

Handling the pressure of the defence industry

Few companies can match the fluid power solutions prowess of BL Shipway.

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BL Shipway is the quintessential world-class company that plays a critical role in key Australian defence projects, yet chooses to operate 'below the radar'.

Despite its deliberate low profile on military projects, the 60-plus-year-old company teams with prime contractors of the calibre of BAE Systems, SAAB, DSTO and ASC.

BL Shipway ranks among the top fluid power solutions providers in Australia. However, Managing Director David Shipway said "when it comes to defence, we are a team player, being just as comfortable working in conjunction with other second and third tier contractors".

"We are 100% dependable, totally solutions-focussed and our team brings to any project more than 800 years of collective experience in what is a highly specialised but mission-critical niche.

"We stock the broadest product range of its type in the State. That gives our customer quick local supply and service."

This range includes long-standing, exclusive distribution rights in SA for major international brands of hydraulic and pneumatic equipment. These include Bosch Rexroth hydraulic pumps, motors and valves, Hydac hydraulic filtration and accessories, Enerpac high pressure hydraulics and RYCO hydraulic hose and fittings, amongst others.

But what sets the company apart is its ability to utilise that product range to offer customised fluid power systems, from full system design and commissioning to ongoing service and testing. They feel that they are unparalleled in this field in South Australia.

"In response to our customers' needs, we have incorporated ongoing servicing and testing of their hydraulic and pneumatic systems. For example, we have a specialised pressure test facility that is able to test up to 30,000psi on hose assemblies, and we offer mobile support, which has taken our team across South Australia and interstate."

The company is owned by its two directors, David Shipway and Scott Dabinet, both of whom are active in the business. David's son, Todd, recently joined the team to help facilitate the next phase of growth. With over 90 years of collective experience between these three alone, there are very few hydraulic or pneumatic problems which they haven't encountered and solved.

"Continuity is important for clients and that's where our staff and our facilities come in," said Mr Shipway.

"Most of our staff have been with the company for many years, which translates into both industry experience and retention of knowledge for our clients. That continuity and broad experience across a range of industry sectors has also on occasions helped a customer in unrelated fields, which is not something on offer elsewhere."

"Our skilled technicians still maintain systems that we built 30 years ago, and our workshop can perform customised work to ensure that we can replace parts with the same brand of product."

As South Australia's leader in fluid power solutions, BL Shipway has capabilities that start with concept development and design, right through to installation, commissioning and maintenance. The size of project ranges from the installation of a

small hydraulic pump to major projects of national significance.

Three high-profile defence projects they are particularly proud of are:

Hydraulic flushing and powerpack equipment for the Australian Submarine Corporation.

Hydraulic hose and tube assemblies for land based military vehicles.

Synchronised lift for sections of the Hobart Class Air Warfare Destroyer (AWD) project.

There are many other projects of note, including work related to RAAF assets, but the company takes client confidentiality very seriously.

Such projects cover basic hydraulic hose assemblies through to high-torque bolt tensioning equipment, with all manner of filtration and lubrication systems, valves and hydraulic cylinders in between.

Outside the defence industry, its previous projects include intricate pneumatic systems management for the blast furnace at Nyrstar in Port Pirie, and hydraulic systems for the operation of emergency equipment on the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

In the mining industry, it has on-site facilities at several major mine sites to enable immediate repairs of vital equipment, as well as helping to design pneumatic cabinets for rail trucks.

BL Shipway is also a well-known name in agriculture, with their products ending up on agricultural machinery across Australia and overseas. They also helped to develop an environmentally sensitive hydraulic system for the operation of lock gates on the River Murray barrage system.

They are ahead of the curve from a quality and safety standpoint in comparison to companies of a similar size, as attested to by several clients who have inspected BL Shipway's facilities as part of their own quality controls. The same commitment applies to their ongoing commitment to staff training, to keep pace with industry developments.

At a time when other long-established businesses are wondering what's next, BL Shipway's diversified customer base, product range and service offerings ensure they are well-placed to navigate the next phase of South Australia's economic future.



BL Shipway
Darren Oatway and Todd Shipway