

# BOWRA PANEL & PAINT

*PETER COUPLAND HAS BEEN AT IT A WHILE: "I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT," HE RECALLS. "I WENT TO A COURSE, AND THIS GUY ASKED ME HOW OLD A PIECE OF EQUIPMENT WAS. I REALISED IT WAS 35 YEARS OLD."*



## I WAS A BIT EMBARRASSED.

I went out and bought the latest model."

And, like this piece of equipment, Coupland realised his workshop was getting a bit long in the tooth.

"It was never really meant for a panel shop, that premises," he admits. "I had the opportunity to buy it but I'd spoken to a couple of manufacturers and it wasn't really presentable enough."

The old shop, which Coupland certainly made the best of, was long and very narrow and not ideal to for efficient repairs.

So, after a long innings, Coupland packed up his kit and bought a three-shed facility in Osbourne Park, Perth.

Packing up his kit wasn't so easy though. As with many gentlemen in this

industries, Coupland had a slight tendency toward hoarding – despite adopting lean processes.

"That shop had been there since 1972. I threw out seven tonne of steel," he laughs. "It was crazy. There was stuff there you could possibly keep, but no. I just got rid of it all."

Still, there's plenty of room for a new collection at the new Bowra Panel. Spread over three warehouse spaces, Coupland's allowed individual areas for paint, panel and scrap respectively.

"The old shop was a thousand square metres undercover. Now, at the new site, just the body shop itself is a thousand square metres. And, I've got another 460 in the paint shop," says Coupland. "But, in the future, we're considering putting parts and repairs in there. It's still early

days. We haven't really pushed it to what we plan to."

In moving, Coupland finally had the ability to address a couple of gear issues that had been bugging him, too.

"In making the move, I also got all new equipment too," he says. "I have the very first Car-O-Liner in Australia, believe it or not. But they were getting really old, so we've got the new Spanesi Speed Bench - the 106 - the big one for Mercedes-Benz and Porsche. It's a very, very good machine."

And, the new site allowed for the installation of a dedicated aluminium and mixed-metal unit.

"I've got an aluminium booth I've just assembled, and it's got extraction," says Coupland. It is an old spraybooth that's been converted — both a green and financially savvy way to go.

When it comes to any of the bits and pieces that are part of the trade, Coupland admits he's particularly tight. Directly across from the consumables cupboard is an exact replica, stocked with exactly the same goods.

"Consumables are very tight, that's why we mirror-image it," says Coupland. "The one in the cupboard that's locked is exactly the same. When we pull it all out, we know exactly what we've got to order. It's pretty basic, but it works well."

In the reception area, we sell products occasionally," he explains. "Polishes and disinfectant bombs and driving lights, and we're using the Sikkens waterborne products at the moment."

Reception is so vast your could easily host an international line dancing competition. There's already a couple of motorbikes on display — perhaps Coupland might follow in Exclusive Body Werks' footsteps, there's certainly space for a mini-museum.

We're currently on the road to I-CAR Gold, and I'd like to think we'd have that done by the end of the year.

And it's from this area that Coupland has a panoptical view of the workshop via a series of LED screens.

"I've got monitors that attach to cameras in the workshop so I can see where operations are at," he says. "And, I've got big windows over the workshop area"

It's in this spot, looking out over the warehouse, that Peter Coupland is going to stay, too.

"I don't intend to go anywhere at the moment. I could easy do another ten years," he says. "Absolutely! I'm sixty, but I feel like I've just had another oomph."

## JUDGES' COMMENTS



### SAM STREET

Such a huge contrast to the old shop, Coupland has set himself up for success and acquired a new lease of life — business-wise.



### JUDGE POWELL

Nice new shop with plenty of space to put things where you want them in order to create good flow. This has made a huge difference for Peter who battled with the old long narrow shop.



## SHOP STATS

**SIZE:** 1400m<sup>2</sup>

**STAFF:** 13 inc 3 apprentices

**OTHER SERVICES:** Windscreens

**NO OF CARS PER WEEK:** 50

**TYPE OF REPAIR:** All types

**OEM:** Holden



FROM TOP:  
Fancy Spanesi  
realignment area.  
The old oven still  
works a treat.  
Bowra's previous  
reception was  
compact, you  
could hold the  
world line dancing  
championships in  
this one.  
Xxxxxx

