

for Adelaide company

BUSINESS

An Adelaide company that shot to international prominence after designing the flames for the Sydney Olympics has become the world's leading supplier of burners to the iron ore pelletizing market.



Runner Cathy Freeman lit the 2000 Sydney Olympic cauldron, designed and manufactured by FCP International. Photo AP / Amy Sancetta

Thebarton-based FCT International had a small customer base in the cement industry when its current ownership group took over the company in 1999.

Everything changed when FCT won the right to design the burner system for the Olympic torches and the cauldron at the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

The company designed and manufactured 14,000 torches for the Athens Games, the cauldron and the spectacular Olympic rings of fire, which featured in the 2004 opening ceremony.

we very quickly became the market leader in that space and we became involved in more and more major events around the world,” FCT Managing Director Con Manias said.

“The thing with the flames business is it’s hit a ceiling – it’s got no more market share to grab as there are only so many major ceremonies and event spaces being built.”

However, the international success gave FCT renewed confidence to once more increase its presence in the more traditional industrial combustion side of the business, which delivers burner systems for high temperature processing factories including cement, lime, alumina, nickel and iron ore pellets plants.



An FCT burner in action at an iron ore pelletizing plant.



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WORKFORCE, FROM 25 TO 45.

“We realised a few years ago that working only out of Adelaide when you are targeting the world market for industrial combustion was not that great because we’re so far away from our markets,” he said.

“The technology development and overall strategy and marketing is still centralised in Adelaide while each of the satellite offices are developing their own relationships, getting to know their markets intimately and capturing their market share in each of these regions, which is impossible to do working solely out of Australia.

“As a result of taking the company closer to the markets our orders have increased quite spectacularly... it’s actually been more successful than what we imagined.”

FCT International now comprises three companies: FCT Flames, FCT Combustion and FCT ACTech, an online instrumentation business.

FCT Flames continues to lead the ornamental flame industry and has supplied equipment to dozens of major global events, including every summer Olympics since 2000.

But the rise of FCT Combustion is driving the latest growth spurt.

FCT Combustion is experiencing dramatic growth with its burner technology for the iron ore pelletizing industry, fitting out more than a dozen plants with burner equipment in countries such as Sweden, Algeria, China, Brazil and the United States.

The success of FCT Combustion has meant the industrial side of the business provides about 80 per cent of total revenue while the flames business brings in about 20 per cent.

“We were able to win significant projects – these things tend to grow with your reputation – and the last couple of years it’s been our major revenue earner for the



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that iron ore space in the past two or three years.

“At the moment our big projects are in China and Brazil – Vale in Brazil and SinoSteel in China.”

FCT International has won two major export awards in Australia on the back of its strong growth: the Minerals, Energy and Related Services Award at the Business SA 2018 Export Awards in October and Export Business of the Year at the Optus My Business Awards last month.

The company has also been winning new work designing and manufacturing burners for the cement industry capable of utilising a variety of alternative fuel sources including rice husks, sewage, used engine oil and municipal waste.

And it has worked with the University of Adelaide to develop leading gas burner technology, which is helping it win work in the United States as cement plants convert from coal to natural gas.

“It’s a very low emission, high efficiency technology based on different principles to every other burner and it’s giving us a particular advantage in doing gas conversions in North America and what often happens is if customers like the burner then the rest of the scope of a project will normally come to us as well,” Manias said.

“We have done quite a number of those projects in the United States in cement, lime and ore pelletizing as well and there is still a lot of opportunity as more plants switch to natural gas.”

Manias said FCT International was looking to grow its business by providing other equipment such as furnaces and kilns for each project.

He said there were also many parts of the world and industries that the company had yet to target.



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“The growth prospects are fairly well unlimited it’s really around how we can bring that about.”