



Case Study: White Industries

“White Industries is invested in the Western Downs region. We have a deep pool of experienced, skilled workers, and future-proof our human resources by being involved in local schools through work experience and apprenticeships. As a result, we can develop quality tradespeople through apprenticeships, and attract workers who are keen to work with our team.”

- White Industries

BACKGROUND:

The White Industries story began in 1960, as a small jobbing repair shop servicing the agricultural market throughout the Western Downs. Over the last 60 years, two generations of the White family have grown the business through diversification and innovation, to be the largest privately-owned foundry in Queensland.

Over a period of 30 years, business founder, Bob White grew the Dalby-based business from its small machine shop origins, into producing non-ferrous and ferrous castings for the agricultural industry. As demand for his products grew throughout the Western Downs, he expanded to supply other industries.

Bob’s sons, Bruce, Craig and Neil White, stepped into driving roles in the business in the mid 1990s contributing their own unique skills and experience to the business.

They purchased the Rocklea Foundry in 2001, relocating the foundry’s entire plant and equipment including the **German BMD automated moulding line** for mass produced castings, to the White Industries base of manufacturing operations in Dalby. Today, the company also has an office in Brisbane.

White Industries is now one of the most advanced businesses of its kind in the country. The business includes a modern foundry, a Computer Numerical Control (CNC) machine shop and fabrication facility; using some of the most advanced automated foundry and machining equipment worldwide to produce advanced moulding, pattern making, fabrication, machining and casting technologies.

White Industries operates as a subcontract foundry; making sand castings for a variety of industries with components custom-made, while also protecting intellectual property.

Services offered include product development and product capabilities, ability to receive computer-aided design (CAD) software files, design assistance to optimise outcomes and budgets, and professional advice in metallurgy.

A big focus at White Industries is to add value for clients to help them increase their market share. This is achieved through ongoing innovation, expertise and quality, to increase reliability, customability and value for investment.

The team build strong working relationships with clients, recognising that open communication leads to the best outcomes; providing a competitive edge and value for investment.

“It is economically viable to establish a manufacturing business in the Western Downs due to lower land acquisition costs, strong freight and transport connectivity, and access to a skilled workforce.”

- White Industries

The Dalby facility has an under-roof area of approximately 7000 m² and is located on 4.6 hectares of land.

White Industries operates as a lean manufacturing business. All products are proudly Australian made in the Western Downs and are sold nationwide.

ESTABLISHING A MANUFACTURING BUSINESS IN THE WESTERN DOWNS REGION:

Industrial land acquisition in the Western Downs region is 87% less per m² to purchase, when compared to industrial land in the Brisbane City area.¹

This means lower start-up costs when establishing a business in the region and opens future opportunities for expansion due to land availability.

Business Development Manager, Jim Stevenson said that having room to expand, the lower land costs and the lower cost of living were some of the key reasons White Industries relocated the Rocklea Foundry to Dalby after the business purchased it.



LOCATION:

The Western Downs region is underpinned by the strength of industries such as agriculture, energy, mining and construction. High demand for manufacturing products and services within these industries opens opportunities to innovate and value add in the broader manufacturing industry, and to introduce advanced manufacturing technologies.

The Western Downs is known as the Energy Capital of Queensland and boasts an impressive \$6 billion worth of approved renewables, with another \$1.2 billion under construction.² The region is experiencing high economic growth, investment and consistently high employment. To date, there are 124 manufacturing businesses in the region with products that service a range of industries.³

The Western Downs region's manufacturing industry increased the value-add by 8.36% compared to -4.35% in value-add productivity across the Darling Downs and South West over a 5-year period ending 2018.⁴

“Transport capabilities and the strong resource industry across the region provide plenty of room for niche manufacturing businesses to leverage opportunities.”

- White Industries

White Industries manufacture the castings for park seats, tree grates, kerb adaptors, streetlamps and various maintenance requests for the Western Downs Regional Council.

Businesses throughout the region have access to information, networking and relevant industry connectivity at a regional and/or a business level, through organisations such as WDRC's Economic Development Team, the Chambers of Commerce, the Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning, Toowoomba and Surat Basin Enterprise (TSBE) and various other industry groups.

DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY:

White Industries optimise use of the digital telecommunication available throughout the Western Downs, for day-to-day operations, manufacturing processes, supply chain communication and research and development practices.

CONNECTIVITY:

One of the benefits of the Western Downs location is connectivity and proximity to supply chain and relevant markets.

Once the Toowoomba Second Range Crossing is opened it is an easy two-three hours to drive to Brisbane and approximately one hour from Toowoomba, depending on where you are located.

Ease of highway access including the Leichardt, Moonie and Warrego Highways, the construction of the Toowoomba Second Range Crossing and rail networks such as the Western Rail Line increase connectivity and provide direct access to the Toowoomba Wellcamp Airport and the Port of Brisbane.

Dalby is well serviced, with overnight deliveries to Brisbane, and within two days to Sydney and Melbourne.

“The new Toowoomba Range Crossing will have a positive impact on time frames and access between the region and Brisbane.”

- White Industries

THE BUSINESS TEAM/SKILLED WORKERS:

Within their team, White Industries offers more than 300 years of combined years of foundry experience. This deep pool of knowledge provides not only a source of high-quality products for customers, it is also a valued business resource that works to attract and retain others wanting to work within a team with years of combined knowledge and skill.

White Industries source many of their apprentices from local schools within the Western Downs region. The business fosters ongoing engagement with schools and TAFE apprentices and trainees; offering school-based work experience students opportunities to experience the industry first-hand, and apprentices the option of being employed nationwide due to demand created by the businesses' reputation for quality apprentices.

Skills development is a strong focus for White Industries, with staff undertaking regular training on safety, production and machine operation skills.

“We have found that being based in a regional community with a rural culture, results in good workforce relations and retention rates.”

- White Industries



INNOVATION AND DIVERSIFICATION:

The success of White Industries is the result of continuous investment and innovation to drive the business forward.

An example of this is the new induction furnaces, sand reclamation equipment, heat treatment ovens, CNC lathes and machining centres to increase services to a growing customer base.

White's automated BMD Moulding Line is the only subcontract one of its kind in Australia. It is innovative because of its versatility to be able to run either small or large production batches, or both simultaneously. This offers increased profitability for the customer.

In 2018, the Business Development team recognised the value of immersive Virtual Reality (VR) Technology. Towards the end of 2018, they invested in a set of portable **Virtual Reality Goggles** and the creation of a business story and production VR video. Watching the VR video positions the viewer right there on the production floor, creating a comprehensive understanding of the business story and processes. This is an invaluable marketing and sales tool that can be leveraged to grow business reputation, reach and sales.

White Industries invests 80% of profits back into the business. Recently they have acquired land neighbouring their manufacturing facility in the Western Downs, to allow for future expansion and extension of capabilities to meet growing demand.

The company strives to implement best practice environmental standards with natural gas fired heat treatment ovens and a state-of-the-art sand reclamation plant. The foundry is an important end-user of recycled ferrous and non-ferrous scrap metals.

CLIENT BASE:

The products and services provided by White Industries are used across a variety of industries including:

- Mining – OEM heavy mining castings (dragline and excavator components)
- Sugar – cast or fully machined sugar mill and sugar transportation cast components
- Pump – major infrastructure components
- Heavy Transport – hub and stub assemblies and brake drum castings
- Aftermarket Automotive – OEM aftermarket automotive parts
- General Engineering – one-off and long-run production castings
- Rail – manufacture of power car, wagon carriage parts and rail line castings
- Agriculture – prototype fabrication, innovative casting design and material improvement

LOOKING AHEAD:

White Industries BDM Jim Stevenson believes it is economically viable to set up and establish a manufacturing business in the Western Downs, due to lower land acquisition costs.

"It is well situated for transport by road, rail and air for links to industry nationwide.

There is a local source of labour that will stay with you, and good contacts with schools to gain apprentices to train and retain; creating opportunities to pass on skills for future generations.

The Toowoomba Wellcamp Airport, the Toowoomba Second Range Crossing, and upcoming rail developments, further open national and global access for manufacturing businesses.

The airport means businesses can fly-in and fly-out clients, BDM's and freight to key destinations.

The Western Downs also hosts a range of manufacturing and other industry events for networking and building in to supply chains, while acting as a conduit for sharing of the latest industry technology and innovations."

- White Industries

References

¹ - Fraser Valuers

² - Western Downs Development Status Report

³ - Western Downs Regional Council (WDRC)

⁴ - economy.id





“We are part of the community we serve, working together to provide valued leadership and services to our diverse region. We’re open for business and offer investment opportunities that are right for our region.”

Western Downs Regional Council

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