



BONDING:
Stephen Visser
and Ray
Shadforth.
Picture:
Megan Slade

SHADFORTH'S

380

NUMBER OF STAFF

\$180m

ANNUAL TURNOVER

HQ

FOREST GLEN ON THE SUNSHINE
COAST, WITH OFFICES IN
GLADSTONE, MACKAY, NEBO,
ALPHA AND WANDOAN

Directors

RAY AND PETER SHADFORTH

1964

FOUNDED

Fleet

400 PLANT OR MACHINERY
ITEMS

52

EXCAVATORS, RANGING FROM
800KG TO 120-TONNE
MACHINES

Projects

NEWLANDS COAL MINE,
NORWICH COAL MINE, PEAK
DOWNS, BMA POITREL ACCESS
ROAD

A fine veneer settles dust fear

A QUEENSLAND COMPANY IS TAKING THE LEAD IN FINDING A SOLUTION TO COAL POLLUTION, WRITES **NAOMI LIM**

WITH the dust yet to settle on Queensland's coal pollution problem, one of the state's largest civil contracting firms has lifted the lid on its proposed solution to the issue.

After three years of development, Shadforths Civil Contractors has unveiled its coal wagon veneering system and installed a prototype at the New Hope Coal Group's Jondaryan Rail Loadout, near Toowoomba, in April.

The coal dust concerns of communities near mines and rail corridors around the state have been well documented, particularly after residents of central Queensland's Collinsville formed a railway blockade to protest against the coal trains rattling through their town in 2010.

The State Government, however, has not legislated on the matter.

Instead Aurizon, formerly QR National, is in the process of making veneering a condition of carriage for its rail network through its coal dust loss-management plan, with responses being piloted by mining companies statewide.

Veneering is considered industry best practice, with alternative measures – including covering rail wagons with tarps or lids – proving to be more expensive to roll out and operate in the long term, as well as creating unnecessary safety risks.

In layman's terms, veneering is the coating of coal with a dust suppressant chemical as it is being loaded into wagons for transportation from the mine site.

Shadforths' Ideame veneering system uses a specially designed environmentally friendly suppressant, which mixes into the coal when it is released from the bottom of the wagons at its destination.

Shadforths civil contractors project leader Stephen Visser says the system is completely automated and remotely monitored for quality assurance.

"The system makes sure only wagons full of coal are sprayed, not the empty ones or the gaps," he says. "Immediately after the train leaves the loadout, we receive information about how much suppressant was used, how long it took and the quality of the veneer on the coal."

Visser says it has been difficult for mining companies to address coal dust concerns in the past because of several financial and logistical complications.



Inquiry looks at dust issue

ONLY five million tonnes of the almost 10 million tonnes of coal transported across southeast Queensland every year is now veneered with a dust suppressant.

Veneering, or the process of coating coal with an adhesive spray, is said to reduce dust escaping from open rail wagons by 50 to 90 per cent and was introduced to the New Hope Coal Group's Jondaryan Rail Loadout after months of agitation by dust-clogged communities.

New Hope shuttles about five million tonnes of coal through Brisbane a year, with the two other companies based in the southeast corner of the state, Peabody Energy and YanCoal, promising the Queensland Resources Council they will spray their loads with the sticky polymer by the end of 2013.

"But the veneering exercise has now become cost neutral because the price of installing the system is about the same as the cost of coal that's usually lost off the wagons," he says. "It's cheaper than installing covers and saves time by not having to open and close them. It's also cheaper than modifying the rail system."

Mr Visser says Aurizon is estimated to spend about \$25 million in Queensland

The dust concerns of residents living along Brisbane's 30-suburb rail corridor, from Ipswich to Wynnum, and downwind of coal piles at the Port of Brisbane were exposed by *The Courier-Mail* in November.

Their complaints were aired at a public hearing into the dust problem in Queensland's Parliamentary Annexe in Brisbane on June 11, as part of a wider Australian Senate inquiry into air pollution.

Neither the State nor Federal Government have legislated a mandatory response to decrease coal dust emissions, but the inquiry will make recommendations to the Commonwealth Parliament when it reports its findings in August.

Greens Senator Richard Di Natale, a doctor and public health expert from Victoria, says Brisbane residents are at risk from long-term, low-dose exposure.

John Gordon, spokesman for Stop Brisbane Coal Trains, says covering wagons was a better solution than veneering only port-bound loads.

each year cleaning rail tracks to stop coal dust building up between the ballasts.

"(The machine Aurizon uses) can only clean 110km of track a year. That's about \$227 to clean just one metre of track."

With affected communities mounting pressure on the State Government, Visser says mining companies need to proactively find a practical response.

"The mining industry is trending

towards self-compliance rather than regulation," he says. "It needs to be careful with regulation because any enforced solution may not be the most suitable for their mines. It's about community and efficiency."

Shadforths is a family owned company based on the Sunshine Coast that was founded by Peter Shadforth and his brother John in the north Queensland town of Clare in 1964.

A few years later, Peter relocated with his family to the Sunshine Coast and the business continued to expand, with civil contracting projects on the Sunshine Coast, Gladstone, Mackay, Mount Isa, Nebo, Townsville, Ipswich and the Gold Coast.

Peter's son Geoff and nephew Ray became company directors in 2008; Geoff died in an accident during a Cambodian charity motorcycle event in March.

Shadforths employs more than 380 people and recorded an annual turnover of more than \$180 million last June, with \$200 million forecast for this financial year.

Ray Shadforth says a division of the firm's business was devoted to servicing the mining industry, building roads and other infrastructure at the mines and in and around the rail terminals.

"That's how we fit into the resources world," he says.

"We started developing closer relationships with businesses that work within the mining sector and the opportunity of veneering presented itself through one of those relationships."

Mr Shadforth says the biggest hurdle for the project has been creating the prototype.

"We can now take it to other mines that we have relationships with and say that the product exists and it does work for this cost," he says. "The aggressive marketing strategy can begin now."

Mr Shadforth is not worried about the prospect of a coal downturn and said the company's AusRoads project would be a growth area for the firm in the future.

"Our business isn't based on veneering alone," he says.

"We'll continue being involved with engineering infrastructure within the public and private sectors, including road repaving. We've also had a lot of business generated by the flood relief packages and have partnered with developers to deliver large amounts of residential property."