



# Phil Nixon

## Supply Chain Specialist, IAG

WE MET WITH INDUSTRY ICON AND LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD INDUCTEE PHIL NIXON FOR A WALK DOWN MEMORY LANE AS HE BRINGS HIS 45-YEAR CAREER WITH IAG TO A CONCLUSION, LEAVING A LEGACY OF COMMITMENT, DEDICATION AND PASSION.

Phil takes us back to when it all began, 6th January 1975, his first day on the job at NRMA Insurance, where remarkably, he was the youngest person ever to be employed as an assessor.

“It was quite a different time as some of my early tasks included working at the Salvage Centre at Lidcombe processing country claims for the Central Coast and Blue Mountains, and I was even a part-time chauffeur for the then General Manager of NRMA Insurance. Also, in those days smoking was permitted in the workplace, there was a tea lady doing the rounds at 10am and, of course, we were paid in cash every Thursday morning.”

After completing his cadetship,

Phil became a “Resident Assessor” at several NRMA Insurance branches including North Sydney, Chatswood, Parramatta and Bankstown. However, in 1977 he earned the dream promotion for any young assessor: he became a “Territory Assessor” and was handed his first company car, a yellow LX Torana with a front bench seat. Phil and his Torana were inseparable and he clocked up plenty of miles as he travelled NSW as a “Relief Assessor”, filling in for staff on annual leave or carrying out country assessing.

“Most young lads these days would object about travelling from the city to Penrith to do their job, but I clocked up a stack of ‘country miles’.

On a Monday morning I’d fly to locations in rural NSW such as Coffs Harbour, Tamworth, Wagga and Casino. These runs would consist of four days assessing in country towns, driving approximately 1,200km and inspecting, on average, 90 vehicles each trip.”

Phil had a great interest in boats, so in 1980 he was charged with setting up NRMA Insurance’s in-house assessing function for its “Boatsure” insurance arm, as it was then known. “Being a new player in this field we faced many challenges to overcome the pre-existing poor practices, which saw many claims going through litigation to prove our decisions were



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correct.” This changed the image of NRMA Insurance in the pleasure craft insurance field, with Phil having no tolerance for repairers who encouraged the lodgement of fraudulent claims.

In 1983 an opportunity arose to set up a formal in-house training program for new assessors and Phil was appointed to head the program. This was to be the start of Phil’s career dedication to industry training. “Back then there was no IAG Research Centre and no I-CAR, so our training programs were undertaken at the rear of what was then the largest collision repair facility in the southern hemisphere, known as NRMA Car Repairs in Lidcombe. From there, the training program moved to a temporary site at NRMA Insurance’s Eastwood Branch until a dedicated site was found in Artarmon, which eventually became the Training and Research Centre.”

In 1993 Phil was appointed Branch Assessing Manager at the NRMA’s Burwood Office, and later filled similar roles at Parramatta and Blacktown. With the roll out of NRMA’s Competitive Partnering model, Phil was appointed Partner Support Manager for Metro West Assessing until 1999 when he received an offer to undertake a six-week secondment at IAG’s head office at 388 George Street to assist with the establishment of Online Repair Management, or ORM as it is known. However, in what is possibly the longest secondment in history, Phil was still there over 20 years later. “Not long after joining the ORM team I was asked to look after the introduction of the GST for the organisation’s repairer network as the incumbent (conveniently) was going on extended leave. I soon discovered that the role also included looking after towing, which really became a sliding door moment in my career.”

Phil’s involvement in the Preferred Towing Operator pilot and then the Towing Tender was “rather tumultuous”, as he had guards and CCTV at his home for three years, such were the risks involved. Phil is philosophical: “Let’s just say they were

testing times.”

Phil undertook the management of the JumpStart programs as he went on to support the company’s Preferred Smash Repairer Network. The programs included an AutoBody Scholarship, a school-based traineeship, and an Apprentice of the Year program. “This role perfectly matched my real strength and passion for support of training, apprenticeships and sustainability of the repair industry.”

Phil has been a driving force behind the NRMA Insurance Smash Repair team which, for more than 25 years, has seen many apprentices from all states of Australia and from New Zealand benefit from the opportunity provided to them through Phil’s dedication and commitment.

Phil, together with several of his IAG colleagues past and present, has been a key supporter of the National Collision Repairer’s Future Leaders Program and has worked tirelessly to identify, reward and recognise the young talent coming through our industry. “I am eminently confident that the future of our industry is in good hands when I see the calibre of the next generation of young technicians and other industry professionals who are embracing the challenges and changes of our industry.”

Over the past 12 months Phil developed a “test and learn program” with Kangan Institute in Melbourne, known as “The Apprentice Academy”, to offer an alternate entry model that would provide the new entrants with base skills to be 70% productive when



Phil receives his Lifetime Achievement Award from Lance Weiss



Phil with the I-CAR team last year

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commencing with their employer. The program was very successful until the impact of COVID-19; however, the model will be revisited when restrictions are eased.

Phil's last role involved the management of IAG's assessor technical training requirements to help them achieve the nationally recognised Assessor Certificate IV Qualification, as well as I-CAR training, which has enabled IAG to become the first insurer to reach I-CAR Gold Insurer Status.

I-CAR Director and Company Secretary, Richard Pratt, said: "Phil was involved with I-CAR quite early, predominantly through his role with IAG. He came with a reputation that was built on his passion for improving the knowledge of correct collision repair for everyone, and as part of his continuing commitment to that goal, Phil formally qualified as an I-CAR Instructor in 2013. In addition to being a well-credentialed and knowledgeable Instructor, his personal involvement with I-CAR played a very big part in the expansion the organisation enjoyed through that period."

In addition to his role as an I-CAR Instructor, Phil has continued to work for the benefit of the wider industry.

He is Deputy Chair of the Vehicle Body Repair Industry Reference Committee of Skills for Australia and President of the Institute of Accident Assessors. It was in recognition of this commitment to the industry, over and above his role at IAG, that Phil was awarded a National Collision Repairer Lifetime Achievement Award in 2015.

As Phil reminisces on a career spanning five decades, he reflects that some of his most memorable and satisfying moments are the relationships he has had with the many industry people over this time. While there have been several times where there was conflict between IAG and the industry, these relationships were not impacted.

"While my time at IAG has come to an end, I still look toward contributing in some way to the autobody repair industry, initially in developing a new category within the Institute of Accident Assessors being Certified Motor Assessing Professional to recognise members who undertake significant professional development."

Phil will retain his current mobile number 0411 012 563 and can also be contacted by email at [dpnix69@yahoo.com](mailto:dpnix69@yahoo.com).



Phil drove the Future Leaders program on behalf of IAG.