



# Dale Durden

## Head of Sales and Supply – Capricorn

WE INTRODUCE DALE DURDEN, HEAD OF SALES AND SUPPLY AT CAPRICORN AND DISCOVER A PASSIONATE, DRIVEN AND PEOPLE-FOCUSED LEADER WHO IS NOT ONLY DEVELOPING HIS OWN TEAM, BUT IS ALSO A KEY FIGURE IN CAPRICORN'S DELIVERY OF OUTSTANDING VALUE TO BOTH ITS MEMBERS AND SUPPLIERS.

**NCR:** By way of introduction, would you tell us a bit who you are and where you've come from?

**DD:** I am an automotive guy through and through. When I left school, I joined the automotive industry in country Victoria, where I was born and raised. I worked at the store level, as a sales representative and in branch management within the spare parts sector for over a decade in Shepparton, Cobram, Echuca and Bendigo in the early part of my career. I then moved to Melbourne in a business development role to establish a business on the east coast, which expanded through NSW and into Queensland.

I subsequently moved to Queensland in 2001 and spent five years in the tyre industry and the automotive repair and service sector with responsibility for business development, franchise management and business acquisition.

On a personal note I have been married to my wife Sally for 25 years and have two boys, aged 18 and 22. Our first son was born in Victoria and our second son was born just after we arrived in Queensland. Although my wife and I are Victorian born, the Gold Coast is now very much our home.

I'm currently studying an MBA with the Australian Institute of Business and hold membership with the Australian Institute of Company Directors (GAICD) and the Australian Institute of Management (AFAIM).

**NCR:** And since joining Capricorn in 2007, you've had several roles?

**DD:** My first role with Capricorn was as State Manager Queensland, which quickly expanded to a Regional

Manager role that also included NSW, ACT and Capricorn's business operation in Johannesburg South Africa.

The experience running the South African business meant that I travelled to Johannesburg several times a year, which gave me a solid understanding of the nuances of international business operations.

In 2013 I was appointed Head of Sales Australia with responsibility for the field sales team for the entire

Australian business, and I also held management responsibility for Capricorn's financial services business unit with finance and loan products across our total membership.

**NCR:** Can you expand on the recent restructure late last year and how it impacts your team and, of course, your members?

**DD:** The business structure where the sales team looked after our members and the supply team supported the suppliers worked well for many years.

However, as the organisation evolved, it became evident that it was time to merge the two teams together and, working with Brad Gannon, the newly appointed Capricorn CEO Automotive, my role was expanded to take on the responsibility of the combined field team for both sales and supply for Australia. This new structure would better support our key stakeholders in a more integrated and consistent way.

Our personalised, face-to-face contact with our members and suppliers continues to be integral to the service offering of Capricorn. It's who we are. We take pride in our ability to build relationships with both members and suppliers, supporting them in their businesses, and whilst that's not changing, bringing both the member and supplier teams together enables us to fully align both parts of the business and ensure we provide a consistent customer service experience. While we will continue to refine our activity, in most cases we have been able to define geographical territories to one person, enhancing the Capricorn connection and relationship opportunity across both members and



suppliers within these territories.

It's important to note that this allowed us to further invest in positions that we believe are of strategic importance, such as our dedicated panel business unit, and expand our relatively new dedicated commercial vehicle business unit. The focus on the commercial vehicle sector is expected to be a growth opportunity for Capricorn with, of course, the added focus on the panel sector to specifically address the strategic challenges within this sector.

**NCR:** Capricorn has experienced significant year on year growth. As the person charged with revenue growth, where will the next big opportunities come from?

**DD:** I believe we still have significant revenue opportunity within the current segments of the automotive industry. That means greater focus on growing our market share, attracting a greater share of our members' parts purchases and expanding our member benefit products. Membership growth continues to be a key focus and we continue to invest in and develop our field resources.

Also, as I mentioned, the commercial vehicle sector has been identified as a key strategic segment for the business and an opportunity to further expand the Capricorn membership.

And finally, as we develop our strategy, we will likely evaluate opportunities in other business segments.

**NCR:** And what about the challenges in both the short and medium term?

**DD:** Although we've experienced industry consolidation in recent years, this process will be ongoing, especially with the added impact of business uncertainty within a COVID-19 recovery phase.

Automotive businesses are already adapting and preparing for a post COVID-19 world to ensure they offer an outstanding experience for their customers, something with which we at Capricorn can assist.

One very real short-term challenge is that some automotive businesses may not recover from the economic contraction induced by COVID-19, or indeed, may decide it's time to bring forward retirement or

exit plans. This may have an impact on our current membership and, of course, on our opportunity to grow the membership base.

I also believe that workflows are unlikely to contract in the medium to long term and it's likely that the businesses that do recover will experience levels of activity we have seen before, given motor vehicles will always need to be repaired and maintained. Only time will tell.

In addition, the rapid pace of technological advancement, will continue to be a challenge as vehicles become increasingly more complex, which in turn flows onto the demands on repairers. To ensure today's cars are repaired correctly in a sustainable and economic way, all parties need to come together - this needs to be a real focus for the industry.

In summary, the key challenge for us is to help our members to not only survive but thrive in these challenging times.

**NCR:** You were instrumental in the Futures Collide conference late last year, although I recall you acknowledged that Rob Mildenhall, Capricorn National Panel Manager "did most of the heavy lifting". Is this a sign that Capricorn is taking on a greater role in shaping the collision industry?

**DD:** Firstly, let me say that our panel

business is a strategically important part of our business, and yes, we will endeavour to play more of a key role going forward to support our members, our suppliers and the industry as a whole. Therefore, we have invested significant time, resources and energy to deliver the Futures Collide conference and, in fact, had Futures Collide II in the planning, only to have to postpone it due to the pandemic.

Since the event we have been doing substantial work in the collision repair space given that panel is the second largest part of Capricorn's business. The Future's Collide conference was born from the concern that our panel members needed to be able to collectively address current industry developments impacting their businesses given the explosion of modern materials and technology in today's vehicles. It was designed to assist these independent repairers to remain relevant, be technology savvy, and have greater access to industry stakeholders that will enable them to conduct safe and efficient repairs to OEM standards.

Futures Collide brought the wider industry together and facilitated interaction between associations, vehicle OEMs and a wide range of suppliers to be able to discuss these topics cooperatively.

We do see this as an annual event



Dale doing what he loves most - meeting people..



with Capricorn playing a key role in collaboratively bringing like-minded industry stakeholders together to network, debate and identify potential solutions to the challenges facing the industry.

**NCR:** So, where do you see the collision repair industry in say, five years?

**DD:** That's a question that potentially needs more than a crystal ball given the wide range of issues impacting the collision industry. However, we do expect further consolidation across both repairer and supply chains, but within this consolidation we are still attracting new members and remain focused on exploring an increased range of products and services needed by members to adapt to the fast and ever-changing collision repair landscape.

The industry needs to collectively agree on and adopt minimum standards, and the work providers must recognise that the ever-debated hot potato of repairers being able to cover the rapidly-increasing investment costs in staff, equipment and technology must be addressed to ensure consumer safety is not being compromised by unsustainable labour rates.

ADAS is already proving to be a positive catalyst in raising both awareness and discussion with industry stakeholders. This is another reason why we invested in Futures Collide and specifically engaged Mike Anderson, given his exposure and experience in this field.

In summary, if the stakeholders do come together – and work together – we see a bright future for the industry and Capricorn is, of course, in it for the long haul. We are here to do what we can for the industry.

**NCR:** And how will Capricorn position itself to maximise value for the members?

**DD:** In addition to the initiatives I've mentioned, Capricorn has already moved to increase value to both members and suppliers within our core structures through our expanded capital equipment finance, products and services and specific business protection product offerings. Events, training, networking and, of course, dividend and rebate return remain a priority.

And we're always looking for a well-supported supply chain to help our members in the changing

environment. We will continue to invest in broader industry initiatives such as Futures Collide and also in a dedicated focus on the panel sector which, as mentioned, is only one of two industry sectors within our organisation with dedicated national leadership positions.

**NCR:** On a more personal note, what can you tell us about "Dancing CEOs"?

**DD:** Sure. Dancing CEOs is an annual fundraising initiative to support the women's legal service of Queensland who in turn support victims of domestic violence.

I was nominated to take part in 2019, which required me to perform a dance routine on stage in front of 1,000 people at Brisbane City Hall, which was daunting to say the least as it took me well out of my comfort zone. However, whilst it was one of the most challenging things I've ever done, it's also one of the most rewarding. It was great to take part and I feel honoured to be part of a group of people who raised \$440k for this great cause.

It was really tough to fit it into my busy workload, but I was really pleased to be invited to be part of it and glad I took up the challenge. We are now on the lookout for the next automotive industry person to take part.

**NCR:** So, what is it that really drives Dale Durden?

**DD:** For me, it's all about people. Working with like-minded people, developing my sales and supply teams

and generating results through people. In essence, this is what Capricorn is all about: helping support like-minded individuals for long term prosperity and sustainability, working cooperatively and working together.

When I look back at my career, the last 12 years with Capricorn have certainly been the most enjoyable and rewarding, which I attribute to being part of a team that has helped many people over the journey – some in a big way, others in a small way, but of most importance, in meaningful ways.

I truly value the relationships I have formed within the industry and the interaction really gives me a buzz, which again, is all about the people.

**NCR:** And a final message to your members and suppliers?

**DD:** For us at Capricorn, and for me personally, it's all about mutual benefit, specifically the mutually beneficial relationships with our members and our suppliers. We are here to help the industry, to do "our bit", particularly when it comes to the sustainability of the industry during these difficult and changing times.

I would also extend an invitation to existing members and suppliers to work closely with us, and also invite prospective members to reach out and start a conversation as we are constantly on the lookout to expand our membership.

This is a great industry with a lot of great people and Capricorn is here to work in mutually beneficial ways for all stakeholders.



Dale Durden with David Fraser and Bradley Gannon.

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