



Kishen Khosa

Head of Coatings, BASF Australia and New Zealand

AS BASF CELEBRATES THE CENTENARY OF ITS FIRST PRODUCT SOLD IN AUSTRALIA, WE INTRODUCE THE RELATIVELY NEW HEAD OF BASF'S AUTOMOTIVE REFINISH COATINGS. WE FIND OUT WHAT MAKES HIM TICK AND WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM HIS LEADERSHIP TEAM.

First, we asked Kishen to introduce himself. He started on a personal note which, as we get to know him, we find is a sign of his commitment to family and his underlying values.

KK: I was born in Singapore and came to Australia in 1997. I am married with two children, a 6-year-old daughter and a recently arrived baby son. I am a chemical engineer and I started my career with BASF in 2002 as an intern, in the days when we had a dispersions plant in Melbourne's western suburbs, which was focused on making materials for, amongst others, architectural coatings.

My early career included a role as a process control engineer at this plant, followed by a national sales role

looking after BASF's construction and adhesives business. It was actually a natural transition as I moved from manufacturing the products to selling them, so as I developed a greater understanding of the customers' needs, I had intimate knowledge of how to build that into the product.

I then had the opportunity to take up a global procurement role at BASF's regional office in Hong Kong, joining a team with responsibility for sourcing all materials for the dispersion business' global manufacturing footprint. I was able to make

this transition on the basis of my strong technical background and understanding of the chemistry of our product portfolio. A common thread that runs through BASF is the love of chemistry and I was no exception. Procurement is not about getting the cheapest price, it's much more strategic – it's all about the value-add to the supply chain. I found that the diversity of my background really did help me in this role.

I went on to a role at our head office in Germany as a technology specialist working on coatings for our packaging business, and on my return to Australia I was responsible for a diverse range of products that cut across a whole raft of different markets.

Fundamentally however, from the early days of my career I found that I really love working with people, from whom I draw much of my energy and enthusiasm, which is really important in our industry as we have developed strong partnerships with our distributors and end-user customers.

NCR: So, you've been exposed to a plethora of industry sectors during



BASF has the world's largest colour database.

Kishen Khosa.

your career?

KK: We often reflect that by the time you wake up and get to the office, you've had a multitude of touch points with a BASF product, such is the diversity of markets in which we operate. The majority of my time has been spent supplying industries such as construction, adhesives, packaging and coatings.

I've also been involved with other industries such as plastics, mining and oil refineries, and even health and nutrition and personal care. It really has been a fantastic journey that has given me extensive exposure to a great many of the markets in which we operate in Australia and New Zealand.

NCR: So, how did you find your way into the collision repair industry?

KK: I've always had a passion for cars, although not quite to the level you see in Germany and other countries across Europe, where people have a great affinity with their cars. So, when the call came late last year to join the coatings group, I just saw it was a great fit for my background and experience and was only too happy to take up the opportunity.

NCR: What does your current scope of responsibilities entail?

KK: So, in my role as Head of Coatings, I am primarily responsible for our automotive refinish coatings business in Australia and New Zealand, which of course includes my real passion – leading the people in our business. I am first and foremost a listener, which allows me to fully understand the business, the voice of the customer and the environment in which we both operate.

In addition, I am a member of the



BASF Australia and New Zealand leadership team, where we make enterprise-wide decisions related to our safety culture, sustainability and, of course, diversity and inclusion, another real passion of mine. These are topics that run through the fabric of our DNA, irrespective of the business unit for which you are responsible. It will come as no surprise that these are in real alignment with my own value system.

NCR: Let's talk about the automotive refinish coatings business leadership team in Australia and New Zealand.

KK: Let me say right up front that we operate as a unit, although there is a high degree of diversity across the team. We have people with diverse industry backgrounds, experience and, of course, we are committed to gender diversity. Those who are relatively new to the team have really embraced these principles, and when we discuss the key issues, the range of different ideas and perspectives never ceases to amaze me.

The other key requirement of our leadership team is to develop the talent within our organisation and enable them to be the best that they can be, whatever their role. However, once again, let me say that the focus is always about how best to service our customers and I am really excited

about the talent we have in this team.

NCR: What are your first impressions of the challenges facing the industry?

KK: The perennial challenge is the attraction of new talent. This is critical for not just our business, but for our partners and end user customers. We at BASF are proud to be involved in attracting students to science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects, and we work closely with organisations such as TAFE NSW and WorldSkills to identify, recognise and support our industry at grass roots level.

The other challenge for the industry is the retention of this new talent. At BASF we have an organisational culture that embraces diversity, sustainability, flexibility and, of course, learning and development. Also, the sheer breadth and depth of our organisation creates great opportunities across the business and around the world, which is a huge contributor to our ability to develop raw, young talent and create leaders of the future.

NCR: So, what can your distributors and end-user customers expect from a Khosa-led team?

KK: One of the primary areas of focus for us has been, and will continue to be, delivering best in class service to our partners and to our end users. I



James Green training apprentices.



truly see our distributors as partners in every sense of the word, and what we deliver goes way beyond our product portfolio. This is a key element of the BASF DNA.

It's not about selling a product; it's about delivering a solution through chemistry and innovation in technology. Our Refinish Competence Centre is a key facility through which we deliver this value proposition. Fundamentally, if they are successful, we are successful. It's really that simple.

NCR: You have already mentioned sustainability, but what does this really mean at BASF?

KK: Our global commitment to sustainability can be summed up by our enterprise-wide commitment to zero emissions by 2050. We will, of course, do this against the backdrop of ensuring that our organisation will also be commercially sustainable, as we are a significant user of energy across our procurement, manufacturing and distribution processes.

BASF operates what we call our Verbund concept, which creates efficient value chains that extend from basic chemicals all the way to consumer products. In this system, chemical processes make use of energy more efficiently, achieve higher product yields and conserve resources. By-products of one process are used as starting materials for another process, so we save on raw materials and energy, minimise emissions, cut logistics costs and realise synergies. This is a great starting point for our 2050 ambition.

We are also committed to helping our customers be more sustainable with the recent introduction of Glasurit 100, which contributes to more sustainable practices, as its one of the most eco-efficient basecoats in the refinish industry. It is the first basecoat line on the market with a VOC value below 250 g/l, which is a pioneering 40% below the EU solvent limit.

NCR: New and exciting colours continue to drive consumer demand. What part does BASF play in the automotive refinish sector?

KK: Every year, BASF's Coatings

division's designers create Automotive Colour Trends, an innovative collection of new colours based on extensive research and in-depth analysis of global trends and cultural shifts that will influence automotive colours three to five years into the future. They draw inspiration from many things, including industry, fashion, consumer products, and nature.

Together with experienced colleagues in the colour lab, the Coatings division's know-how comprises not only the art of designing innovative and creative colours, but also the knowledge required to translate them into applicable paints.

We have accompanied our 130 years of automotive history with our paint expertise from the very beginning. During this time, we have compiled the world's largest colour database, where 250,000 colours and 600,000 mixing formulas are archived. And best of all, for many manufacturers, our colour history documentation is almost 100% complete.

We also have a wide range of colour tools including our spectro, our software and our global network of colour labs, which gives us full reach into all the key markets, so when a new colour rolls off the line, we already have that colour in our refinish database.

And finally, the ongoing developments in mobility are also a key driver of our coating technology developments.

NCR: What will success look like in, say 2025?

KK: This is very much a strategic question as, although 2025 seems not too far away, a lot can happen in that time. However, success will be measured by three key criteria:

- Have we lived up to our commitment to deliver best-in-class service, delivered our value proposition and been true to our mantra that we develop and enhance true partnerships with our distributors and our end user customers?
- Have we made progress towards our global sustainability commitment to deliver net zero emissions by 2050?
- Have we maintained our colour leadership position in the rapidly changing colour landscape, much of which is driven by community demands and technological advancement?

NCR: And what message would you like to leave with our readers?

KK: In my first six months I've received a myriad of feedback about what is going on in our industry. I want to reassure our partners and customers that first and foremost we are a customer-centric organisation and that every day our team strives to deliver that best-in-class service. Our entire value proposition is built upon delivering what's best for our customers which, after all is said and done, is the whole reason we are in business.



Kishen is passionate about fostering Diversity and Inclusion in the industry.