



Chelsea Autobody

A vision to service the prestige sector

AT A TIME WHEN MANY IN OUR INDUSTRY ARE CONSIDERING THEIR FUTURE, MECHANIC JOHN KARLAGANIS HAS ESTABLISHED A PRESTIGE COLLISION REPAIR FACILITY IN MELBOURNE'S SOUTH EAST WITH THE SUPPORT OF CAR-O-LINER'S LINDSAY BATTEN.

John Karlaganis, Managing Director, takes us back to the beginning of his automotive career and we find he is actually a new player in the collision repair industry. John has a Bachelor of Commerce degree from La Trobe University, and then went on to complete his apprenticeship as a mechanic in 2000. He subsequently spent 17 years working in the mechanical trade before his first foray onto the collision industry.

"I bought my first panel shop, Chelsea Accident Repair Centre, as a going concern in 2017. It is still operating, literally down the road. The work is predominantly supplied by Platinum Towing, our family business that operates within the allocation system in Melbourne, which avoids multiple tow trucks arriving at an accident scene and ensures that accidents are attended to as quickly as possible."

John believes he can bring more to the table than the "normal" panel shop,

as evidenced by the quality of the facility, from the reception area all the way to the vehicle delivery bay. His drive to succeed, combined with his commitment to hard work and a passion for cars, give him every confidence in the future of his business.

"My parents emigrated from Greece in the mid 1970s and my brother and I were born here in Melbourne. My dad started his mechanical workshop, which my brother manages to this day, and the family business now has several mechanical, towing and collision businesses."

John has always been one to look for a new challenge and he saw the potential in our great industry. However, he

was frustrated when he could not keep up with the demand at Chelsea Accident Repair Centre and was particularly concerned that he was losing prestige work. He decided this was the area he needed to address.

"We initially bought a new site and began the fit out in late 2019, but on Christmas Eve I saw this pre-existing factory come up for sale, so we stopped the fit out and re-located our equipment to where we are today."

John first met Lindsay Batten of Car-O-Liner at the 2017

Collision Repair Expo and was immediately drawn to the



A true partnership – Lindsay Batten of Car-O-Liner with John Karlaganis.

Car-O-Liner brand, which he always believed was the best in the industry. They built a strong relationship to the point that when it came time to set up the new facility, Lindsay was there to meet his every need.

“We opened the business at Easter 2020, by which time COVID-19 was clearly becoming major issue in the community, but John was already committed to the venture. My dad always told me: ‘when you’re already dancing, keep dancing’, and so we stayed true to the strategy. It is beginning to pay off, but only through the hard work and dedication of our family and our staff, together with the unerring support from Lindsay and Car-O-Liner. We put the huge Car-O-Liner light box on the front of the building as a way to say thank you for the support.

“We now have 11 people in the business and currently put through 12 cars per week, all of which are heavy

hits. However, as our reputation grows, we are attracting interest from several insurers and expect the numbers to increase in the not-too-distant future. In addition, as business starts to get back to normal, OEM training will resume and drive further demand in our business.”

We turn our attention to John’s “first impressions” about the industry and find that as he becomes a more serious player, he is more exposed to the influence that insurers and the OEMs have on the industry, However, he reinforces that he is developing good working relationships with several insurers and is also working towards prestige OEM approvals. “The investment in Car-O-Liner equipment is part of the overall strategy to create a prestige business so that we have all the necessary tools, equipment and training to become an OEM-approved repairer across several prestige brands.”

I turn to Lindsay Batten, who has

been in the industry his entire career and with Car-O-Liner for the past 23 years. Lindsay tells us about the Car-O-Liner range of equipment already installed in the shop: “We have installed two Quick 42s, three Speed Benches, a full EVO 1, 2 and 3 wall system, a 4WD bench and range of welding equipment, including the fully automatic CTR 9.”

John adds: “It is the quality of the equipment, ease of use, reliability, and ongoing service and support that makes all the difference. The combination of pulling, straightening, measuring and welding equipment makes our life so much easier and leads to a better repair, first time, every time.”

In addition to Car-O-Liner, Chelsea Autobody uses other premium brands such as Cromax coatings from Axalta Coating Systems and 3M ancillary products. It’s all about being premium in everything they do.



John (centre) with dad, Steve and brother Paul.



CA's main workshop.



The prestige reception area.



Customer delivery.