce pre-stressed hollowcore slabs of 60 megapascal (Mpa) strength in lengths up to 17.5 metres.

The hollowcore planks have an advantage compared to solid floors, in that they are approximately 40 per cent lighter. The high quality of the concrete used means the concrete reaches 32Mpa strength within less than 12 hours, which enables rapid manufacturing.

Providing columns, beams, stairs and hollowcore floor planks for MCG in Melbourne, the EastLink Freeway works with the construction of the ventilation structures at each end of the EastLink Freeway tunnel and manufacturing the noise walls, freeway barriers and bridge abutments for the recent Monash Freeway and West Gate Freeway upgrades are only some of the projects the team has undertaken to date.

To solve any technical issues that may arise while designing or handling the concrete sections, Hollow Core Concrete has a team of in-house structural engineers who make sure technical challenges can be overcome with experience.

From designing concrete wall sections with precisely located voids for attaching staircases to resolving how a 50-metre-long T-beam can be lifted with cranes and

transferred to the project site, Healy says the experience of the engineering team is very valuable to the success of Hollow Core Concrete's projects.

"I am very appreciative of my staff. Building a strong team has been key to our business growth," says Healy.

#### MASTER PRECASTER MEMBERSHIP

Hollow Core Concrete is a Master Precaster member of National Precast Concrete Association Australia, which according to National Precast's Chief Executive Officer Sarah Bachmann, is now a must-have when awarding a precast contract.

The initiative by National Precast came in response to discussions with external bodies such as government authorities and tier one builders, who had experienced cost blowouts resulting from quality and other issues.

"Most head contractors just don't have the time to do their own proper checks. It's too late when we get the call after inferior precast has been supplied and find out that a member has not been used. There's just not a lot we can do, unfortunately. That's why we have introduced Master

Precaster," Bachmann says.

A requirement of wearing the Master Precaster member badge is that the precaster must have satisfactorily completed one of National Precast's stringent audits and comply with the Master Precaster Code of Conduct. It's a step above what a Precaster member must pass, and covers eight areas, including: industry contribution; track record; financial stability; technical skill; factory capability; quality management; safety management; and environmental management.

The bar, as Bachmann admits, has been set high. But it's also necessary to ensure reduced contract risks for contractors.

As Hollow Core Concrete is leading the way with quality prestressed precast concrete manufacturing, Bachmann encourages more precasters to follow in the company's footsteps.

"Precast is a growing sector and we want to make sure specifiers and users have a positive experience and use it again. That means doing our bit to lead the industry, to ensure our members at least are doing the right thing and to raise the bar," she comments. ■



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