

CASE STUDY

Hofmann
Engineering



CATEGORY:
Engineering

LOCATION:
Perth, Western Australia
Bendigo, Victoria
Melbourne, Victoria

Hofmann Engineering shines with the help of BlueScope Distribution

Since 1969, Hofmann Engineering has been providing a range of specialist engineering services to a range of Australian industry sectors such as mining, aerospace, defence and rail.

Over that time, the company has built up a reputation not only for quality output, but also a commitment to continuous quality improvement that touches every aspect of their products, services and customer support.

With operations in Perth, Bendigo and the Melbourne suburb of Cheltenham, one of the company's recent wins was a significant order to provide bespoke mild steel brackets for the First Solar Nyngan and Broken Hill project, a PV solar power scheme with a total nominal capacity of 150MW located at Nyngan and Broken Hill in New South Wales.

On an annual basis, the Nyngan Solar Plant project alone is expected to produce enough electricity to meet the needs of approximately 33,000 average NSW households.

From the perspective of Hofmann Engineering, their pivotal role in this massive engineering job was to fold, press and deliver hundreds and thousands of mild steel brackets used to hold the solar panels and wiring to the frames of the panels."

This is where BlueScope and its flexibility and inherent understanding of its customers needs truly shone its brightest.

According to Hofmann Engineering General Manager, Commercial, Theo Lemonidis, it was BlueScope Distribution, and their foresight and flexibility that made winning the tender for the solar job a certainty.

"To ensure success for this tender, we needed to be globally competitive and to achieve that, we needed a partner that understood the value of the job and also how they could value-add to the whole process to ensure that we were the winning company," said Lemonidis.

That partner was BlueScope Distribution, which already had a history of successfully supplying steel product to Hofmann Engineering.

BlueScope Distribution Sales Manager Alex Salins noted that the Australian steel company has had a long and successful relationship with Hofmann Engineering.

"Part of the reason we won this tender was from our previous work supplying steel plate for the Boeing 787 tooling project for the company," noted Alex.

"Hofmann Engineering really appreciated the prompt, efficient and timely service we provided to them, so as part of one of our successful partnerships in Victoria, we were thrilled at being brought in to work with Hofmann on their solar panel tender."

"From the outset," said Lemonidis, "BlueScope Distribution partnered with us on pricing, flexibility and also quality to ensure that we got the job."

"It wasn't only price that was an issue and it wasn't only our local BlueScope Distribution branch that gave us the invaluable support – it was all about understanding how they could contribute to help us win the tender through their entire supply chain and it was all the way through to the corporate level of BlueScope Distribution where we got the support and understanding we needed to ensure we prevailed."

"BlueScope Distribution has been an important part of this whole process," said Lemonidis.

"If it was not for BlueScope Distribution, this job may well have gone to an overseas company."

"BlueScope Distribution helped us with the pricing, the supply, the quality, the technical back-up, the service, the delivery – our relationship with them was exceptional."

"BlueScope Distribution not only supplied the 450 MPA high tensile galvanised mild steel- they also brought their positive attitude which allowed us to remain a globally-competitive company."

For their part, Hofmann Engineering also put in a lot of time, effort and resources to ensure that the solar bracket job was 'secured'.

This included investing in plant automation – a crucial factor notes Lemonidis, since most of the competitors in this tender were from the US, who would rely heavily on manual labour.

"Our investment in automating the press shop helped us greatly in keeping the cost of the finished goods down."

"When you are dealing with 1200 tonnes of steel being turned into hundreds of thousands of steel brackets, the margins are so slim that you are measuring your required savings in cents per bracket," said Lemonidis.

However, going back to BlueScope Distribution, Lemonidis noted that the partnership forged during this time has had a huge affect on the outcome.

"Their ability, desire and willingness to be flexible was the key," he noted.

"We were always on the same side of the table."

This relationship and synchronisation is what Lemonidis said proved to be the crucial factor for the solar panels tender - so much so that he sees his experience with BlueScope Distribution in a different light that has broader implications for Australian manufacturing in general.

"Manufacturing in this country has never been tougher than now and Australian companies have to collaborate and synchronise their supply chains to ensure they survive and thrive in a business environment like this."

As for the solar panels brackets job, that is still going on, with Hofmann Engineering due to deliver their last batch by the end of 2014.

More information at www.hofmannengineering.com.au

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