



## Rusca Bros Group Case Study

Darwin-based company, Rusca Bros Group, recently won a contract to supply waste management services for Shell Australia's Prelude Floating Liquefied Natural Gas (FLNG) project. The 100 per cent Indigenous owned company with a 'can do' attitude has partnered with the global energy giant to create a unique partnership. NERA spoke to Rusca Bros Group Managing Director, Robert Rusca, and General Manager of Rusca Environmental Solutions, Tim Hyatt, about how this groundbreaking story unfolded.

### Can you tell us about the Rusca Bros Group, and how it got started, Robbie?

Rusca Bros Group originally started around 40 years ago with the name of S & J Earthmoving, after our father and mother, Sid and Jenny Rusca. It was quite a successful business, having started off as a one-grader operation, and growing over the years to become a sought-after contractor taking on jobs in different places that people didn't want to do. Dad made a successful name for himself, and when we were able to take our place in the business, my brother Shannon and I took it to another level and grew the company to what it is today.

The Rusca Bros Group is made up of Rusca Bros Mining, Rusca Bros Civil & Construction, Rusca Bros Oil & Gas, Rusca Environmental Solutions and a labour hire department – HR Links. There's also the Sid Rusca Training Academy, where we home-grow our people, put them through training, and employ them through our organic growth at Rusca Bros. We train them so they're ready for the market, and handpick where we place them to make sure they're successful.

The company operates in most parts of Australia. As well as the Northern Territory, we have offices in Western Australia, New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria. Rusca Bros has had up to 400 employees at peak times. Due to the winding back in oil and gas construction we have reduced our employee numbers but we are actively out there in the market, chasing opportunities. We've just won some tunnel work in Sydney, winning a tender with the Tier 1 contractors on the east coast, which is a nice coup for Rusca Bros new territory. In turn there is new opportunity for Aboriginal people to come and work for us.

## What prompted your move into waste management?

The Australian waste management sector is massive in terms of its annual revenue worth, which is around \$8 billion. Couple that with increasing regulation and the Federal government's legislation around its spend on Aboriginal business, and it jumps out as an absolute opportunity to develop and diversify your revenue base. It's an exciting opportunity for us.

## How did a Darwin-based business win a large contract with a huge global like Shell?

Expressions of interest came out for the Prelude waste management contract, and we submitted one for Rusca Bros. Shell went through the expressions of interest, which were received from around the globe, and came back to us asking us to explain what we do, and why we had put our hands up for this particular opportunity.

It's a cornerstone of the Rusca way: we've got a 'can-do' attitude and always think about how can we participate in that opportunity? How do we build flexibility across our business? How do we give more opportunities for people to work not just in civil, mining and construction? And when there's a huge opportunity to move into waste management, how do we offer our people a role in that space?

So we delivered our proposal to Shell, showed them how we had built our businesses, that waste management wasn't part of our core group of companies but this is how we've done it in the past, and we've been very successful. We believed that collaboratively Shell and Rusca could develop something unique.

It was quite a courageous move on Shell's part, to award a contract for a world-class facility to a local company who hadn't yet had the level of experience it might have required to service the waste management for the its Prelude project.

Shell being a multinational company and Rusca being an indigenous company, there were lots of hurdles to get over – and get under, so to speak. We were assisted by Shell personnel in terms of the commercial piece. It's been a challenge and it's been hard work. Shell set a very high standard but up to this point we've met that standard and it's a success story in the making.

## What has helped Rusca Bros to be successful?

Generally, the local industry was quite protective of its patch and it's been quite confronting for existing operators to be faced with the prospect of helping a competitor develop its business. We've partnered with a local waste management company and a larger, nationally-listed company to deliver a solution for the Prelude project. By doing that, we've developed a sustainable solution for Shell by increasing utilisation of infrastructure our waste management partners already had. Rather than duplicating infrastructure, we have increased utilisation and efficiency within the industry.

I think champions are also critical - we have to have them in this space, it's inevitable. The reality is that without them the contract will mean nothing. We will develop champions inside this contract term and then take them beyond. It's why we feel very fortunate to have a general manager such as Tim Hyatt, because we believe we can be unique in the market. We will develop champions through this process and they'll go on to greater and bigger and better things, and hopefully stay with us into the future.

## What has winning the Prelude contract meant for Rusca Bros and others?

Employment is a hot topic with the economy heading the way it is, and by awarding Prelude's waste management contract to a Darwin company, Shell has not just created jobs for indigenous Australians within Rusca Environmental Solutions, but it's spurred on some interest in further investment into infrastructure which in turn will generate jobs for Territorians generally.

Rusca winning the contract shows that companies such as ours, and smaller ones, have an opportunity to partner with the multinationals. Hopefully, this solution can be applied across the country, not just with Shell but with other companies and for other local groups as well.