

THE NEXT BIG THING



PROUDLY AUSTRALIAN, SYDNEY BUSINESS OMNI TANKER HAS DEVELOPED A CARBON COMPOSITE TANKER THAT COULD CHANGE THE BALANCE OF POWER IN THE BULK TRANSPORT WORLD.

[Story by Sebastian Grote]

The traditionally accepted idea of evolution is one of gradual change and adaptation, but every so often, a disruptive leap forward will occur and challenge the status quo in its very foundation.

When a young Sydney start-up called Evolution Tankers took to the local manufacturing stage in 2007 and launched the world's first carbon composite tank to the bulk liquid chemical transport industry, just that happened. Food grade and dangerous goods compatible, lightweight and strong, the company's technology-driven design brought a whole new value proposition to the market and placed the young business firmly on the nation's trailer building map.

Since then, much has changed. The start-up has gone through a successful maturation process that has seen it establish a highly capable executive team and Board of Directors to help it take on the next, crucial growth phase. To mark that new chapter for the company, CEO Daniel Rodgers has launched a new logo and rebranded the company as Omni Tanker – a name which he says points to the “extensive potential” for the company's technology.

Backed by a suite of patents granted on the Omni Tanker technology, the company is now making the move to extend its reach to a more broad-based audience – both locally and abroad. “Until now, we've been tightly focussed on the Australian chemical transport industry, where aggressive liquids such as strong acids and oxidants place extreme demands on the equipment and the standards call for very safe designs,” Rodgers explains. “On the basis of the Omni tank's advantages of very high chemical resistance and light weight,

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In late May, Australian Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, commended Omni Tanker on exporting its carbon fibre chemical tanker model to Europe. “You are showing the way,” Turnbull told the management and staff at a function in Sydney. “If you can export advanced patented Australian material science to Germany you can export it everywhere in the world. There are no fussier buyers than the Germans. That is the heartland of the chemical industries of Europe. And you cracked that market.”



To achieve EU certification, Omni Tanker had to go through a so called 'Burn Fire Test' in Germany. As part of it, the tank is subjected to a full engulfment fire of around 850-1000°C for 30 minutes and must remain leak free after the test.



we have been able to provide equipment to the leading chemical transporters.”

Rodgers lists prominent names such as Toll, Chemtrans, Coogee Chemicals and McColl's Transport as companies who have embraced the Omni Tanker concept. Now with almost 10 years under the company's belt and the design and technology performing well in the local market, he says it's time to widen the net. “Behind the scenes we've been working incredibly hard to create the right framework to scale up the business,” he explains. “Last year, we moved to a new, expanded facility in the southwest of Sydney. It's a great site with plenty of space, along with a dedicated R&D centre that will allow us to take the business to the next level.”

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According to Managing Director, Daniel Rodgers, building a global brand is all about the team. With experienced hands on the factory floor, talented engineers with advanced CAD and FEA skills, and a leadership team built around multi-skilled Operations Manager, Robert Stubbs, and the technical expertise of CTO, Dr Luke Djukic, the company is well resourced and ready to take on the challenges of an exciting future, he says.

Rodgers adds, “Our focus is firmly on innovation, and we believe the environment is right for us to apply what we've learned in the chemicals space to the wider tanker market – both here in Australia and around the world. It's time to make the next move.”

Omni Tanker's next move will be two-fold, he elaborates, with a strong push into the European chemical tanker market and a broadened product range locally. “The new factory is now up and running, so we have the capacity to significantly increase production for Europe while also enabling improved delivery to our existing customers and the development of new products for the Australian market,” he says.

With the first shipment of five tanks for the European market due for export any day now, he says reaching the next level in Omni Tanker's evolution is well on track: “As an Australian company, exporting manufactured products to a major overseas market is pretty significant, and it's taken a big effort to get here. There are a lot of moving pieces, from finding the right partner, to securing IP and patent protection, through to completing product development to suit the varying market needs. It's been a massive team effort and together we have achieved a huge amount in a relatively short timeframe.”

The European model will be marketed under the name the Omni L4 tank and distributed by German tanker specialist, Kurt Willig, which will also provide the chassis and running gear assembly. “We have formed a new, jointly owned company named Omni Willig Carbon that will take care of the European business,” says Rodgers.

He adds that the new Omni L4 model is designed to comply with the European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR) and Rail (RID), and has been certified by the German Federal Institute for Materials Research and Testing (BAM), with engineering oversight by TÜV SÜD.

“We chose to approach European certification in Germany and with TÜV SÜD fully aware that we would have to work to the most rigorous testing, and it has certainly proved to be so,” he explains. “The advantage, however, is that the technical credentials of the product will be recognised as having met the





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Daniel Rodgers **CEO, Omni Tanker**

high bar of German homologation.”

After a strenuous 18-month certification process, Rodgers says Omni Tanker’s first Type Approval has now been issued, allowing the company to take its game-changing technology to the Eurozone. In Australia, meanwhile, a new general-purpose model is now in the works, with the company targeting launch in 2017.

The new model will be based on the chemical tanker design, albeit without the equipment required to achieve Dangerous Goods rating. The result, he says, will be a lightweight, yet robust tanker that will “provide a highly significant payload advantage” at a competitive price. “What we are aiming to create is a general purpose tanker with excellent resistance and food grade rating that will deliver superior economic performance,” he says.

While there is still some time before the new model hits the local market, Omni

Tanker’s international expansion is already well underway, with the official launch slated for the 2016 PetroTrans show in Germany, which will take place parallel to the IAA Commercial Vehicle Show in September. “There is an incredible energy in the business knowing we are about to write a whole new chapter in our story. In a time where local manufacturing is under pressure, being able to stand tall and represent Australian innovation on the global stage is something we are very proud of.” **GT**

www.omnitanker.com

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Omni Tanker’s carbon composite tanker features a seamless thermoplastic interior without welds or joints that prevents product hang-up and reduces absorption to a minimum. The result is a versatile tank that allows transport businesses in the chemicals industry to switch safely between different products after each wash out.



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