

The complete package

Sometimes the best ideas are born from the most unlikely of circumstances, such as during the Australian tradition of Friday knock-off drinks. That's exactly what happened when Joe Hackett shared a beer nearly four years ago with his now business partner Damien Whitnall – and the rest, as they say, is history.

Earlier this month *TimberTrader News* paid two childhood friends, Joe Hackett and Damien Whitnall, a visit to their place of business, Complete Frames, nestled in Melbourne's Dandenong South.

EARLY BEGININGS

Complete Frames provides clients with, quite literally, a complete package for timber frame requirements.

Both carpenters by trade, Joe and Damien were experiencing a common issue that many others face in their field. Working on site, they often found themselves waiting around or being delayed by pre-fabricated deliveries.

"As a carpenter, you won't be making any money just waiting around. We were

finding that pre-fabricated only works if everything is there on time," Joe said.

So the idea was born. Coming from a trade and installation background and changing over to the frame side of the building process, meant that Joe and Damien possessed a significant edge within the industry.

"I think it's one of our big advantages, we're both chippies. We both know how frustrating it can be and how much money you stand to lose if your job is not there when you say it's going to be there," Joe added.

"We don't want to let our chippies and our builders on site down, or have them standing around doing nothing! At the end of the day, that comes out of the >>



Joe Hackett and Damien Whitnall are the proud owners of Complete Frames in Dandenong South.



“If you had told us what we would be doing today three years ago, we would have told you you were crazy! We just thought we were going to knock a few frames out and send them out on site,” he added.

Joe and Damien agreed that the early days of the business were unstructured and a steep learning curve for both of them.

“It took us a good 12 to 18 months to figure out what we can get the machine to do and how to get what we wanted from it as a result,” Joe confirmed.

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– DAMIEN WHITNALL

tradesperson’s pocket, and we knew what that was like,” Damien reflected.

With that, the cogs were in motion, and after several calls to timber suppliers who consequently hung up on Joe, eventually Multinail jumped on board with their idea.

Three months later, Damien and Joe’s conversation over a Friday night beer had turned into a reality.

A QUICK RISE

After some eye-opening location scouting by Damien and Joe, where they discovered machinery they had never seen before, the duo commenced their education regarding the tools that would soon become key components of their future venture.

“It was pretty tough at the start! It was certainly a journey going from doing it all in my head to computerised systems, a different step and avenue for both of us,” Damien said.

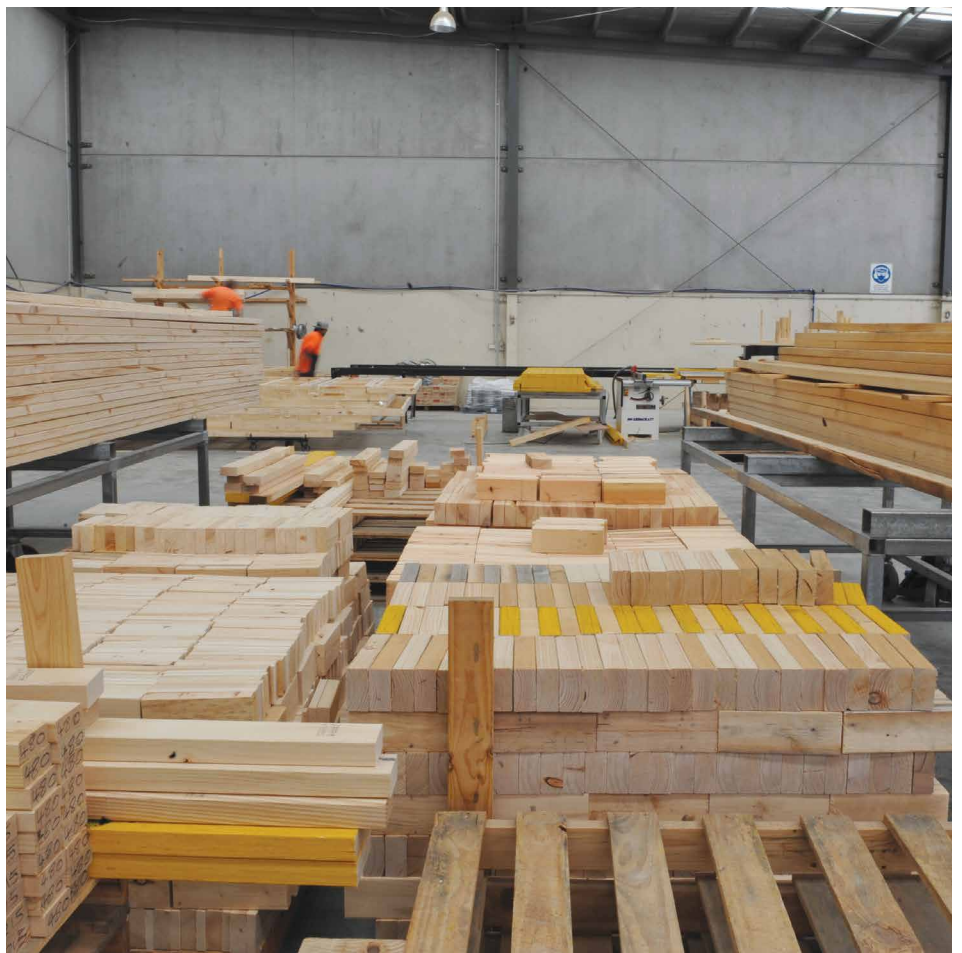
FRAMING IT RIGHT

Times have certainly changed for Joe and Damien, as Complete Frames today boasts 14 employees and a large factory base in the south-east Melbourne suburb of Dandenong, impressive considering the company only started three years ago.

For a company reliant on the building sector booming in Victoria, Complete Frames is looking towards their future, which could mean a broader product offering.

“We have always been wary of not going too big, too early, because we remember a time within the building industry when you would get work by cutting other people’s grass – and we’ve never wanted to do that,” Damien said.

The company additionally offers clients installations, another element of the business that Joe and Damien offer to clients upon request.



Complete Frames also holds a unique working relationship with a truss company, Super Truss, who they outsource their truss needs to and who, as a result, do not do wall frames.

This ensures one point of contact for their clients, consistent with their offering that promotes convenience and efficiency.

“We are open and honest with our customers about everything, including our working relationship with Super Truss. We just really like to make sure everyone is aware,” Damien added.

A CHANGE OF SCENERY

As for the transition over the last five years from out on site to under the workshop roof, Joe and Damien said it’s been an interesting change of pace.

“There’s days when I wish I was back on the tools – absolutely!” remarked Joe.

However, these two don’t seem to want it any other way, stating that they have found a great balance with their business due to their hard-working team, allowing them to both spend more time with their young families and still make time for that occasional Friday knock-off drink.

“Most of the time we still like each other!” Joe jokingly admits, with Damien chiming in, “We’re both pretty driven to succeed but still good mates, which works great for us in business life.” **T**