

Great balls of fire, we're lighting up the Games

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FIRE UP: FCT Flames created this "eclipse of the sun" for the first European Games in Azerbaijan in 2015, and inset, Cathy Freeman lighting the cauldron at the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

ADELAIDE is again in the Olympic Games ceremonial spotlight with Thebarton company FCT Flames seeing its work appear among the highlights of Rio.

Company chair Constantine Manias is coy about FCT's involvement as the current Games continue to unfold in Brazil but confirmed the company worked on creating fire in the opening ceremony.

"At the moment we can only say we were involved in the ceremony with flame effects," Mr Manias said.

It's been a triumphant story for the designer and manufacturer after it first appeared in the global spotlight at the Sydney Olympics in 2000, helping create the famous cauldron lit by Australian sprinter Cathy Freeman.

"We didn't see it as a business at that time, we wanted to get involved because it was Australia and we wanted to fly the flag," Mr Manias said about the company's first Olympics job.

"We didn't expect it to go beyond that."

Since then, the company had dominated the ceremonial flame market and worked on every Summer Olympics.

FCT Flames designed and manufactured 14,000 torches, the cauldron and Olympic rings of fire for the Athens Games, won contracts for the London Olympics, and has established a firm market in games events around the world.

Last year, it won contracts for the first European Games in Azerbaijan, the South-East Asia Games in Singapore and the Pan American Games in Toronto.

"It's surprising how many events there are in a year," Mr Manias said.

"At the European Games (in Azerbaijan) they had a fantastic opening ceremony, the budget was probably bigger than some Olympics."

FCT supplied 216 torches, 71 lamps and six portable cauldrons, training the relay crews in operating the torch "which worked flawlessly in what Luke Mills (senior production manager, ceremonies) called one of the windiest places on earth".

"We supplied an 80 metrehigh burning man mapped out in flames and with internal organs, the heart and veins showing, and there was a cauldron that was an eclipse of the sun."

The Export Finance and Insurance Corporation – Australia's export credit agency – supported the company's bid for the South-East Asia Games.

"This is a company that's the best in the world based in the back streets of Thebarton and these guys are winning contracts on a global stage, there's no bigger stage than the Olympics," SA office chief Andrew Perkins said.

There are 20 staff based in Thebarton, with Mr Manias saying they were high-performing individuals including "10 people with PhDs". Another two offices have opened in Philadelphia and Turkey.