

# Celebrating 70 years in Australia

IT'S NOT EVERY DAY THAT A LOCAL AUSTRALIAN COMPANY IS ABLE TO CELEBRATE 70 YEARS OF SERVICING THE HEAVY-DUTY ROAD TRANSPORT INDUSTRY. MELBOURNE FAMILY BUSINESS **BARTLETT** IS ONE SUCH LONG-SERVING INDUSTRY ICON THAT IS STILL SETTING THE INNOVATION BAR HIGH TODAY.

Known for manufacturing world-leading truck and trailer equipment, Hallam, Victoria-based family company Bartlett is celebrating an anniversary in 2016 that only few local businesses have the perseverance to achieve – 70 years of on-going service to the transport and logistics industry. Founded by Norm Bartlett in May 1946, the company started off supplying a loyal base of agricultural clients in country Victoria. Using his skills as a boiler maker and the principles learned whilst studying structural

engineering and drafting, Norm identified and capitalised on a need for farming trailers after World War II – targeting the grain growing industry with a three-wheel grain trailer design that would help boost the company's reputation. Utilising a unique and extremely stable triangular frame, rear axle pivoting for the tipping function, as well as salvaged DC-3 aircraft tyres that provided the required floatation and manoeuvrability in the field, the trailer was so successful that Bartlett

quickly gained renown for producing bespoke trailers that were “affordable, reliable and designed to save the end user lots of time and money,” as current Managing Director, Allan Bartlett, recalls. “Following the success in agriculture, a natural progression into road-going trailers and semi-trailers soon occurred, with clients such as the Australian Army placing large orders,” he says. “With his inventive nature and ‘never-say-no’ attitude, Norm seized the opportunity and built a strong reputation

throughout Victoria and then Australia.” In the 1960s, Norm was joined by his sons, David and Geoff, who brought with them a diverse skill-set that would help the family develop many more unique transportation systems. “The common denominator was to make the equipment at the right price,

strong and lightweight, to safely meet the arduous workload of hauling road freight,” David's son, Allan, says. Apart from building trailers to meet their clients' individual needs, the Bartlett family also developed a variety of truck and trailer modifications utilising its own brand of lazy and pusher axles, as well as non-reactive, load sharing spring suspensions. “In 1964, under the guidance of Geoff Bartlett's engineering expertise, we then developed Australia's first heavy-duty trailer Ball Couplings with a design that, even after 50 years of continual use and abuse, is still going strong and outlasting all other drawbar coupling types,” Allan explains proudly. Representing the third generation of Bartletts in the business, he is committed to continuing the company's legacy of innovation, with a strong focus on the brand's flagship range of towbars and associated coupling products, “including our strong and trusted Bartlett safety chain systems, which are unique and industry leading, bringing total ADR compliance to the market so that truck dealers, equipment suppliers, body builders and vehicle outfitters can be assured that they are meeting their legal obligations,” he says.

“Bartlett's integrated towing solutions are designed and manufactured to outperform and survive in Australia's most demanding road freight and contracting operations, including mining, road making and earthmoving.” According to Allan, the underlying driver for these products stems from Norm's original aim to exceed client expectations every time – allowing the current generation management team to find a niche in the marketplace and develop what is considered a “distinctive edge” for the long-standing brand. He explains, “Coming from a background of trailer building, suspension and chassis manufacturing, we understand vehicle dynamics and especially the towing task. As such, our history is highly relevant to what we do today, as the accumulated knowledge and intuitive design techniques feed into each and every one of our products. “To complement our products, we value-add to our customers' experience with specialised services that include complete workshop installation of towbar and coupling systems



One of Norm's original semi-trailers.

at our Hallam facility, as well as upgrades of truck air brake systems for towing trailers, auto electrical modifications, serial numbered towbar Rating Plates for traceability, and printed summary installation reports for safe fleet management.”

He explains that, “additional cost savings flow on for installers and operators, such as reduced design overhead, rapid installation, uncomplicated truck/trailer inter-changeability, fleet standardisation, and much more.” 70 years after Norm Bartlett set out to revolutionise the Victorian farming equipment industry, his grandson Allan says that today's Bartlett business can provide a ‘whole system experience’ designed to protect its clients' interests through the accessibility of safe, reliable and low cost towing options – thereby continuing a proud tradition of innovation that is unique in an industry where the only constant is change. ▶

#### Contact

Bartlett Equipment  
6-8 Abbott Road  
Hallam VIC 3803  
Ph: 03 9796 3222  
Web: [www.bartlett-equip.com.au](http://www.bartlett-equip.com.au)



Current Managing Director, Allan Bartlett.

Bartlett display stand at the Royal Melbourne Show in the mid-1950s.

