



Fix Auto Mulgrave and Clayton

AS THE FIX AUTO AUSTRALIA JUGGERNAUT ROLLS ON, WE CAUGHT UP WITH THE NETWORK'S FIRST MULTI-SITE OPERATOR, LANA PAGIAMTZIS, WHO WE INITIALLY MET IN 2019, AND FIND A GREAT DEAL HAS TRANSPIRED OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS.

Introduction and background

By way of setting the scene, we revisit our earlier conversation that outlined how Lana came to be a business owner in the collision repair industry which, she reminds us, was more circumstance than an underlying desire.

Initially running the front office doing the administration and bookkeeping in a business with her former husband and a couple of other partners, Lana retained her share when she and her husband went their separate ways. Over time, the other partners also exited the business and Lana became the sole proprietor.

She knew she needed to learn every aspect of the business, which in

the first instance was a real challenge, but with the support of some experienced people in the industry she worked hard to come to grips with the key operational functions of running a collision repair business.

Always with an eye on the bigger picture, Lana attended the inaugural roadshow that introduced Fix Auto to Australia, and she knew she had found what she was looking for as the Fix Auto franchise model was so different to her pre-conceived ideas of franchising in Australia. "I took the opportunity to attend a Fix Auto conference in Canada, and after meeting so many franchisees and employees, I was hooked. We also

visited local shops in the network and looked at the body shop management software that I just knew we needed in our business. By the time I left Canada, in May 2016, I had joined the network, becoming Fix Auto Mulgrave."

In the early years, Lana highlighted that not only did they receive all the support and guidance that they needed, but they also had business reviews and planning meetings to point the business in the right direction. "By professionalising the business under the Fix Auto banner, we successfully attracted several new customers and work providers with the support of the team at Fix Auto Australia, which was



Fix Auto's Stuart Faid.

Lana Pagiamtzis.

working diligently with national opportunities to support the Australian network as a whole.”

After only three years in the network, Lana was named Fix Auto brand ambassador at the 2019 Fix Auto annual conference, recognition for all her hard work and that of her team as they grew and developed the business. She was also invited to sit on the next-generation franchisee panel at the 2019 conference, where she spoke about how the ownership and leadership within the industry is transitioning to the next generation, coinciding with the advent of new systems, processes, technology and professionalism.

Interestingly, in late 2019, when Lana was asked about how she saw her future, she said that she saw great opportunities to expand within the Fix Auto network, perhaps to a larger site, perhaps with additional repair franchises, or even diversify into a Novus Glass franchise.

At that time, Stuart Faid, Fix Auto Regional Vice President and Head of Business Asia, Australia and New Zealand, added: “We have worked hard to support Lana’s vision for excellence since she joined our network, and continue to work with her as those goals evolve. We advocate all our partners growing where possible, whether this is the scale of their existing operations, venturing into bigger facilities, or even adding new facilities into their portfolio.”

Well, let’s see what has happened.

To a brave new world

Going into 2020 full of optimism only to be confronted by a global pandemic would be enough to dampen anyone’s enthusiasm – but not Lana. The challenge she faced as she was still very much working in the business was that the COVID-19-related requirements brought a whole new level of complexity into working on the business. That’s where being part of Fix Auto Network really paid dividends.

“Fix Auto did all the heavy lifting and created all the policies, procedures, signage and all sorts of

other documentation that we required to stay operational and allowed us to continue to focus on the business. In addition, we stayed connected to the entire network and we were able to speak openly about specific challenges and share both problems and solutions in a collaborative way with our colleagues. Being part of the Fix Auto Network was very reassuring throughout this time and having access to all the background information required to manage within the pandemic environment enabled us to focus on our business and on supporting our customers.”

So, in the midst of all of this, the opportunity to expand came knocking when Fix Auto Clayton “came on the market”. Lana saw this as an opportunity just too good to pass up,

especially as growth was always front of mind. “As it was already branded Fix Auto and had embedded the prerequisite procedures, for me it was a no-brainer, so I bought the business and took ownership of the facility in May 2020.”

Although the Mulgrave facility is generally very busy, Lana committed a great deal of her time to the Clayton acquisition to fine tune and align the processes, the operational procedures and particularly the way they implement customer service. “I just wanted to do things my way as it was working so well at Mulgrave. We have standardised our business model, so now both facilities do everything the same way.”

However, the transition was not smooth sailing as the impact of the



The Fix Auto Mulgrave team.



The Fix Auto Clayton team.



pandemic took hold and Clayton was put into “hibernation” for six weeks. However, with the support of JobKeeper, Lana was able to keep the staff gainfully employed rotating through the Mulgrave business.

Into a new year of cautious optimism

By the back end of 2020, things began to look up and Lana once again cast her eye to the future. Things had really got busy – and congested – at Mulgrave, so in the interests of improved productivity in the immediate term and grand plans to further expand in the longer term, Lana decided to look for a bigger footprint, which she found “just down the road” from the existing Mulgrave site.

“We are currently setting up the new location – an expansion of Fix Auto Mulgrave – as a full production facility, with two spray booths being installed as we speak. The plan is to be fully operational by mid-September, and our current Mulgrave site will effectively be our head office from which we will continue to run the business.”

Although taking a longer-term perspective is part of Lana’s DNA – let’s not forget she was identified as an “Entrepreneurial Woman in

Automotive” in 2019 – she is all too aware of the pitfalls of growing too quickly. “The next phase is really important for the business as we will look to consolidate the changes that we have implemented in the past two years. We aim to improve our efficiencies, which in turn will allow us to increase our throughput, although the perennial challenge of attracting and retaining additional staff is very much front of mind.”

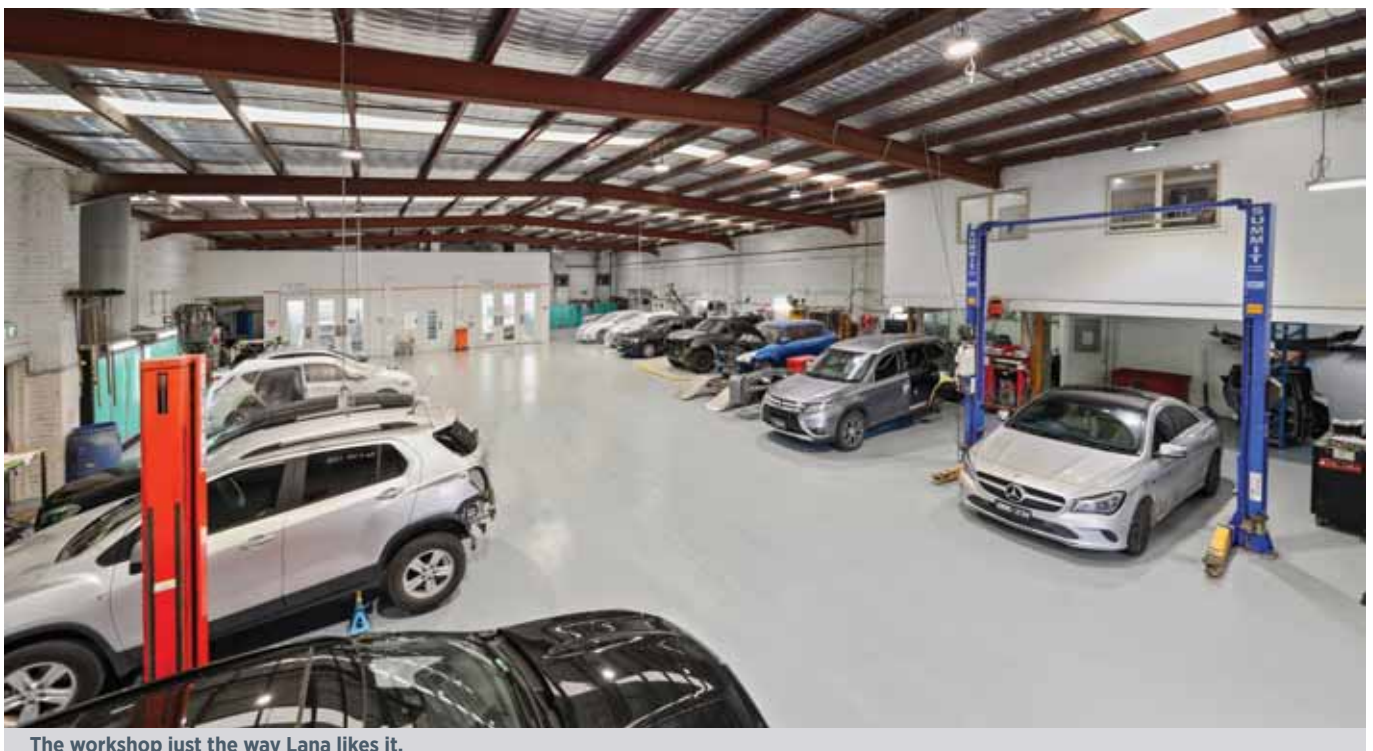
So, as we move into the latter months of 2021, it’s a timely reminder that Lana was one of the first Fix Auto Australia franchisees to join the network, and this year is a milestone year. As a woman who “fell into the industry” rather serendipitously, Lana has come such a long way in the journey, to the point where she has renewed her commitment to the Fix Auto Network and signed for another five-year term, which she again said was a no-brainer. “It’s been a fantastic journey and Fix Auto is amazing to deal with. They listen to your issues and needs and are always there to support driving your business forward. It truly is a partnership in every sense of the word.”

We decided to give the final word

to Stuart Faid, who has been instrumental in the progress and expansion of the Fix Auto network since coming to our shores in 2018: “Lana has been an absolute delight to work with since I joined the organisation. She epitomises everything that is good about our industry. She is passionate about her business, her people and her customers and embodies an entrepreneurial spirit whilst being open to guidance and qualified advice,” said Faid.

“We coach her through her ideas, help her make good decisions and remain on hand to support her when she needs us. The partnership we have with Fix Auto Mulgrave is much like all the others in Australia: we are in it together and it in for the long haul. Having Lana sign for another term is the ultimate validation of our work together and her belief in not just her business but in our brand. I am excited to continue to support her growing empire for many years to come.”

Editor: We too pass on our congratulations to Lana and her team for a great first five years. We are also eminently confident that she will continue to succeed with the support of the Fix Auto organisation.



The workshop just the way Lana likes it.

BETTERTOGETHER



Aussies know a thing or two about how to take a good thing and make it better.

From slapping a BBQ snag in a piece of bread, to downing an ice cold pint of beer with your Parma, there are some things that just work better together.

At **Fix Auto Australia**, we're all about building partnerships so that your business goes from good to great.

Fix Auto is the world's largest independent repair network, with over 700 locations in 13 countries taking advantage of our systems, resources, training and global buying power, coupled with the strength of leading collision industry brands.

If you're ready to go one better, call the team on **1300 FIX AUTO** or visit **fixauto.com**.



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