



# Kevin Roberson

## National Aftersales Manager, Hyundai Australia

FOLLOWING A YEAR OF GREAT ACTIVITY, WE CAUGHT UP WITH KEVIN ROBERSON WHO REFLECTS ON 2019 AND GIVES US A REAL INSIGHT INTO THE PACE OF DEVELOPMENT OF A RANGE OF TECHNOLOGIES AT THE HYUNDAI MOTOR COMPANY..

**NCR:** By way of introduction, tell us a bit about your background.

**KR:** I started in the automotive industry in 1989 as an apprentice parts interpreter whilst at a country dealership in Bega on the South Coast of NSW. This was a relatively new apprenticeship and TAFE course back then.

I moved and worked for various dealership groups in Canberra and Sydney over a 20-year period in all sorts of roles: delivery driver, panel sales representative, workshop back counter, parts manager, group management and into senior management roles. I've thoroughly enjoyed every business challenge that I generally "inherited" in the new roles.

I have worked across about 23 franchises over the last 31 years, from prestige brands such as Ferrari and Rolls Royce to commercial brands such as UD Trucks, and with former value brands such as Daihatsu. The last 12 years in the industry I have been working in the wholesale corporate arena and that has been a great challenge but very rewarding in working closely with dealers.

Some of the teams of staff and management that I've had the pleasure to work with over the years have been amazing, and I've gained some great business knowledge and principles from some mentors that I still work with today.

**NCR:** And how did you get to be working with Hyundai?

**KR:** One of my industry contacts at Mobis Logistics gave me a "heads up" about the role and, fortunately for me, I was given the opportunity to join the team back in May 2016. It's been a very rewarding role to date and we have

accomplished some great milestones, with new product areas introduced, the development of further parts competitiveness in the collision industry, and some new parts and accessory sales records, nationally and regionally.

**NCR:** So, what are the primary responsibilities in your current role?

**KR:** My role within the company is to drive genuine parts and accessories sales and implement programs through the regions and through our dealership



Kevin Roberson at the Australian Head Office

network. The role also provides me a great opportunity to travel and visit our dealers and, in turn, their trade customers, across the country.

We have also added a few new partnerships and programs with Caltex Australia, who supply us a Hyundai-branded range of lubes and coolants, and with several tyre companies such as Kumho, Hankook, Pirelli and Continental, from whom our dealerships can purchase products at group rates.

**NCR:** What is Hyundai doing to further promote the use of genuine parts?

**KR:** We have been very active in industry events throughout 2019, particularly with the sponsorship of various collision industry events. We have plans to again,

be involved in events, both nationally and regionally in 2020.

We believe through this activity we have a great avenue to communicate our intentions around market competitiveness. The perception from insurance companies and repairers that parallel parts cost less than sourcing them from the Hyundai local dealer network is just simply incorrect.

When you consider the total cost efficiency with fitting only Australian market-specific parts, and that we have our national price matching program, there is no reason to go parallel when our dealers have the ability to support repairers with competitive quoting and additional compliance services such as scanning

and calibration (especially with ADAS)

We have, and will continue to, advertise our genuine parts message and their advantages over the parallel competitors in industry publications.

Finally, agreeing to be a Brand Partner of Capricorn will allow us to further connect to the industry. So, as you can see, it's been a big year for us.

**NCR:** How do repairers access your repair procedures?

**KR:** It couldn't be simpler. We have a repair manual menu option on our public website, [www.hyundai.com.au](http://www.hyundai.com.au), with a link that directs customers to a webpage that offers various subscription options to access the library of information. We firmly believe that repairers should have access to the correct repair information as we are committed to ensure every Hyundai is returned to the road in pre-accident condition.

**NCR:** What's been the driving force behind the brand's success in recent years?

**KR:** Undoubtedly the brand's quality has improved significantly, which is backed-up by our five year/unlimited kilometre warranty on passenger vehicles. We also offer a great value proposition, especially when you consider the level of both passive and active safety technology in the vehicles across the range, much of which is traditionally found on luxury brands.

One such example is the recent development of a new centre side airbag, which separates the space between driver and passenger, which is expected to reduce head injuries caused by passengers colliding with each other by 80 percent.

**NCR:** How much of the success of your N-division is attributed to motorsport?

**KR:** Internationally, there appears to be a lot more influence from the motorsport division within our N DNA, with potentially more coming in the future. The N-division has been merged with our Motorsport division and is headed up by Albert Biermann, former head of BMW M. I'm sure the readers will appreciate the pedigree Albert brings to our organisation.



Hyundai NEXO.



SCC-ML Technology.



**NCR:** And what about your investment in alternative powertrains?

**KR:** The recent announcement about the company's global commitment of billions of dollars to alternative powertrains and mobility development is massive and could be a major influence on the diversity in the global industry.

Of course, we already have the Kona Electric, which is the first-ever EV to be crash tested in Australia, achieving an ANCAP maximum 5-star safety rating in the process. As our CEO has said, this underscores Hyundai's eco vehicle leadership.

However, our focus on hydrogen fuel cell technology is particularly exciting. Our investment into three hydrogen companies, Impact Coatings, H2Pro and GRZ Technologies will strengthen our leadership position in the global hydrogen fuel cell industry. This collaboration with industry leading players will enable Hyundai to expand their hydrogen infrastructure and enhance the efficiency of its fuel cell electric vehicle (FCEV) manufacturing.

The release of our NEXO Fuel Cell vehicle in several overseas markets has led to the organisation receiving critical acclaim as "a world leader in advancing alternative fuel technologies". The principle behind the FCEV is zero emissions motoring, just like an electric car, without the need for recharging, so drivers won't have to change their behaviour after more than a century of internal combustion engines.

**NCR:** And your mobility technology is progressing at a phenomenal rate?

**KR:** It sure is. We have announced the development of the world's first machine learning-based smart cruise control (SCC-ML), a technology that incorporates the driver's patterns into its self-driving behaviour, creating a custom experience for the driver. The technology, an industry first, incorporates artificial intelligence (AI) within the advanced driver assistance system (ADAS) feature.

SCC-ML operates as follows: sensors, such as the front camera and radar, constantly acquire driving information and send it to the central computer. The computer then extracts relevant details from the information to identify the driver's patterns, then artificial intelligence technology (a machine learning algorithm) is applied during this process. This results in SCC-ML making analyses to distinguish over ten thousand patterns, developing a flexible SCC technology that can adapt to any driver's patterns. With an upcoming highway driving assist system that features automatic lane change assist, SCC-ML achieves level 2.5 self-driving.

**NCR:** So, what does this all mean to the collision repairer?

**KR:** Firstly, Hyundai will be more active than ever before in the collision sector with our promotion of genuine parts, access to approved repair procedures and further developing our position as a Capricorn Brand Partner. However, it should be clear that Hyundai is at the forefront of alternative fuel technology

and cutting-edge mobility solutions and as we roll these out into the market, they will find their way into collision repair facilities.

My role is to facilitate access to all the necessary repair information and support to the industry to ensure our vehicles are repaired safely and properly. However, the onus is on the repairer to ensure they are adequately trained and have the capability to implement the approved procedures.

**NCR:** Looking ahead, what can your aftersales customer expect in 2020?

**KR:** Hyundai's main business focus has always been about the end customer, and 2020 will only further enhance the ownership experience with areas such as connectivity through our smartphone app "Autolink". The app provides customers visibility of their vehicle's health, their driving habits, as well as technological advances such as remote starting, temperature setting and important services such as roadside support when needed. Customers also receive discounted fuel offers through the app during peak holiday times.

From a trade customer perspective, our customers can expect that we will continue our focus on industry events that give us the opportunity to keep the communication lines open to the industry.

We will also be investigating what other vehicle repair data we can access to better support the repair industry further. We are in this together and I look forward to an exciting 2020 and beyond.



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Centre Side Airbag.

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