

Neil Smith's love of transport and what it offers communities drives him everyday, which is a passion that saw him send a letter of recommendations to the NSW Department of Government Transport when he was just 11 years old.

Neil Smith's official career in transport started years later as a trainee manager with the Busways Group in western Sydney in 1972, after obtaining a BA at the University of Sydney.

In 1974 he formed a partnership that purchased Manly Bus Service in Sydney and 1975 he established Urban Transport Systems (UTS), offering consulting services in the areas of bus route design, bus and driver scheduling and public transport marketing. UTS worked with both the Macarthur Development Board and the private sector in the design and implementation of the improved bus services in Cambelltown, Blacktown, Cairns and the NSW Central Coast.

Mr Smith was actively involved in the purchasing and operating of bus lines over the following years including Somersby Bus Lines, Central Coast Transit (renamed Peninsula Bus Lines), Davis Coach Lines and Roberts Brisbane Water Coaches and had an extensive involvement with the Bus & Coach Association (NSW), serving on the Executive Committee from 1983 to 1991.

He was also involved with the establishment of the Certificate of Transport Management at the Institute of Transport Studies at the University of Sydney, and lectured in service design, marketing and Government relations.

Between 1991 and 1994 Mr Smith moved away from operating services to complete a Masters of Transport Management at the University of Sydney. He then worked both as a consultant and as a lecturer at the University, and studied overseas.

Mr Smith re-entered the bus operations industry in partnership with Transit Systems Directors Graham Leishman and Lance Francis with a successful tender for the Midland Bus Service in Perth in 1996.

Operating as Swan Transit, this company won subsequent tenders in Canning, Southern River, Kalamunda and Armadale South, and for the management of the Perth Circle Route.

The Perth operations of Connex (subsequently Veolia) were purchased in 2002 and Swan Transit was awarded the Marmion contract in 2010 and re-awarded a number of its existing contracts between 2002 and 2010. It is currently the largest bus operator in Perth, with a 47% market share.

Tendered operations were expanded to South Australia in 2000, with the award of the East West and City Free contracts. This business expanded in 2005 with the award of the Outer North East and North South contracts. The latter two contracts transferred to Transfield Services in October 2011.

In 2005, Mr Smith and the company saw a seachange on the horizon and Transit Systems commenced passenger ferry operations, with the purchase of the Bay Island Taxi Service (BITS), operating from Redland Bay southeast of Brisbane.

These services were expanded with the 2006 purchase of Sea Stradbroke, the operator of a car ferry service between Cleveland and Stradbroke Island. This was rebranded to Big Red Cat and has since won the Moreton Bay and Islands Tourism Award for Major Transport Operator for two consecutive years.

The Gladstone Ferries business commenced operations in Gladstone in 2011, serving the construction of two LNG plants on Curtis Island. These contracts involve the design, construction and operation of seven new passenger ferries; three roll-on roll-off ferries and a marine paramedic vessel, representing a \$70 million portfolio of vessels managed by Transit Systems in the region.

Transit Systems also acquired Stradbroke Ferries Ltd in 2011, an operator of roll-on roll-off ferries on Moreton Bay and in Gladstone. The ongoing growth in Gladstone has placed Transit Systems as Australia's largest ferry operator, with more vessels than Sydney Ferries.

In 2013 Transit Systems commenced operations in Sydney of Region 3, linking Parramatta with Liverpool. This was the only contract won by a non-incumbent operator in the tendering of privately operated services in the Sydney Metropolitan Area.

In 2014 Transit Systems commenced operations in Darwin in the Northern Territory, taking over the previous public sector operation after a competitive tender process.

In 2015 Transit Systems commenced operations in Bunbury and Busselton, on the south-western coast of Western Australia.

Concurrently with this growth in Australia, Mr Smith moved to London in October 2012 and led the buyout of part of First Group's London bus operation. This was completed in June 2013. Trading as Tower Transit Limited, this company operates 425 buses from three depots under contract to Transport for London. Tower Transit is an associated company of Transit Systems.

Tower Transit expanded further during 2014 through the purchase of the specialized passenger transport operator Impact Coaches in west London, and the purchase of Whippet Coaches in Cambridgeshire. Whippet Coaches operates services on the Cambridge to St Ives guided busway.

Tower Transit opened an office in Singapore in 2014 and is currently bidding for urban bus contracts in that city tendered by the Land Transport Authority.

These companies have an exceptional reputation in the transport provider industry, developing and delivering effective transport systems, procuring vessels and overseeing delivery, maintenance and ongoing operations, with a dedicated focus on delivering sustainable transport solutions.

In 2009, to facilitate further growth, a Chief Executive Officer was appointed (Clint Feuerhardt) and the Board of Directors restructured. This has enabled Mr Smith to pursue opportunities in lecturing and writing, including presentations in Turkey (UITP), Kuala Lumpur (Marcus Evans Conferences), Sydney (Terappin Australia) and Delft, Netherlands and Durban, South Africa (Thredbo Conference on Regulation in Public Transport).

He has been a guest lecturer at the University of South Australia in the Masters program. In March 2009, he was appointed by the Minister for Transport and Disability Services Western Australia as a member of the Independent Panel for Public Transport for Perth, the body responsible for the preparation of the 2031 Transport Plan.

In 2010 he was appointed to the Independent Review Panel investigating school bus services in Western Australia and as a "BRT Advocate" at the "Bus Rapid Transit Centre of Excellence" at the Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Chile.

Mr Smith also has a strong personal interest in the development of leadership training in countries facing economic and political challenges. He has facilitated the construction of a small college in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and is involved in assisting similar projects in Tanzania and in Sierra Leone. Mr Smith has travelled extensively in central Africa generally spending a two weeks of each year there in support of these projects.

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