

# OLD BUILDING, EXPENSIVE OVER-HEAD CRANES, WASTED FLOOR AND STORAGE SPACE, UNSAFE AND INEFFICIENT METHODS OF HANDLING LARGE AND HEAVY LOADS...

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**Since its inception in Australia over 70 years ago, Atlas Steels has grown to become the largest stainless and specialty steels distribution company in Australia. As such, it services a large and diverse customer base through its network of service centres and semi-finished product manufacturing operations.**

A huge operation on the eastern seaboard, known as the Metal Centre feeds the service centres with deliveries every other day. This allows them to reduce the stock holding but the operation still has to cater for customers specific needs, so as the business grew, so too did the challenges for the service centres according to David.

HUBTEX Australia have a team of space-saving experts on hand to offer advice on handling and storage solutions for warehouse, distribution and manufacturing operations and provide a comprehensive warehouse planning service, including site layout diagrams and storage capacity calculations; Atlas Steels took full advantage of this service.

Atlas Steel products vary in size and weight – from lengths of pipe and 1220mm deep sheets right through to packs of steel 12000mm in length, 2400mm deep and weighing over 2500kgs, so it was imperative that flexibility was built into both the layout and the sideloaders.



**"Our old building and handling methods were very typical of the steel industry," commented David . "It was dark and not a particularly nice place to work. As with most similar operations we used an overhead crane, which was both expensive to purchase and run, and stored most of the product on the floor or in 'finger racks'. Handling of goods was a 2-man operation using slings which invariably could be both slow and a health and safety risk, so when the decision was made to move into a new building we knew we needed expert warehousing advice, so the call was made to HUBTEX Australia."**



HUBTEX Australia proposed a mix of MQ30 and MQ60 Multidirectional Electric Sideloaders, both built with 1300mm platforms so that all machines can operate in all of the aisles. The MQ30, which has a lift capacity of 3000kgs, is fitted with 1200mm tines and primarily handles the 1220mm sheets, stillages, pipe and most of the order picking. The MQ60, with a lift capacity of 6000kgs, is fitted with telescopic tines that extend to 2138mm when handling the larger 2400mm deep sheets in the oversize aisle, and then retract to 1200mm when required to work in the smaller aisles.

One of the main challenges when planning the layout was how to accommodate the large 12000mm x 2400mm packs. It became evident that every time a pack was to be turned it could create a problem with wasted space, so the layout was designed to double up on transition aisles so that the main aisle used to turn the packs is also used for cutting the pipe in, thus minimising the wasted space.

The Hubtex MQ range of electric multidirectional sideloaders are compact, highly manoeuvrable and, like all products from HUBTEX, can be tailored to suit customers' specific needs both from an operational point of view and health and safety. The comfortable, ergonomic drivers cab offers more room for the operator, optimum all-around vision and an innovative joystick for all controls, but it was the ability to design and build the truck to meet with the requirements of Atlas Steels that really made the difference.

So six years on, has it been a success? "Without a doubt," concluded David. "We have created a whole new culture which has resulted in a 50% increase in operational efficiencies and a fantastic health and safety record. The old way of using the crane and slings was slow and unsafe and could take 3 men up to 2 hours to unload a semi-trailer of the larger sheet. With the Hubtex MQ60, one man can unload it safely in 20 minutes. We have become totally reliant on the Hubtex products, so only having a handful of breakdowns despite operating 80 hours per week has been a huge benefit to the overall success of the Atlas Steel operation."

**HUBTEX.**  
**AUSTRALIA**

**Head Office:**

32-36 Victoria Street, RIVERSTONE NSW 2765  
info@hubtex.com.au  
1300 365 621



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**It can be a real benefit when we get involved right at the start of a project of this magnitude,” added Andrew Quinn, State Sales Manager for HUBTEX Australia. “I was tasked with looking at layouts for the new operation, the range of products to be stored, reducing the footprint, improving the handling efficiencies and ultimately advising on the best overall solution for Atlas Steel. The new building is 3500m<sup>2</sup>, roughly half the size of the old building, so everything needed to be carefully planned in order for the project to succeed.**

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