

Wheels KEEP. Turning

60 years on and Fraser Motorcycles is still going strong, targeting the high-end leisure market with a carefully selected core set of brands.

Images by Scott Ehler

Fraser Motorcycles was established in 1955 from humble beginnings in the backyard of the Fraser family's home in Newcastle. By 1965, it had opened its first dealership in Broadmeadow, which still operates today, and later five new locations were launched in the Sydney CBD, Concord, Wollongong, Perth, and Melbourne. All of the dealerships have something different to offer; however, they still have one thing in common and that's superior quality and service.

This year marks 60 years of business for Fraser Motorcycles. In the early days, small motorcycles were a cheap form of transport, but by the mid 1970s the game had changed and small cars took over as the vehicle of choice for the commuter. This meant motorcycles for leisure-type activities became increasingly popular, and this was a market which Fraser Motorcycles quickly tapped into. Offering repairs, services, finance, dyno testing,

customisation, and a wealth of expertise, Fraser Motorcycles found itself riding the road to success.

Warren Fraser came into the business, which was founded by his father, in the 70s and took over the running of the Newcastle store in 1976. In 1983, he was appointed to a management role in the head office and distribution centre, and today he holds the position of Fraser Motorcycles' managing director.

"Our aim is to grow within reasonable numbers in the next decade by wholesaling, retailing, and trading," Warren says. "We mainly pick the high end of the market to ensure our business remains strong and our customers remain satisfied.

"We don't overcomplicate our business by putting in too many brands that people don't really understand. If you overcomplicate it with product, you'll probably end up hurt in the long term."

Warren says the onslaught of cheap bikes coming out of China and Japan can be confusing for the consumer. "There are a lot of people out there that get themselves tied up with the wrong product which has no parts to fix it, is unserviceable, is probably a foreign brand, and in the long run it only ends up with upset customers.

"You're dealing with 8 per cent of the population that ride motorcycles; it's not a motor car, where you have 80 per cent of people driving cars. A lot of car dealers can just go out and incinerate their customers; we can't. We have to look for repeat business. We give great customer service. There's never been a product we haven't fixed or sorted out.

"So our advantage is that we bring a product in, wholesale it at retail, bring it to market, and don't overcomplicate it. We don't try to be at the cheap end of the market, and we don't burn people. We commit to yearly orders in >

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advance, and then we must have the pull-through of sales of all models, which sometimes means pulling the necessary levers to move the product, be it wholesale or retail.”

Fraser Motorcycles became involved with distribution in 1964 with two European brands—Bultaco, from Spain, which ceased production in 1980, and Ducati, from Italy. The business just passed a 50-year milestone with Ducati, and distributes the products in both Australia and New Zealand. It sells Honda, from Japan, and is one of the country’s largest retailers of Harley-Davidson, from America. Furthermore, it recently added Norton, from England, to its repertoire after it recently returned to the market.

Ducati is a super-brand in the motorcycling world and is at the forefront of technological innovation within the industry. On the track, it has amassed a string of World Superbike Championships unprecedented in the history of motorcycle racing. Harley-Davidson has been around since 1901 and has inspired generations of riders and modern-day pop culture. Honda rose from Japan’s post-war fledgling motor industry and is a name synonymous with performance, reliability, and quality. Finally, Norton is an iconic brand of the classic café-racer-style motorcycles from the 50s and 60s. It recently made a comeback onto the market and has found a new generation of fans for its classic design.

Warren says his staff are very familiar with each different brand and can provide extensive and detailed advice when required. “If anybody has a problem—let’s just say any of our 40 independent dealers have a problem with a product and can’t figure it out themselves—then we’ve got a group here to help. There will either be a long phone conversation or we’ll put someone on a plane to go and fix it. Customers are not left stranded with our brands, particularly with what we import.”



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- Warren Fraser



To do this, the business invests a lot into training its staff of 180 people. Employees are regularly sent overseas to learn more about specific brands and models; the aim is to give everyone a great depth of knowledge to be ahead of the game. At any given time, there are about 60 technicians right across Australia, as well as another 20 to 30 apprentices. Warren says his people have two jobs to do: to get the customers excited about a specific brand, and inevitably to win the sale.

“We do a lot behind the show, and we do a lot to try to keep customers loyal, to keep them keen, and to keep them coming back. We have a lot of repeat clients. We’re not into holding onto knowledge and not learning; we’re into training younger people to keep going forward. We put a high emphasis on training with all divisions and aspects of the

business to make sure we give a premium service.”

Warren says he has “the best people in all the top positions”, with most having been with the company for over 20 years. “We’re happy in the business. We’re not asleep; we get up early, we’re into it every day, and we’re not living in the past. We’re not sitting on our chairs waiting for business to come. If it doesn’t come, you’ve got to go out and find it, push it, and service it. It doesn’t matter which aspect you look at—if you’re not serving it, you’ll hear about it; and if you’re not pushing the business, you’ll know about it. So it’s an all-round show on a daily basis.

“I have financial controllers, I have a retail operations manager; and all our dealerships have a branch manager, a sales manager, and office managers for finance. So it’s



all controlled and it’s been built over the years. We’re happy in what we do and it doesn’t overly stress us.

“Business is healthy. We do look at our threats; however, we’re not worried about them. You’ve got to enjoy your life.”

Warren has been passionate about motorcycles for as long as he can remember. He first hopped on a bike as a five year old and hasn’t looked back. “You could say I’ve been around it a little bit. Motorcycling has been most of my life. I’m originally from Newcastle, in the Hunter Valley, and we grew up basically riding bikes along trails, dirt-bike riding, and then 30 years ago I moved to Sydney.

“Sydney is more of a road-bike city; there’s nowhere to really ride dirt bikes without going two or three hours out to the mountains or farms. I’ve been through all facets of the motorcycle industry. I’ve raced in a lot of different forms of motorcycling—motocross, dirt track, and trials.”

When Fraser Motorcycles was established, the face of commuter transport was nothing like it is today. Scooters such as the Honda 90 were popular with girls, and as a result the popularity of motorcycles among young men increased as they attempted to impress the opposite sex. A couple of decades later and small cars were introduced such as the Toyota Corolla and Honda Civic,

which moved the market considerably. “That’s when we [Fraser Motorcycles] lost the commuter market and really went more into the top-end leisure market,” Warren says.

Today, the motorcycle industry is coming back around to attract commuters once again. With the increasing price of petrol, expensive parking, and high congestion of traffic on the roads, people are looking for a cheaper and more efficient option of transport. Warren himself prefers to ride a bike, although he also owns a car.

“The commuter market is travelling back now because it doesn’t matter what size car you buy, it’s still going to cost you \$7 an hour to park it in the city and cost you a lot in fuel and fees. I ride a motorcycle because it is easier with the constant road furniture, traffic, and constant changing of speeds. I do drive a car, but when that drives me insane I ride my motorcycle.”

Despite the business’s many successes, Warren says there has also been a myriad of challenges over the years, as is the norm with most competitive industries. One of the greatest struggles was the global financial crisis in 2008 which negatively affected many businesses in Australia and overseas. “Whether you’re talking motorcycles, cars, pies, chips, restaurants—everybody suffered.”



Fraser Motorcycles prides itself on being heavily involved with the community, particularly within motorcycle circles and not-for-profit groups. Every year, it makes a commitment to assist local and national charities that make a difference, and this support often goes beyond monetary donations. Some of the groups it has supported over more than 50 years include Bikers Against Child Abuse, Blue Light Disco, Cancer Council Australia, Harleys for Helicopters, and Legacy.

The company boasts the sponsorship of the Fraser Motorcycles Drag Racing Team and Bad Bones Racing, which are involved in numerous events each year. The former was started in 2010, and all current team members are trained motorcycle technicians, while the latter dates back to 1993 when Warren supplied the group with its initial leather riding gear.

Furthermore, Fraser Motorcycles regularly hosts events such as dedicated ride days, new model releases, ladies-only events, and product information days. It is grateful to be in a position where it can give back to the communities it is a part of. •

