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The CEO Magazine
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PAVING THE *PATH TO* PROSPERITY

Many of Australia's large infrastructure projects are draining the resources of the industry's top-tier firms. Mid-tier firm Abergeldie Complex Infrastructure hopes to capitalise on the resulting client service gap.

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When taking over from Michael Boyle as the CEO of Abergeldie, Greg Taylor was well aware of the boots he was appointed to fill. From the onset, he had a firm mandate to drive continuing growth while maintaining the strong heritage in promoting sustainability and corporate social responsibility, an uncommon focus in this hard-nosed sector.

Greg's breadth of experience is called on daily as a result of the diverse range of projects delivered by this mid-tier company. Within the past year, projects have included preparing the infrastructure for the Supercars Grand Finale in Newcastle, tunnelling under the Brisbane River to install new water pipelines, and rehabilitating the local sewer network for Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council in Queensland. "I've really enjoyed understanding the special skill sets and developing the expertise in each of those business »



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units, and I've been involved in growing each of these groups separately," he says. "The real power I have seen in the organisation is when teams from several of these groups work together."

Strong business partnerships and relations are a major driver behind Abergeldie's success and sustainability, according to Greg. "I think it's about having a complementary relationship where value is brought to projects that are outside of your traditional boundaries," he notes. "Something I promote within the organisation is that I don't know everything, nor do I pretend to know everything. I believe my role as a leader is to ask the right questions and use that as a way to learn."

Greg's experience stretches more than 28 years in tier-one firms: initially at Transfield Construction from 1989 to 2003, working on projects such as the Sydney Harbour Tunnel, then at John Holland from 2003 to 2015. He has assumed his CEO position while Australia is in the midst of an infrastructure boom. In the 2017-18 Federal Budget, the Australian Government committed A\$75 billion towards infrastructure projects as a crucial part of its plan for continuing economic growth. According to Greg, many of those infrastructure projects are extreme in their scale and mostly taken on by the top-tier firms.

"A concern for the industry is that a lot of skills and resources are being soaked up by those mega projects. We are seeing a lot of new and existing clients come to us, as our focus is not compromised by involvement in these mega projects. Despite the volume of work in the industry, we have positioned Abergeldie to offer a diverse and committed service to our clients," he says.

Greg hopes to leverage Abergeldie's skills and project diversity to cater to those clients over the next few years. However, he's prudent about growing too quickly, believing that building and maintaining sound partnership arrangements is the key to business

growth, profitability and sustainability. "It's easy to try and be all things to all people and grow, but this isn't sustainable," he says. "Rapid growth in unknown sectors with new clients can lead to problems in safety, quality and reliability, which can then lead to reputational damage. It's the quality of growth that's most important – measured and sustainable without stifling innovation."

Regardless, Abergeldie has been broadening its horizons geographically. It recently opened operations in New Zealand, with Abergeldie Harker, following the acquisition of micro-tunnelling business Harker Underground. It has even gone to Europe, establishing an

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office in Northern Ireland to take on a A\$16-million restoration project of Killeavy Castle. "It will become a wedding reception and boutique accommodation venue," Greg notes. "It suits the style of projects in which Abergeldie wants to be involved, in that our mission is to deliver the complex infrastructure needed to build better communities."

Beyond the civil engineering world, Abergeldie partners with charities and community organisations, including a longstanding relationship with the St Vincent de Paul Society, popularly known as Vinnie's. "We sponsor a food van that caters for the homeless of Western Sydney. We also strongly contribute to the WaterAid charity in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

"It is a very community-driven organisation. I think that is really reflective of the type of people who work in the business," Greg concludes. "Abergeldie is unique, and it is a real privilege for me to contribute to a business of such integrity." ■

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