

Going the Distance

With a commitment to its customers and people, and to its quality, safety, and training, Nationwide Towing & Transport has seen significant growth as it services customers across Australia.

Images by Estelle Judah Photography

Throughout its many years of operation, Nationwide Towing & Transport has chosen a very deliberate path in building its business by investing significantly in people, quality, safety, training, fleet, and ICT, which sets the benchmark for the industry.

As the leading Australian towing services player, Nationwide completes more than 25,000 tows per month and services a wide range of customers, from one-off transportation or relocation jobs through to servicing major organisations such as the state-based automotive clubs, police, road authorities, local councils, and large Australian and multinational corporations.

Rob Nicholls, CEO of Nationwide, attributes the company's success to "a sustained strategic focus and significant capital investment, overlaid with great people, to build a platform that generates value for our customers."

"In the past five years, following this strategy," Rob says, "we've

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- Rob Nicholls

invested more than \$30 million in information communications technology, quality and workplace health and safety systems and procedures, training, fleet, and people to ensure that we deliver into the requirements of our customers."

Rob also says, "A further key element in Nationwide's success is its longstanding relationship with the RACV, which stretches back over 50 years. This partnership has been very important for both organisations." Nationwide's IT provider LinkSoft has worked with RACV and Nationwide to develop a real-time system that interfaces directly with the RACV and can dispatch up to 1,000 jobs per day without a phone call.

Partnerships with Prestige Hino, Continental Tyres, LinkSoft, Ekebol, Westpac, and NAB have also been very important to the development and growth of the company.

"The business has been very disciplined in focusing on key functions, including recruiting great people," Rob says, "building an ICT infrastructure that can deal

with the 24/7/365 nature of our business. Getting WH&S processes and procedures established and enforced has rightly been, and remains, a constant focus. Maintenance of a quality system, staff training and development, building and maintaining a fleet of quality vehicles, and developing long-term relationships with customers to secure their work, given the heightened WH&S obligations on all parties, are also key areas we focus on.

"The learning and development that takes place in dealing with these issues and getting them right is very positive and adds to the strength and resilience of our platform."

Before joining Nationwide, Rob spent more than 25 years in the finance sector, including 10 years in senior leadership roles with Westpac. Rob says Westpac is an excellent organisation, where he was fortunate to have learned a lot about leadership, strategy, and building businesses. Based on this experience, Rob says, Nationwide has a very strong group of talented people with well-developed systems >



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and processes, and a strategic focus not always associated with a company of its size.

Safety is a very important focus, and has been a critical emphasis, for the company since inception. Tony Re, motor mechanic, former

tow-truck driver, and a major shareholder of Nationwide, says the company's safety policies, procedures, training, and enforcement have been pivotal in Nationwide's development. "Our heavy WH&S focus coincided with the Chain of Responsibility legislation and consequently saw much more demand from our customers for sophisticated WH&S systems and enforcement."

Rob says, "We physically go out and make sure we're meeting our safety system standards. We do driver-skills and assessment audits every month, and 6- to 12-monthly vehicle and equipment audits, plus annual internal audits of the quality and WHS management systems. Our larger customers support us by conducting their own audits—this assists the process and strengthens the system."

On the people side, Nationwide has a strong blend of experienced towing and transport people who

have grown through the ranks, combined with industry newcomers. "This generates a great blend of deep industry knowledge and experience, combined with the creativity and lateral perspectives of the newer people," Rob says. "Like many businesses, people are critical. Our people are experienced, energetic, and engaged, which are important characteristics in our industry. The culture at Nationwide is to give people a go, and, if they show drive and initiative, to give them opportunities early in their careers."

Rob and Tony believe this approach has created a very strong team of people at the company. They also believe that developing from within the organisation is an important principle to adhere to, which has served Nationwide and its people very well.

In regard to future growth, Rob states, "We're already involved in

multiple states, so we're looking to further expand our footprint across Australia. When expanding our operations, we have to think about drivers, fleet, property, customers, ICT, quality, WH&S, and training. We want to secure multi-year contracts and leverage our existing platform with local experience to enter that new market and then build from there."

Rob believes supplier relationships are critical to growth, and Nationwide has been backed by very supportive, long-term suppliers including Prestige Hino, Continental Tyres, IT firm LinkSoft, truck-tray builder Ekebol, and bankers Westpac and NAB. These partners have provided high-quality products and services and support to Nationwide over a long period of time and are important to the company's longer-term growth ambitions.

With many decades of experience between them, Rob and Tony

agree that there's one main message that they'd pass on to any prospective leaders or CEOs about WH&S: "First, it's about the right systems and processes, then constantly enforcing and being vigilant about complacency. We constantly remind our staff about safety and give them awareness reminders about nearby incidents or weather changes. We take every opportunity that we can to remind them about being aware and safe."

As Nationwide continues to service a diverse range of customers across Australia, this commitment to excellence will truly set it apart from other industry players. •

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"Nationwide Towing has a 'can do' approach to business, and we are privileged to be a key truck supplier. They are industry leaders and set high expectations for the ongoing support of their fleet which we continuously strive to achieve." - Anthony Long, Dealer Principal, Prestige Hino

"Continental Tyres of Australia is pleased to be a supplier one of Australia's leading towing and transport companies. Many stranded drivers rely on Nationwide to get them out of strife daily and it is imperative to supply reliable high quality goods and services to enhance their mobility." - Mark Lockwood, National Sales Manager, Truck and Bus Tyres, Continental Tyres



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