



Gino's Panel and Paint

Immersed in the Fremantle community since 1960

WE MEET PASSIONATE BUSINESS OWNER AARON SCAGLIOTTA, WHO HAS EVOLVED FROM WORKING IN THE BUSINESS TO WORKING ON THE BUSINESS AND IS TAKING THIS FREMANTLE INSTITUTION TO A WHOLE NEW LEVEL.

It all began when a young Basil Scagliotta came to Australia in 1962 and, not unlike many migrants in the 60s and 70s, went looking for a trade, initially as a mechanic, but as fate would have it, he secured a position as a painter at Gino's Panel and Paint, where he worked for the best part of a decade.

However, Gino got himself into a bit of financial trouble, and in the early 70s Basil was made an offer he couldn't refuse: "either you buy the business, or you'll need to find another job". So, the newly married young father of one took the plunge and bought the business, notwithstanding his relative inexperience running a business.

Basil learned a great deal in those early years. He was determined to succeed and always believed in himself. His motivation was not only his investment in the business but running a successful business that would ensure he could support his young family. Put simply, failure was not an option. Gino's was such a well-known business that Basil kept the name and under his leadership, Gino's Panel and Paint has gone on to be a real institution in the Fremantle area.

Things really picked up for Basil when he joined the embryonic Car Craft Group. His knowledge and skills really improved through his

involvement with the other members of the group, in addition to his involvement with MTA WA. Basil stayed involved with Car Craft for many years and although Gino's is no longer a member, Basil reflects fondly on the support he received when he needed it most.

Aaron, a second-generation owner and director, tells us how he came to be in the business. "As I was approaching the end of high school, I really didn't see myself going into the family business, so when I left school, I went straight into the hospitality sector, initially as a croupier at Burswood Casino, where I worked for



Aaron with his dad, Basil.



Gino's iconic frontage.

3 years. I then took up an opportunity to go to the then new Star City Casino in Sydney where I went on to become a floor manager. However, while I was still in my 20s, I decided to travel the world with a good mate before returning home to Perth."

Aaron found that Basil had begun to build a new facility, on the current site at South Fremantle, and asked him to oversee the building process whilst he continued to run the repair business. "When the new facility was up and running, I decided to try out 'this automotive caper' to see if it could work for me. I quickly realised that panel beating was not for me, so set out to become a spray painter. Dad initially encouraged me to go out and work at other shops to 'look and learn' how other businesses in the industry operated, before coming back to Gino's, where I completed my apprenticeship."

Aaron had only just become a tradesman when circumstances led him into a role as an assessor, which then gave him a much broader perspective on how a successful workshop should operate. This was the foundation of his development as he took on more and more responsibility, by which time Basil gave him the opportunity to buy into the business.

This coincided with insurers introducing what has been called "average cost models" or "fixed cost models" and so Basil and Aaron built

"Gino's Rapid", a separate business to allow them to assess the viability of the rapid-repair model. "We decided to go down this path and invested in a range of new equipment, although it was more of a challenge than we initially realised, especially as our volume grew rapidly and our understanding of the metrics just wasn't where it needed to be."

Their largest insurance partner, RAC continued to work with them to help them understand what they needed to do to make it a win-win situation. In addition to RAC, they also have a very healthy relationship with Allianz and continue to receive work from several other insurers. Very early on in his journey, Basil realised the importance of the relationship with work providers, although he always believed that while there were many stakeholders in the process, the person who pays the bill is ultimately the customer.

To take the business to the next level, Aaron implemented two key initiatives. The first of these was a change in paint supplier to AkzoNobel, who installed their premium brand Sikkens waterbased basecoat, Autowave 2.0. "We also took the bold step from a colour perspective and became a 'spectro-only' shop, which means we no longer rely on the traditional colour documentation. We also got involved

with the Acoat Selected program, which was a real eye-opener as we could now see a whole new array of key metrics, such as a WIP calculator, paint usage to paint labour splits and, of course, our paint spend, not just in real terms but as a percentage of sales. It really has helped me to be a better businessperson."

Jourdan Calvert, WA/SA State Manager at AkzoNobel added: "This second-generation family business is always pushing to be one of the most innovative and efficient independent body shops in Western Australia. They are pleasure to work with and we look forward to continuing to grow with Aaron and the entire team."

Aaron's second initiative was to implement IQI's innovative body shop management program. Combined with Acoat Selected, the comprehensive live data features had an immediate, positive impact on the management of key areas of the repair process and gave him the ability to improve scheduling to smooth over the peaks and troughs in workflow and, of course, their labour allocation. Aaron also engaged an HR company to introduce health and safety policies, KPIs and performance incentives, all of which led him to manage the business better. "In essence, I believe in the old adage: if you can't measure it, you can't manage it." Basil stepped back from the operation about four years ago.

In addition to the relationships with these key business partners, Aaron highlights that although he has a range of different benches and welders, Car-O-Liner is their main brand. They also use Symach gas fired infra-red spray booths that have served them well for the best part of a decade.

Aaron goes on to say that although he is the eldest of three brothers, he is the only one in the collision repair industry. However, not unlike many long-standing family businesses, there are several long-term employees among the 35 staff. Of the three managers who run the business, both the panel shop manager and the front office manager began their careers at Gino's as apprentices. As a team, they process an average of



The extensive footprint from the air.



between 70 and 80 drivable and non-drivable repairs per week and the management team all understand what Aaron calls “the Gino’s way”, which gives him great confidence that the business is in safe hands.

Aaron is also keen to highlight their commitment to developing new talent, with 12 apprentices currently in the business, two of whom are young women. “We proactively advertised on various digital platforms, focusing on those coming to the end of their schooling, followed by an open day. We engaged with the parents and put the students through an aptitude test – it was a real recruitment drive. Typically, we have approximately a 50% retention rate, which is not uncommon as young kids are still finding out about themselves, what they want to do and where they want to go. In addition, in WA the perennial challenge is competing with the mining companies’ cadetships which, to a young person, can be very attractive financially.”

We turn to the impact of the external factors on the business, beginning with the consolidation trend. “Capital S.M.A.R.T was one of the first to have an impact, followed by the growth of the Gemini group, both of which influenced the way things were done. However, WA is a very parochial place and both RAC and Allianz understood this very well, which led them to work more collaboratively

with local repairers such as us and develop a sustainable model.”

Aaron appreciates the growing influence of OEMs. Gino’s is a Subaru Approved Repairer and is also in the process of working to grow their certified approvals. However, the lack of certification has not been an impediment to repairing a wide variety of models in the Perth car parc. He also has a watching brief on the growing trend towards manufacturer-owned repair facilities.

Aaron acknowledges that managing the changes in technology across the range of brands they repair is somewhat challenging. However, they fall back on the expertise within his wide network of dealerships. After all, it is the manufacturers who are best placed to understand the masses of information available in the motor vehicle. In addition, he sees this as the most cost-effective way to manage the variety of makes and models that they repair on a daily basis.

From their very distinctive building facade to the welcoming customer reception, it is clear that Gino’s is not your average repairer. So, when I ask Aaron to put into words what makes them really stand out, he has no hesitation. “Gino’s has been a part of the Fremantle landscape from its very foundation, and I believe it’s a combination of our professional approach to business and the fact that we have retained the local

touch to which the community has become accustomed. We stay connected to, and support, the Fremantle community in several different ways. We also pride ourselves on our approach to customer service, which includes communication with our customers as their car moves through the repair process, and we are also an RAC Ready-drive shop, which means RAC clients receive complimentary hire cars.”

I ask Aaron to outline his vision of the future for Gino’s and he tells me about the current project, which is to get their accident-related mechanical repair business up and running. “We dipped our toe in the water about 12 months ago, with a focus on front-of-car repairs, and we have a dedicated building on this site that is almost complete. We call it Repair Satellite Solutions, and we believe it will help us to control the quality of the repair and minimise the key-to-key time. It really will be a one stop shop for our customers.” In addition to diversification into mechanical repair, in the longer-term Aaron aspires to further expand the company as a whole, which he believes is likely to be growth-by-acquisition. Time will tell.

Editor: With the knowledge, experience and business skills that Aaron has developed over the years, I am sure he will continue to be successful and will find a way to make his vision a reality.



Inside the expansive workshop.



The AkzoNobel spectro in action.