

Q&A: Back in APAC

JOHN BRELLS - MANAGING DIRECTOR, DRIVER TRETT ASIA PACIFIC TALKS TO THE DIGEST ABOUT THE FUTURE FOR DRIVER TRETT ACROSS THE REGION.

Is it good to be back in Asia Pacific (APAC)?

In a previous life, I had spent four years working in Asia and loved every minute of it! Having recently joined the global management team of Driver Trett as managing director of APAC, I can honestly say it's good to be back after a six-year focus on the natural resources boom in Australia. I am based in Perth, Australia; a good central stepping stone to the overall Australasia territory with great connections to the wider region.

What does the current APAC business look like?

Our APAC team has shifted in structure and approach to market changes over the past couple of years, with the regions' recent growth primarily being driven by our Diales (Driver international arbitration litigation expert support) delay, quantum, and technical expert witness capabilities.

We are currently operating out of four country bases; Australia, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore with 67 staff spread between six regional offices.

Driver Trett in APAC grew this year, with the Australia team now operating out of Sydney, Brisbane, and Perth providing planning, dispute resolution, and expert witness delay and quantum services. Perth had been a virtual office until this year and we now have three additional professionals based there. We have an eye on expanding to a fourth office in Melbourne in 2018 and are currently searching for an exceptional leader to develop our offering there.

The Malaysian team has grown this last year because of the management's target on a more APAC regional focus. Not only has the team been able to extend existing commissions, but they are also winning work on commissions outside of Malaysia. They provide expert witness assistance to our Singapore office



John Brells - Managing Director, Asia Pacific

and other regional offices, resulting in continued utilisation throughout the year.

Having inherited a small, but seriously talented team of delay, quantum, and contracts specialists in Hong Kong, their focus over the next year will be on delivering quality services and products from our core strengths that include planning, contract-commercial support, and dispute advisory services. This team provides expert witness assistance to our Diales experts, spread across APAC and Driver Trett's other global offices.

Our Singapore team is the crown jewel of the APAC region, with a diverse team of over 34 professionals strictly specialising in supporting six Singapore based Diales testifying experts. We are delivering expert witness services in delay, quantum, and technical engineering for our oil and gas, roads, transport, infra-

structure, and commercial development clients not only in Singapore, but across the globe.

Are there any further improvements to be made this year?

As with any organisation there are always ways to improve. We are currently in the process of implementing APAC wide use of an eDiscovery system to assist with analysis of 'big data'. On most of our commissions, especially the liquified natural gas (LNG) and oil and gas projects, we are deluged with massive amounts of data that we have to get our arms around in a short period of time. Having an electronic system to assist us in organising this data makes us time and quality efficient, at a significant cost saving to our clients.

In addition to my previous answer, our two key focus points this year will be in externalising our Diales expert witness offering across the APAC region and developing our next generation of expert witnesses. Initially, this will focus on three team members who we will mentor towards, and assist in gaining, their first expert appointment.

What shape would you like the APAC business to take in future years?

Over the next five years, I would like APAC to grow in a controlled and focused manner, building on our in-house skills and adjusting to market requirements. We will achieve success and continued growth through wise and well placed acquisitions of talent and key experts in the region. These will enhance our skills and knowledge in the areas where we see the need to expand.

Needless to say, I am excited about APAC's future prospects and growth potential that will enhance our ability to deliver quality services all the time, every time, everywhere. ■

Having an electronic system to assist us in organising this data makes us time and quality efficient, at a significant cost saving to our clients.