

# 15 great years and stronger than ever!

WE REFLECT ON OUR FIRST 15 YEARS AND TAKE A WALK DOWN MEMORY LANE, BRINGING YOU SOME OF THE STORIES BEHIND THE EVOLUTION OF THE NATIONAL COLLISION REPAIRER WITH MANY IMAGES THAT ARE WORTH AT LEAST A THOUSAND WORDS.

## Foundations

It all began in 2005 when David Newton-Ross and Chris Stone decided that, whilst there were various industry publications, there was something missing. David had 35 years invested in the industry and had developed a passion for what makes it all tick - the people. Chris had spent his entire career in the graphic design, media and newspaper industries and was all too familiar with how to grab the readers' attention.

The driving force behind the introduction of The National Collision Repairer in 2005 was that David believed that the whole reason for a

trade magazine's existence was to educate, inform and entertain everyone involved in the industry, and to do that he knew the focus needed to be on the people and their businesses. Early initiatives, such as "Talking Shop" and "5 minutes with..." exemplified this commitment. They are initiatives that have retained their relevance to this day.

In addition, both David and Chris were well aware that, as with any trade publication, there needed to be a balance between news, information and, of course, supporting editorial if the magazine was to cement its place in the industry. Mediocrity was never

going to be acceptable and David and Chris set out to be the best they could be, particularly when it came to the all-important layout. Their objective was to make it easy to read and easy on the eye, which was enhanced by the high-resolution photographs that have appeared throughout the magazine since the first issue.

In every sense of the words, the magazine was all about the industry, which was captured in the initial catchphrase, "news, views and information of the collision industry professional", which we still use to this very day.

"David worked with us for 9 years prior to starting the National Collision



The First issue - where it all began.



David and Vanley Newton-Ross.



Chris Stone.



Joe and Josephine McFadries.



# Milestones and memories along the way ...



Owen Webb with Chip Foose.



John Yoswick – USA.



'The Gadget Man' Mark Pulham.



John McCoy-Lancaster.

Repairer, and we have been happy to support the business ever since. Congratulations on your first 15 years and we wish you many more," Warren McMartin, Managing Director, The SAPE Group.

The very first issue was dominated by the then "running battle" between the industry and NRMA, and although the story dominated the first issue, the immediate challenge was to generate meaningful content for subsequent issues. Although this was tough in the early days, as is common in many situations, success breeds success and they soon got to the point where there was no shortage of quality

content. Interestingly, as the years went by the organisation, now IAG, has become a key supporter of the industry, not just in The National Collision Repairer but through its involvement in a whole raft of initiatives around the country.

When David and Chris established the business, they had "backed themselves" to be able to deliver a high-quality product, one of the cornerstones of a successful publication. They believed – correctly – that Chris had this covered, and his vast experience in layout and design meant that The National Collision Repairer got off to a flying start, and they never looked back.

The third challenge, of course, was to ensure that the business was commercially viable, although they saw this as more of an outcome than an objective. With a focus on quality content and a professional presentation they attracted a strong readership base, which in turn led to the support of key industry stakeholders. The initial response was excellent, securing solid support from advertisers, many of whom are still with us to this day. David put this down to their commitment to excellence, their ability to connect with people and a genuine care-factor for the industry, which are the foundations on which the publication is built.



Julie Thomas - Car-O-Liner.



Max Chanter.



Terry Feehan in his SAPE days.



Steve O'Brien - iBodyshop.



Richard Pratt - I-CAR.



Paul Galea - PPG



Paul, Ray and Warren McMartin – SAPE.

Julie Thomas, managing director of Car-O-Liner Australia, an inaugural supporter of the new venture said: "We were so thrilled to see a fresh, new publication that really cared about the industry. It has been our pleasure to support the business and we are proud to say that we have never missed an issue in 15 years."

Of course, the ongoing support and the broadening of the client base has allowed the business to further develop and the content to evolve with the transformation of the industry.

## The care factor

Both David and Chris knew that the business was always going to be "more than a just a magazine", and they established several key initiatives that helped cement the reputation of The National Collision Repairer.

### Lifetime Achievement Award

During the 1990s, David, together with Terry Flanagan and Marshall Duncan, were inducted into the US Hall of Eagles in recognition of their

contribution to the US collision repair industry. David saw the irony in this recognition, particularly as there was no equivalent program in Australia, and in 2007 he launched The National Collision Repairer Lifetime Achievement Award.



The award recognises the perseverance, commitment and contribution of individuals who have sacrificed time with family and their own business to help the industry to be better as a whole and to do this without personal gain. The award has become one of the most coveted awards in our industry and of the 46 inductees there are five international recipients who have not only developed the industry in their home countries, but also left an indelible mark on the Australian collision repair industry.

### Launch of I-CAR Australia

David's first exposure to the I-CAR industry training organisation was when

he lived and worked in the US in the late 1980s. He saw the obvious benefits to consumers, business owners and employees in the correct repair of motor vehicles. David always had in the back of his mind that I-CAR training would be great for the Australian industry, particularly as he saw the success of I-CAR in New Zealand since its introduction in 1985. Through the National Collision Repairer, David, together with David Weatherall and Richard Pratt, was instrumental in getting I-CAR Australia up and running and he is proud to see the transformation of the business, particularly this year as I-CAR Australia's online training platform has really come into its own. I-CAR Australia has since become a company limited by guarantee, and David continues to be a director to this day, reflecting his ongoing connection to, and passion for, the industry.

### Future Leaders of the Industry

Following an industry event several years ago, David and Carl Tinsley, Head Teacher at TAFE NSW's Campbelltown campus, were lamenting that there was little, if any, way to identify and recognise the young talent coming through the



Marshall Duncan and David Newton-Ross at the Hall of Eagles presentation in the US.



Tim Loden - AkzoNobel.



Rob Mildenhall - Capricorn.



The inaugural Lifetime Achievement Awards presentation breakfast.



The first I-CAR board: Mark Brady, John Howes, David Newton-Ross, John Zulian, Dave Weatherall and Richard Pratt. (Insert) Richard Nathan.

# Milestones and memories along the way ...

industry. This led to a decision to launch a program through the National Collision Repairer, and the concept of Future Leaders of the Industry was born. Serendipitously, David met with Roy Briggs, who at the time was with IAG, and he offered to sponsor the program from the very first inductee. IAG has been our sponsor ever since. This year the program inducted its 50th Future Leader, reflecting the importance of this key initiative.

## Industry Forum

As the business developed, David saw the importance of creating a platform to share information, give people a voice and engage with the industry around the country. In partnership with Jeff Hendler from the USA, who has a long-standing relationship with the Australian collision repair industry and is, in fact, a Lifetime Achievement Award recipient, the Industry Forum was established and the National Collision Repairer was instrumental in the promotion of these ground-breaking events. Special guest presenters from various parts of the world were regular fixtures, drawing

attendees from all around the country and also our cousins across the Ditch, who seldom missed an opportunity to find out what was happening here in Australia and in other parts of the world. These Forums have evolved into the annual National Collision Repairer Symposium, which continues to bring cutting edge content to the industry in these times when we are experiencing significant rates of change.



## Geographic Expansion

Initially, the plan was to build a trans-Tasman channel in an effort to get some New Zealand content into the Australian market, but it was mostly one-way traffic. Then, following a chance meeting with Lyndsay and Darlene Smits, founders of The Smits Group, in Las Vegas, they said they were looking for a vehicle to keep their growing customer base up to date with what's going on in the industry. One thing led to another, and David and Chris decided to launch the

NZ Collision Repairer, which in the early days was well supported by the Smits Group. The new magazine developed and grew over seven years and was a great complement to the National Collision Repairer, and they had some great times, met some wonderful people, gained a real insight into how I-CAR operated in New Zealand, and also how effective and professional the Collision Repair Association was – and still is. Ultimately however, the travel, time and energy required became too demanding and the NZ Collision Repairer was discontinued in 2015.

Steve O'Brien, Managing Director, DNS Technology has watched the evolution of the business from close quarters. "We are proud to be associated with this first-class magazine right from the very first edition, through to this latest current issue. The latest news, trends and the vital industry issues are the core of the magazine, since it was launched by David and Chris 15 years ago and continued seamlessly by Joe and Josephine," said Steve. "Over the entire 15 years we have found The National Collision Repairer to be an



Jeff Hendler – USA.



Phil Nixon.



The 2017 Collision Repair Expo.



Maxine Colligan Future Leader and WorldSkills 2020 champion.



David hosting an early Industry Forum.

invaluable tool to originally promote QuotePlus, our now retired desktop solution and then launch iBodyshop in 2015. The advertisements and editorial provide us with an invaluable communication device to keep the industry informed of new iBodyshop features and benefits. Congratulations on the magazine's 15th anniversary."

## Into the second decade

As the National Collision Repairer celebrated its 10th anniversary, David began to look ahead to retirement, or semi-retirement, although he wasn't quite ready just yet. Coincidentally, Joe McFadries, had returned from Singapore and was moving on from AkzoNobel, and over lunch with mutual friend Max Chanter, David and Joe began discussing their respective futures. David, in a bit of a throw-away comment, said, "If you come across anyone in your travels who may be interested in buying the magazine, let me know." Joe remained in the automotive industry and they kept in touch, caught up from time to time to

chat about the industry, and Joe continued to attend the Industry Forums and, of course, the Collision Repair Expo over the years.

By 2016, stepping back was looking more attractive for David and coincidentally, Joe's new role was moving to Singapore. As he and Josephine had decided they did not want to return to Asia, they too were thinking about their future, once again.

### A new beginning

It really was serendipitous, so when Joe reached out to David and Chris, the timing was about right, and Chris expressed a desire to stay involved. Although the intention was clear, letting go was very difficult for David and Chris, given that it was their baby. However, following a relatively normal acquisition process, they all reached a meeting of the minds and finalised the sale and purchase of the National Collision Repairer on 1 August 2017. It was always the intention to bring a new and fresh perspective to the business and continue the legacy of a great publication and a great brand.

As with any new endeavour, there were several early challenges, but

Josephine and Joe were never in any doubt that they had made the right decision. "One of the great things in the early months was the support of our clients. They embraced the changes and continued to support us as we found our feet. Another key factor in the smooth transition was David's support in the field, and Chris' willingness to continue to do what he does best and share his knowledge of how to create a professional publication."

At the beginning of 2018 we unveiled a complete redesign of the magazine, from the changes to our logo and masthead to the revised page layout. In fact, every page in the magazine now looked different, bringing new life to the next stage of its evolution. Since then, the magazine undergoes a subtle refresh each year as it grows to meet the demands of the modern publishing world.

### New initiatives

As the magazine entered 2018 with a bold new look, we also launched an important initiative, "Movers and Shakers". This is a series of interviews that brings attention to those who are currently shaping the industry, and the



Symposium 2019.



Justin Myers - 3M.



Mario Dimovski at SEMA.



The SEMA Show 2018.



Dale Durden, David Fraser and Bradley Gannon.

# Milestones and memories along the way ...

program is designed both recognise their achievements and to give them the opportunity to share their knowledge and experience for the greater good of the industry.

Following the success of the Movers and Shakers initiative, which of course is ongoing, in 2019 we introduced the “Entrepreneurial Women in Automotive” program. This program is designed to highlight the significant contribution of the women in leadership positions in the automotive industry, a series that commenced with a discussion with Jan McLaren who has maintained the legacy of Bruce McLaren for the past 50 years.

Arguably, one of the most important initiatives has been Josephine’s development of the digital platform, redesigning the website, expanding the weekly e-Newsletter and enhancing the reach through social media channels – LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram – all of which has become a critical component of the value proposition.

## On reflection

It’s easy to look back and reflect on all the success. However, it has not been

without its challenges.

David points out, half-jokingly: “I sacked Vanley at least once a day and she resigned at least twice a day!” There have been times when things were not so different for Joe and Josephine.

However, throughout the journey, the end justifies the means, and when we all reflect on the last 15 years, David and Vanley, Chris and Jane and Joe and Josephine are all so proud of what they have created and the contributions that they have

made, and continue to make, to the industry. As someone quipped back in 2005: “Anyone can do one magazine, let’s just see where this goes.” Well, 180 issues later, the National Collision Repairer is stronger than ever.

**Finally, none of this would have been possible without the support of our clients, and for that support we will be forever grateful as we look ahead to the rapidly changing brave new world.**



One of many SummerNats events, courtesy of Owen Webb.



Stuart Faid – Fix Auto.



Selected Entrepreneurial Women: Beth Rutter, Lana Pagiamtzis and Nicole Gebing.



Team Saint Gobain.



Robin Taylor and Mike Anderson.