

# QUEENSLAND STATE ARCHIVES

## CASE STUDY

### *The companies*

Ed Ahern Plumbing and James L. Williams are Australian companies specialise in contract work on medium and large-sized building sites.

Ed Ahern Plumbing, headquartered on Queensland's Gold Coast, has provided specialist plumbing and hydraulic services to Gold Coast and Brisbane building developers for the past 16 years. Its staff have a wide range of skills to work on all aspects of plumbing, drainage systems and fire hydrant installation.

James L. Williams, established in 1875, is Australia's longest-serving mechanical services contractor. It has offices in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane and on Queensland's Gold Coast. It has businesses in Perth and the United Arab Emirates. The company employs about 350 staff, provides a wide variety of mechanical services and specialises in energy efficient air conditioning and climate control systems.



### *The opportunity*

Global construction company Laing O'Rourke, headquartered in the UK, won a \$40 million contract from Queensland's Department of Public Works to build an office and document storage facility in Runcorn, Brisbane, for Queensland State Archives. The 11,000sqm building, which was completed on May 31 2008, required specialist work to ensure archival documents and other contents to be stored in the building are preserved.

Laing O'Rourke decided to use Industry Capability Network (ICN) Queensland in mid-2006 to help research Australian companies that could do the job quickly and effectively. ICN government projects manager Steve Jones said Laing O'Rourke told ICN the Department of Public Works required high-tech climate control to protect the building's archival contents, so only contracting firms with specialist skills could be considered.

"We talked with Laing O'Rourke and they sent us a package of what services they were going to tender for. We then searched our databases to see what companies were good options for the job, based on their track records as reliable Australian or Queensland companies." Laing O'Rourke selected several companies to conduct different areas of the work, including James L Williams and Ed Ahern Plumbing.

Laing O'Rourke contract administrator Andrew Hood said those two firms were chosen because of their outstanding records and ability to do the specialist work required.

“The mechanical services side of things was particularly difficult because building areas where archives will be stored require the humidity to remain within 5%-50% and the temperature to remain within two degrees of 20 degrees.” Laing O’Rourke was aware of many suppliers in Queensland but ICN helped it identify several “new kids on the block”, not previously known to the company, Mr Hood said.

James L Williams director Gary Deverall said the air conditioning and climate control work his firm’s employees conducted on the site was worth \$4.7 million to the company. At the peak of the project, James L Williams had 24 employees and subcontractors working on site to ensure everything ran smoothly, he said. “With most projects, humidity control doesn’t require as much attention but, when you are storing archives, it’s critical. It was definitely a good sized job.” James L Williams also supplied an eco-sustainable three million litre chilled water storage tank to the project to help offset power costs for Queensland State Archives by producing and storing chilled water overnight, Mr Deverall said.

Ed Ahern Plumbing project administrator Jason Veness said his company supplied the hydraulic services for the archives building, including installing a 90,000 litre underground rainwater storage tank and a stormwater harvesting and reuse system. The system, installed with the help of Queensland company Alliance Water Solutions, would reduce the building’s water use significantly by allowing rain and stormwater to be reused in cooling systems, toilets and irrigation. The project was worth \$1.5 million to Ed Ahern Plumbing, making it one of the company’s “medium-to-large” projects, Mr Veness said.



## The Results

ICN’s Mr Jones said the main benefit ICN offered to Australian suppliers was its ability to give them notice of new projects they might want to be involved in. For project owners, ICN’s assistance allowed them to save time and money that would otherwise be spent finding the best suppliers or service providers for the job. During the Queensland State Archives project, ICN had offered additional assistance by providing Laing O’Rourke with information about Queensland government building legislation and compliance issues, he said.

Mr Deverall said ICN’s nomination on projects like the Queensland State Archives created more revenue and was a vote of confidence in his company. “It’s really a statement for [ICN] to nominate us as one of the preferred contractors for the project.” The work on the Queensland State Archives project had potential to generate more business in future because other building contractors would take notice of James L. Williams’s good work, he said. Mr Veness agreed, saying ICN’s nominations for projects had the potential to generate more business for Ed Ahern Plumbing in the future.

According to the *Manufacturing Sector Impacts Report 2007*, compiled by ICN and Australian Economic Consultants Group, every \$1 million of manufacturing business retained in Australia or freshly generated by Australian companies creates 12 full-time jobs. Every \$1 million of manufacturing business retained or generated by Australian manufacturers also generates \$394,000 in taxes and charges, which benefits Australians as the government can reinject it into the economy.

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