

# Total Construction enters the food industry

» WE SPOKE TO THE NEW BOYS ON THE FOOD BUILDERS' BLOCK – TOTAL CONSTRUCTION – AND DISCOVERED IT WASN'T SO NEW AFTER ALL. *FOOD & DRINK BUSINESS* INTERVIEWED GENERAL MANAGER – FOOD & BEVERAGE DIVISION, COLIN WILLIS.

**FDB: What's your background in the industry, and why has Total Construction gone into this area in this way?**

**Colin Willis:** I've had a relationship with the MD Steve Taylor for 6-7 years. Total Construction has been involved in the food and beverage industry for that period of time, but in an indirect way. Total is doing extremely well at the moment. They've been operating continually since 1994, based on the "concept to completion" philosophy and gaining repeat business from client satisfaction. We're having some of our best years, so Steve Taylor decided

to diversify and target different market sectors. While I was managing the food and beverage group with Layton Contractors, so that we could still provide a total service to our clients, we outsourced some of the smaller projects to Total Construction who



Steve Taylor at the new division's launch event.

delivered them on our behalf. I spent most of last year with GHD in the Middle East on very large projects, and it's very good to be back home again.

**How much business have you done so far?**

The work we've done so far for companies like Coca-Cola and Cadbury Schweppes have been completed. I joined on 1 March. We have completed a few small jobs. We are halfway through a project with Australian Convenience Foods at the moment in Melbourne. We have other work that we're in early days of detailed design for such as The Regional Kitchen Group which is the community chef project in Victoria, a central Meals on Wheels manufacturing facility to produce 7000 meals per day for 14 regional councils throughout Victoria.

**Has the market acceptance been good?**

Yes, we've been very pleased with the response we've had. I guess that's due to the commitment of Total Construction to buy in the right resources. We have

senior process engineers that have been in the industry for the likes of 30 years, such as Peter Fowler and Tony Tate. Peter Fowler has been in the industry all of his career around the world. Tony Tate has joined me from Goodman Fielder and is experienced in bakery and ready meals. Our CAD design/draftsperson I've worked with on and off for the last 20 years. The calibre of resources we've put together and their own networks and relationships from past projects and previous employers has helped enormously.

**What are you doing differently to your competitors?**

Steve Taylor is very passionate about the culture of Total Construction. He's grown the company since 1994 based on that concept to completion approach. I'm of that same culture – do a project, do it properly and have a happy client and win repeat business off that project's success. It's not about being all things to all people, it's about providing the services that those clients are looking for and doing them well.

We can sit down with the client at the concept stage. We have our own process engineers who do the process design and focus on plant and equipment selection, layouts, process flows from raw materials to work-in-progress to finished goods and then working with our local Total Construction team wherever the project happens to be.

We're a process literate builder and a builder that is aware that clients often don't have any real interest in the building, that it's a means to an end, and the building costs them money, where process plant and equipment makes money for them. We're a process builder that doesn't think it's all about the building.

**What's Total Construction's capabilities?**

In food and beverage we do the design in-house, but in other market sectors we go outside for consulting engineering. That keeps us cost competitive. We won't do electrical, mechanical, civil and structural, but we will do the part the client's interested in which is the processes.

## COLIN WILLIS' FOOD PROJECTS:

- Frozen in-flight meals facility D&C – Snap Fresh, QLD – \$25m
- Flight catering facility process optimisation – QANTAS, VIC, NSW, QLD – \$100k
- Brownfield chilled ready meals facility D&C – Goodman Fielder, NSW – \$3m
- Biscuit manufacturing facility D&C – Arnotts Biscuits, NSW – \$190m
- Brownfield cake, pastry and biscuit plant D&C – Sara Lee, Indonesia, China, Singapore, Malaysia & India
- Brownfield bread and roll bakery D&C – Goodman Fielder, VIC – \$15m
- Brownfield meat pie facility process design – Simplot, VIC – \$600k
- Tuna processing facility design – Sarin Seafood, VIC – \$42k
- Brownfield confectionery plant design – Mars, United Arab Emirates – \$600k
- Brownfield pet food plant process design – Simmons Pet Food, USA.

We have all our own project and site managers. We do everything else.

**Why go into food now?**

In a shrinking market everything is relative. I came from the largest construction manager in Australia, and prior to that I was seven years with Bovis Lend Lease. There is a lot of infrastructure work around in Australia, so the really large companies are more focused on infrastructure than the volume of food and beverage work that was around throughout the 1990s. Our ideal strike market is the less than \$25 million project. The market is still quite buoyant there and we're happy to do the very small projects to the medium projects. Yes, the George Weston bakery projects are few and far between, but down in the smaller end there's plenty of opportunities. Steve Taylor saw the advantages in having synergies between the market sectors.

**How small will you go?**

We've just completed a \$25,000 high level preliminary design study for the Regional Kitchen Group, and that led to the detailed design phase for the same project.

**How many projects do you have on the go?**

Our turnover this year will be in the order of \$70 million. We've been growing exponentially over the last few years.



Colin Willis.

## TOTAL CONSTRUCTION CLIENTS HAVE INCLUDED:

Alpha Flight Services, Arnott's Biscuits, Australian Convenience Foods Group, Cadbury Schweppes, Coca Cola Amatil, Community Chef, Full View Plastics, Jones Lang LaSalle, Portavin and Regional Kitchen Group.