

Recognising innovation and sustainable growth



Hera engineers national growth

A focus on quality and organic business growth are two main drivers for Hera Engineering.

THE winner of the major category at last week's RISE Business Awards, HERA Engineering, grew from a mission to deliver quality over quantity.

In addition to being named Business of the Year, Hera also received the Small Business of the Year award.

The Subiaco-based company's founder and managing director, Matteo Tirapelle, left a promising job at a national engineering firm to start the business in 2015.

The move has paid dividends for Mr Tirapelle, who is now leading a team of 24 across Perth and Queensland.

"For us it has been organic growth," Mr Tirapelle said.

"We believe if we keep focusing on quality, the word of mouth will help us get more work."

Mr Tirapelle said setting up on his own was difficult, but had proved rewarding.

"It was tough because when we started to play in a field where the big players are ... there was a lot of resistance," he said.

During the gala event at Crown Perth, Mr Tirapelle told *Business News* the win was a great achievement for all the hard work his team had contributed.

"We are working very hard on the culture of the business; we have had a lot of people really step up. I am not in the driver's seat alone now," he said.

"We are going to keep working on our culture very hard and we want to grow our Queensland office.

"We want to consolidate Perth and keep doing more high rises here and diversify into more government work as well.

"The main plan would always be to grow organically in our team and keep recruiting fantastic people."

Hera Engineering's first project was Stirling Capital's Cirque apartment in Mount Pleasant, on which it consulted in its founding year.

In 2016, Multiplex appointed Hera to undertake the façade design of the WA Museum, one of Western Australia's most recognisable projects.

The following year, Multiplex approached Hera to carry out the engineering works for a Brisbane office tower.

Hera reduced the construction costs at the Brisbane high rise from \$250 million to \$240 million and accelerated the build time by about four months.

On the same site, Hera then value-engineered Brisbane's tallest building, 'The One', which rises 264 metres over 82 storeys, reducing build costs by \$20 million and build time by six months.

The Multiplex projects were a game changer for Hera, helping it establish a footprint on the east coast with the opening of its Brisbane and Gold Coast offices in 2017.

"In the first year I was doing a lot of fly-in, fly-out, then eventually one of my key staff moved there," Mr Tirapelle said.

In 2018, Canberra development group Geocon contracted Hera to redesign the capital's tallest building.

Back in Perth, Hera recently completed engineering works for a 39-storey student accommodation tower in Wellington Street, designed by MJA Architects and being developed by COR Partners.

Mr Tirapelle said the firm focused on developing young entrepreneurs, with the average age of its staff about 26.

Hera Engineering's leadership team includes Mr Tirapelle, engineering manager James Georgiades, structural technical manager Giorgio Marinelli, Queensland office manager Matthew Breen, and building information modelling manager Ryan Robinson.

**WESTERN
AUSTRALIAN
BUSINESS OF
THE YEAR
WINNER**

**SMALL
BUSINESS OF
THE YEAR
WINNER**

Matteo Tirapelle (left) pictured here with *Business News* senior editor Mark Beyer, says Hera has grown organically. Photo: Matt Jelonek



Plico Energy rides solar’s rise

A fresh approach to rooftop solar has helped Plico Energy light 380 households, and become the startup of the year.

SOLAR panels are popular in sunny Western Australia, but the data on take-up of rooftop solar and batteries shows trends are not consistent across Perth.

Rooftop solar panel installations have recently been most common in the outer suburbs in newer residential developments, according to the Australian Energy Market Operator.

Household battery storage has been most popular in higher income areas such as the western suburbs.

All of that comes as the state’s main power grid is under pressure from the success of rooftop solar, with demand at risk of falling below unsafe levels by mid-decade.

Perhaps the work of RISE Business Awards Startup of the Year Plico Energy will help resolve these challenges.

Plico was established in 2019 following the Dunsborough Community Energy Project.

The company offers solar panels as a service, where households avoid the high upfront capital cost of installing panels and instead commit to a long-term offtake deal to buy the power.

That starts from \$33.50 per week.

The company has 380 customers and hopes to have more than 30,000 by 2035.

Those panels are aggregated and managed as a virtual power plant, which helps reduce pressure on the network from high levels of solar electricity being fed into the grid on cool, sunny days.

When customers join Plico, they become owners of the business, rather than owners of the panels.

In November 2019, Plico received \$50 million in seed funding from ethical investors SUSI Partners, and the company raised a further \$4 million in December 2020.

Plico co-chief executive officer Kerry Milne said recognition at the 2021 RISE Business Awards was

massive for the business and the team.

“Not only for the people who get up and come to work every day and slog their heart out,” Ms Milne said.

“Our purpose is about giving every household across WA and eventually Australia the ability to own, generate, and do whatever they need to do with their own energy.

“What we need to do is really get our message out there.

“The more people that we talk to, the more impact we can have.”

Ms Milne said she felt passionate about what Plico was doing.

“I had a business coach who told me that emotion and passion does not belong in business,” she said.

“And then I started working in the startup world and I knew [it] was actually completely the opposite.”

Flower Box flourishes nationwide

Flower Box Home Fragrance has grown from a home-based startup to a nationally recognised candle, diffuser, and perfume retailer.

MICRO BUSINESS OF THE YEAR WINNER

Johnny Van
Der Wielen with
Foundation for the
WA Museum chief
executive Jenny Allen.
Photo: Matt Jelonek



ROBIN Van Der Wielen was domiciled in London mid last decade when she first experimented with candle making and learned of the aromas and processes involved in their manufacture.

Ms Van Der Wielen returned to Perth in 2016, where soon after she formed a business partnership with her stepson, Johnny Van Der Wielen, to develop the idea for a new business: Flower Box Home Fragrance.

The pair initially made products in their garage by hand, before temporarily relocating to Grasse, the centre of the French perfume industry, north of Cannes.

Ms Van Der Wielen, who handles client engagement duties and selects wholesalers, studied at the Grasse Institute of Perfumery (GIP) while Mr Van Der Wielen, Flower Box’s chief executive, studied at both GIP and Candle Academy of Grasse.

Flower Box officially launched in 2017, with its products sold online and stocked in boutiques across Australia, including at more than 40 outlets in Perth.

The company’s growth has earned it the Micro Business of the Year prize at the annual RISE Business Awards, held at Crown Perth.

In the past financial year, Flower Box manufactured more than 50,000 candles, diffusers, and perfumes, achieving sales of more than 30,000.

The business, which has a manufacturing centre and showroom in O’Connor, has already exceeded its production forecast for 2022, attributing the growth to improvements to procedures, strategy, and training for its small team of six full-time employees.

Flower Box has signed corporate gift contracts with Kailis Jewellery, Seven Network, Hillam Architects, and several real estate agencies.

Its products can also be seen in The Mansions at Crown Perth.

Speaking to *Business News* at the RISE Awards, Mr Van Der Wielen said Flower Box would now focus on an expansion into NSW and Victoria.

“Those states have been left relatively untouched by us deliberately because we needed to iron out our manufacturing issues,” he said.

“We manufacture everything in-house, nearly none of our competitors do, hence why their products are all one and the same.

“The process is bedded down, we have the capacity, and we’re now ready to take [on] the two biggest states in Australia.”

STARTUP BUSINESS OF THE YEAR WINNER

Kerry Milne (left) and
DevelopmentWA acting
marketing manager
Catherine Bentley.
Photo: Matt Jelonek



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HopgoodGanim Lawyers
congratulates all the entrants,
finalists and winners in the
RISE Business Awards and their
exceptional achievements in 2021.



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LAWYERS

DBM develops sustainable niche

Staff retention and a commitment to steady growth are vital for DBM Vircon.

DBM Vircon's growth trajectory over the past five decades has helped lift the business to the finishing line at this year's RISE Business Awards, with the digital engineering firm named the Medium-sized Business of the Year.

Founded in 1972, Applecross-based DBM Vircon has carved out a significant niche in the field of construction modelling and industrial design, having played a significant role in the design of Rio Tinto's Gudai-Darri and BHP's South Flank mines.

Outside of Australia, the firm has secured major parts in the design of major pieces of infrastructure in the US, including Salesforce Tower in San Francisco, the David Geffen Theater in Los Angeles, and the Abraham Lincoln Bridge in Louisville.

That work, among other projects, has contributed to the firm's near doubling of revenue

in the past two years, with profitability and staffing numbers surging alongside several new contracts.

Innovation has played a significant part in that success, with the firm boasting nearly 50 years' of institutional knowledge of the drafting process, backed by its team of long-standing programmers and engineers.

DBM Vircon has worked diligently to keep retention high in that time through its cadet program and ongoing professional development, with more than a quarter of DBM's team having been with the business for more than 10 years.

"One thing that's been really important to our business is, while we've grown, we've still maintained a family feel to the business," DBM Vircon global general manager David Dawson said.

"Everyone we work with is part of the DBM Vircon family.

"It is such a great feeling to have people around

you who actually care about the business.

"It's not just a place to turn up to work, clock in, clock out, and go home; it's a family."

Learning from mistakes has also been paramount, as the business has moved away from reducing its training of cadets during downturns to sticking with its staff in leaner times.

In addition, learning to apply for brownfield projects has helped diversify the company's portfolio, with DBM having already identified a significant pipeline of work in Australia over the next three years.

"We've had a fantastic year this year,"

Mr Dawson said.

"It's been very busy in the mining sector; we've had some really good international projects coming through.

"Generally speaking, I think the market's looking pretty good for us."



**MEDIUM
BUSINESS
OF THE YEAR
WINNER**

David Dawson
(left) with Site
Sentry director Paul
McKiernan. Photo:
Matt Jelonek

Brooks has higher goals

Brooks Hire Service has grown from a small Wheatbelt-based operation to a thriving national business.

**LARGE
BUSINESS
OF THE YEAR
WINNER**

Doug Brooks (left)
and HopgoodGanim
corporate advisory
partner Nino Odorisio.
Photo: Matt Jelonek



AGAINST the advice of well-meaning family and friends, Doug Brooks borrowed \$650 to buy two compressors and jumpstart an equipment hire company from his shed in the Wheatbelt town of Eneabba.

It was 1979, and the then 23-year-old Mr Brooks was hedging his bets on an opportunity to hire equipment to the growing mining industry after identifying a gap in the market.

But that decision, and those made since, have paid serious dividends.

In the past four decades, Mr Brooks has grown his construction and earthmoving equipment hire company to a national business with 18 branches.

Eight years after starting the business, Mr Brooks opened the first branch in Cannington.

In 1993, he took another risk, buying an undeveloped block of land in Canning Vale to accommodate his growing business.

Today, that 17,179 square metre site remains the head office for Brooks Hire Service, which is now the nation's largest privately-owned construction and earthmoving equipment hire company.

It owns and maintains more than 5,000 pieces of machinery across its 18 branches Australia-wide, servicing the civil and mining industries.

The company's growth this year has been the strongest recorded in its 42-year history, and no doubt contributed to its receipt of the Large Business of the Year award at this year's RISE Business Awards.

Brooks Hire Service has also become a family affair, with two of Mr Brooks' children taking on managerial roles within the company.

"It's good to get recognised for 42 years in business and to be able to share that with the kids," Mr Brooks told *Business News* after receiving the award at the gala event last week.

"If it weren't for them, I probably would have sold the business during the last mining boom and bought a bigger boat.

"The biggest part of it for me is seeing my kids thrive in the business and see them progress."

During the past 12 months, Brooks Hire has established three separate business divisions, with plans to start a division in the crane industry next year.

Mr Brooks also has bold plans for 2022, with his sights set on becoming global equipment manufacturer Sany's leading Australian dealer.



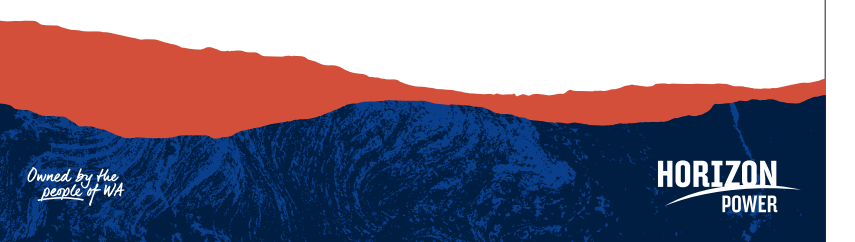
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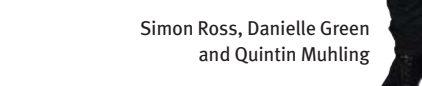
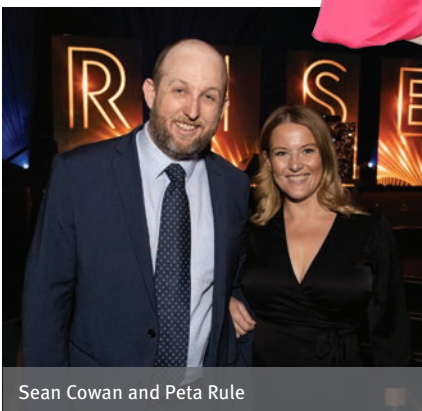
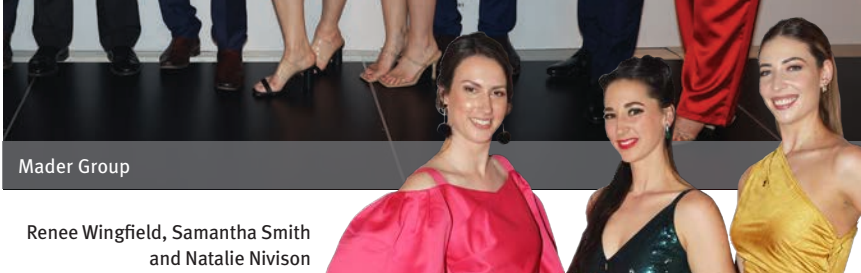
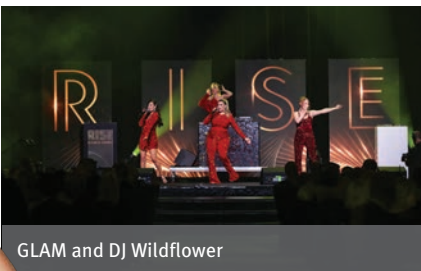
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Photos: Matt Jelonek & John Koh

Mateship drives Mader multinational

Relationships have been Luke Mader's key driver for success at his ASX-listed company.



**EMPLOYER
OF THE YEAR
WINNER**

Luke Mader and
Claritas and Partners
managing partner
Kelly Quirk. Photo:
Matt Jelonek



**Site Sentry congratulates
all the winners in the
2021 RISE Business Awards.**



www.sitesentry.com.au

LUKE Mader started his business, Mader Group, in 2005, working out of his ute in the Kimberley.

His mobile operation offered a rare and flexible maintenance solution, servicing everyday mining and civil operations in what was, at the time, an underserved niche.

Helping clients reach their targets incentivised Mr Mader to strive to make a tangible difference to his customers and his emerging workforce.

He set a goal to build a workforce of the best tradespeople available; those who had a passion for their jobs and enjoyed working alongside "great mates".

Flexibility remained a key theme as the business developed, with Mr Mader investing in the group's people and culture, driven by the key values of strong leadership, comradery and mateship.

It is that vision that has helped transform Mader Group into an ASX-listed company that has since cemented itself as a global provider of heavy equipment and infrastructure maintenance, with a growing network of more than 240 customers from across the world.

That vision also helped Mader Group secure the Employer of the Year gong at the 2021 RISE Business Awards.

"For us, an inclusive culture means everything," Mr Mader said.

"Unlocking people and seeing them see their full potential, that's very fulfilling for me."

"It feels great to be recognised with the team who have put all the work in."

Mr Mader said flexibility, or the tap-on, tap-off nature of his business, allowed customers to access specialised technicians during peak period, providing them with the right-sized team and appropriate expertise.

Although COVID-19 forced Mader to withdraw its workforce from Africa and Asia, the company has managed to slowly rebuild its international presence and now operates in seven countries.

Mader is also gearing up to take its business model to Canada, spurred by the belief that its growth momentum will carry it through to build relationships with large and established markets as well as new and emerging ones.

But despite all the company's successes, Mr Mader's measure of success is more than just a balance sheet.

"My biggest achievement would be that the mates that I started my business with, are still my mates now."

It's a simple mantra that keeps the business going.

"Look after your people, look after your clients, that's it."

WA Ballet targets growth trajectory

The West Australian Ballet has excelled during a turbulent period for the arts industry.

THE West Australian Ballet has overcome the challenges of COVID-19 to grow its group of dancers for the first time in at least a decade and cement its financial sustainability.

It is this resilience during a time of hardship that has earned the state ballet company the Not For Profit/Charity of the Year award at the 2021 RISE Business Awards.

West Australian Ballet artistic director Aurélien Scannella said the company had thrived during the pandemic by turning challenges into opportunities.

One of company's first moves at the beginning of the pandemic was to retain its artists, making it one of the only ballet companies in the world to keep its staff.

While performances were cancelled and many artists were left without work, dancers at the company adapted to training at home.

The company launched digital activities including CoVid Lab and Genesis Online, to

entertain audiences while keeping its dancers fit and ready to perform when shows could resume.

These activities and the establishment of a digital platform led the company to engage with more than 97,000 people in 2020.

The state ballet company attracted \$1.4 million in private giving in the 2020 financial year, a 12 per cent increase from 2019.

More than 400 people donated the cost of their ticket for cancelled performances.

The company worked to secure its financial future by growing its endowment fund to surpass its goal of \$7.75 million.

The fund was launched in November 2019 with a \$500,000 donation from the Wright Burt Foundation and a commitment to match donations from others to the value of \$2 million.

The financial strength it built through the endowment, increased philanthropic support and strong demand from audiences, means the

company's leadership can strive for further growth in 2022.

WA Ballet was able to expand its team of dancers by offering the seven people in its Young Artists program full-time positions, starting at the beginning of next year.

The company is hoping this expansion, and its growing performance and touring schedules, will help meet the audience demand for the artform, which is currently strong.

Mr Scannella said the pandemic had made people appreciate the arts.

"We cannot live without the arts," Mr Scannella told *Business News*.

"We cannot live without books, songs, music, opera, ballet, it has always been there, and I think COVID has reminded people that the arts are important."

Mr Scannella said the company was looking forward to celebrating its 70th anniversary next year.

**NOT FOR
PROFIT/
CHARITY OF
THE YEAR
WINNER**



Business News
general manager
Danielle Green presented
Aurélien Scannella
with the award.
Photo: Matt Jelonek

Safety sparks success for EK Services

EK Services Group founder Bradley Kyne says one of his biggest trials was navigating his company’s rate of growth.



REGIONAL
BUSINESS
OF THE YEAR
WINNER

EK founder Bradley Kyne and Horizon Power chief executive Stephanie Unwin.
Photo: Matt Jelonek

A delight and a challenge for the judges

The quality of entrants and range of businesses in this year’s awards provoked some spirited discussion among the judges.

THE 2021 RISE Business Awards attracted more than 130 entries across eight categories. That presented a daunting task for the judges while also giving us an insight into some wonderfully innovative and successful businesses. This year we had nearly 20 judges, applying their varied skills, experience and insights. Some of them represented sponsors of the awards. Others were former winners who know what it takes to build a successful business. Many of the former winners remarked that participating in the judging process gave them a greater appreciation of their own win a year earlier. *Business News* also had a team of experienced managers on the judging panel. The judging process started with a lunch meeting to discuss the criteria and ensure all judges were on the same page. Over the following weeks, the judges then read and assessed each of the written entries. The scores were collated ahead of a second meeting where the judges were able to analyse, dissect and question each other’s assessment.

That led to some spirited discussions as each judge brought their own perspective to bear. Collectively, it ensured a detailed assessment of the entries. Achieving rapid growth on its own was not enough to win one of the awards, however. The judges looked into the strategies, capabilities and commitment that allow organisations to achieve and sustain growth. That analysis led to the selection of five short-listed entrants in each of the eight categories, followed by the choice of category winners. After that came perhaps the most difficult part of the judging process: evaluating eight very different organisations to select the Western Australian Business of the Year. The judges didn’t all immediately share the same view. We had a spirited debate before reaching agreement on Hera Engineering as the overall winner. Thank you and congratulations to all entrants.

Mark Beyer
Chief judge

Mark Beyer Business News	Mark Keogh UON
Danielle Green Business News	Stephanie Unwin Horizon Power
Sean Cowan Business News	Rebecca Tomkinson Royal Flying Doctors Service
Matt Ryan DevelopmentWA	Jess Karlsson Cahoots Org.
Suzanne Dodds Complete Home Filtration	Jenny Allen Foundation for the WA Museum
Brad Hill Spinifex Protect and Limestone Coast Brewing	Jayden Rogers Linear
Jason Nuttman Site Sentry	Janet Simmons Edith Cowan University
Paul McKiernan Site Sentry	Peter K Bennett Clough
Bhaveshtech Kotecha Transmin	Kelly Quirk Claritas and Partners
Nino Odorisio HopgoodGanim	Charlie Gunningham Damburst

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STRUGGLING to keep pace with growth is a problem many businesses would dream of having. It’s a problem Bradley Kyne may not have anticipated when he founded his security services company, EK Security, in 2016. Mr Kyne started the business to address crime rates in rural Australia, which he observed as typically higher than those of metropolitan areas. His goal was to increase the standard of safety services in rural areas such as the East Kimberley, where EK Services is based. That dearth of services provided a lucrative business opportunity, and Mr Kyne realised that most security incidents required a cleaning service in tandem. He said there was huge demand for both services – security and cleaning – a self-sustaining model he claimed enabled the (then) separate business units to excel. “We tried to make sure that we operated a little bit bigger than what we were so that we could always grow into that into the future,” Mr Kyne said. As the companies grew, it soon became apparent that the cleaning and security business needed cohesive branding. This year’s RISE Business Awards Regional Business of the Year winner, EK Services was launched in 2019 as the parent company for EK Cleaning and the newly rebranded Northern Protective Services. An overheads department grew to a full corporate services suite and eventually EK Services’ third arm, BGR Properties, was created in 2020. Mr Kyne said the system soon became part of its vertical integration strategy and BGR would rent houses to NPS, hire EK Cleaning to maintain them and then hire NPS to control them. The NPS tech department is one of the newest additions to the business, which provides CCTV and alarms to clients for NPS to monitor. But the company has not been without its fair share of challenges, which Mr Kyne said came in the form of EK’s rate of growth, which taught him his business couldn’t service everyone. EK has since ventured into hospitality, acquiring two Kununurra cafes in August this year, which Mr Kyne said had helped generate further cash flow for the business. “We made many mistakes but we do learn from them,” Mr Kyne told *Business News*. “It’s so humbling. The finalists in our category; we just could not believe we won after hearing those stories. “It’s something we can take back to our team, they’re all going to be pretty thrilled about it.”

RISE
BUSINESS AWARDS

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