



HUBTEX.
AUSTRALIA

RACKING IN THE BENEFITS
HARDWARE & GENERAL SUPPLIES LTD



HARDWARE & GENERAL SUPPLIES LIMITED IS ONE OF SYDNEY'S LONGEST ESTABLISHED INDEPENDENT SUPPLIERS OF TIMBER, HARDWARE, BUILDING AND PLUMBING SUPPLIES. THE COMPANY BEGAN OPERATION IN 1960 FROM A SINGLE CORNER STORE. NEARLY 60 YEARS LATER, THE BUSINESS HAS EXPANDED TO 6 STORES, STRATEGICALLY LOCATED THROUGHOUT THE GREATER SYDNEY AREA.

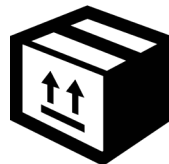
With over 140,000 products in stock from over 3000 appointed suppliers, it's a thriving concern with a strong retail, trade and commercial customer base and a solid reputation for providing value and offering the latest products.

Such a large and varied range of products comes with its own challenges, one being the management of storage. Trade customers in particular want to keep time away from site to a minimum, but not everything can be stored in easy access locations.

Back in 1995, the company had just created their first timber yard. As Geoffrey MacGregor, Assistant Managing Director recalls, "We weren't altogether satisfied in the way it was set up, and we were a bit uncertain about what our exact requirements would ultimately be, so we decided to look at adjustable cantilever racking. We were one of the earliest timber retailers to do so. We spoke to a number of companies, including HUBTEX Australia. They were new to the market - we didn't know then that we would become their first and longest standing customer.



**6
STORES**



**140,000
PRODUCTS**



**3,000
SUPPLIERS**





“We are so proud to call Hardware & General our first and oldest customer,”

says HUBTEX Australia Managing Director Bill Parry. **“In many ways they helped shape our business in those early days. From day one they have stressed the importance of quality service, and this has become the cornerstone of the HUBTEX Australia business.”**

Site visits were arranged and straightaway the benefits of creating rail-guided narrow aisles with the adjustable cantilever racking were clear - better storage utilisation and accessibility, plus more products could be stored under cover, resulting in less wastage due to weather damage. There were however, a number of concerns, the main one being that with only having one sideloader operating in the narrow aisles, the reliability of the machine and service support was critical to ensure the smooth running of the timber store operation.

A number of sideloaders were considered but ultimately it came down to specification and the belief that, although a new start-up company, HUBTEX Australia had already recruited key service personnel and could provide Hardware & General with the necessary levels of service cover.

Manufactured in Germany, and with a fantastic reputation for being technically superior, each Hubtex product is designed and manufactured to a customer's exact specification, so when there was a worry that wet timber coming into the store could be exceeding safe weight limits, a HUBTEX VL 40 fitted with a special 6 ton mast, and capable of lifting 4 ton to the top beam height, was specified. This was followed by another VL 40 sideloader 12 months later.

The low platform height of the Hubtex sideloader ensures that Hardware & General are able to position the lower arms of the racking so that they can order pick from the bottom three levels. This also means that they can store the bulk reserve above the picking levels and the sideloader can replenish the bottom levels easily and quickly.

The width of the platform also means that there is no product overhang, minimising the risk of any damage while in transit along the rails that guide the machine between the system's cantilevered racks.

Fast forward 23 years and the Hubtex machines are still operating, albeit with two new ML 40 machines delivered January last year and one of the originals relocated to another branch, together with two Hubtex machines in other stores.

The original machines featured polyurethane tyres which are made for reasonably flat concrete surfaces. The site at H&G is fairly rough after years of traffic so when they decided to replace the original machines, the recommendation was to go for super elastic tyres, which would better handle the rougher surfaces. This is working very well for them, reducing bumps and shocks which can travel through the machine and into the components, affecting their working lifetime.

The fact that H&G had no hesitation in replacing the old Hubtex units with new ones, proves that the machines have been a great success and service and spare parts support has been of a very high standard. All of the HUBTEX Australia service engineers are trained to the highest standard, both here in Australia and at the HUBTEX factory in Germany, and operate from a fleet of modern service vehicles, each with extensive spare parts and state-of-the-art diagnostic equipment.

So has the partnership worked for Hardware & General? "Absolutely, says McGregor, "the Hubtex machines are perfectly suited to our operation and enable us to offer first class service to our customers. All of our operators find them easy to drive, and especially the new ones with the joystick control, but it is much more than just the equipment.

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“At Hardware & General, we believe our customers deserve the best possible service which we achieve through continual investment in training our people - an ethos I know that is shared by Bill and the HUBTEX Australia team, and one of the main reasons the partnership is still going strong after 23 years.”

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Geoffrey MacGregor
Assistant Managing Director
Hardware & General