



## Taking business to the next level in WA & NT

By Kylie Field, Tuesday 31 January 2017

Donald Cant Watts Corke recently announced a new line-up in their senior management team, with Neil Dickson appointed to the role of managing director.



Dickson has a longstanding background in the WA construction space and joined the Perth team as a director at the beginning of 2013. He has since led the opening of the group's expansion into the Northern Territory and the opening of the Darwin office, along with the growth of the company's Project Management, Independent Certification and Facility Management services.

In an exclusive interview with Inside Construction, Dickson discusses the current and upcoming projects for Donald Cant Watts Corke in WA and NT and what the future looks like for the state as the resource sector continues to recover.

### **Congratulations on your recent appointment. What are your plans for your new role?**

As the incoming managing director for Donald Cant Watts Corke Western Australia & Northern Territory, I hope to ensure our company continues to be an innovative market leader. Our presence in the West was established over a decade ago; now is the time for me to take our business to the next level of success.

Donald Cant Watts Corke prides itself in its history spanning over half a century (celebrated in 2016), as well as its strong relationships with clients and industry partners, and reputation as trusted advisors.

My immediate plans are to continue developing our relationships in WA & NT, consolidating our offerings in current markets and diversifying into new markets. More specifically, as industry leaders, we anticipate ongoing success and growth in health, residential and public sector developments such as schools and hospitals. We are also exploring growth opportunities in infrastructure, defence and facilities to support regional communities.

To deliver across these projects, Donald Cant Watts Corke utilises industry-leading technology to provide a unique services to our clients. Our Building Information Modelling (BIM) process ensures that our capability is ahead of standard market practices. As a result, we are able to provide cost, program and project perspectives in the client lifecycle. This allows us to provide accurate estimates, and help our client's better meet their objectives.

Internally, our main priority will be aimed at spending more time helping our people enhance their industry knowledge and skill sets through the provision of opportunities across a range of our projects. By enhancing the knowledge and capability of our industry leaders, we are able to offer a range of services, which include engineering services, facilities management, bank reporting and certification, quantity surveying, project management and more.

Given our national reach, we possess localised experience and capabilities that assist clients with geographic needs. We take great pride in our people and their ability to offer their unique insights to new and existing clients. The trust we have earned with our clients has allowed us to grow. 2017 will be about building on our success, being trusted advisors and being partners for excellence.

### **What projects is the company working on in WA and NT at the moment?**

In Western Australia, we have been extremely fortunate to work on some of the largest projects in the market. Our quantity surveying team is currently working on the New Children's Hospital, Karratha Health Campus, New Perth Museum, World Trade Centre Perth, Joondalup Performing Arts Centre and the WA Schools Public Private Partnership (PPP).

We are also fortunate to be working closely with many clients delivering projects in the residential, hotel and aviation sectors. Our Project Management team is currently working on the Southern Inland Health Initiative, which involves delivering works at 19 remote hospital sites, Bannister Downs Dairy in Northcliffe, Eastern Goldfields Prison Redevelopment along with the WA Schools PPP.

In the NT, our team is involved in delivering the extension and alteration works to Alice Spring Hospital, a program of works at Charles Darwin University, Darwin Hospital and various police stations, as well as several road infrastructure improvements.

### **Over the past two years there have been lots of discussions on the state of infrastructure in WA, post-mining boom. As we enter a new year what is the State's current position?**

The challenge around the resource sector is still very present in the market, with businesses constantly gazing into the future to understand the opportunity pipeline and strategise around that. The general consensus is that we have reached the trough in the cycle; however recovery is anticipated to take several years.

In March this year, we have the Western Australia state election, which puts us in a transition period. The state government has recently announced the likely creation of a World Trade Centre, a \$1.85 billion development in Perth's CBD, along with a potential new mine in the North West. Both projects combined could create an estimate of 4,000 jobs over their construction periods.

Last year, the state announced its vision for transport through the issuing of the "Perth Transport Plan", which sets out aspirations for infrastructure growth across rail, roads, ports and freight over the coming years as Perth grows to become a 3.5 million population hub. Whether these projects come to fruition will be primarily based around access to State funding, coupled with successful collaboration with the private sector.

Developments within the commercial sector are believed to have hit their trough, with small commercial offerings new to the market having a vacancy rate around 20%. Our residential industry is also slowing as the potential for supply to outstrip demand is becoming more real; and we are seeing funders raising hurdles around pre-sales.

In contrast, Perth's hotel market is currently "hot" with several great properties having recently been completed or reaching completion this year; although, the RevPar economic rating has noticeably dropped.

Overall, while there have been some significant changes in the market landscape, we are starting to observe greater potential for growth in retail and aged care developments. Donald Cant Watts Corke offers localised experts across the country with a breadth of experience in both current and emerging sectors. I am delighted to be leading our teams in WA & NT, and look forward to servicing the needs of our partners, both new and existing.

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