

## Bridgestone Earthmover Tyres: Looking to the future

Bridgestone globally and BSEM in Australia have made a number of strategic decisions set to enhance the company's business and strength for many years to come.

Bridgestone globally has committed to a multi billion



Looking to the future: World's largest high volume OTR tyre repair plant.

dollar investment program to increase the production and availability of its OTR tyres.

BSEM in Australia recognises that the country's mining and resources sector is set to remain a powerhouse industry for generations to come, and it is in an extremely strong position to respond to market demands as the new Bridgestone facilities come online.

As part of this, BSEM has made a number of core commitments:

- To the ongoing development of its products and services to meet the increasing demands faced by its customers
- To continue its focus on staff and customer training, to help better manage OTR tyres performance and safety
- To expanding its servicing, wheel sales and maintenance offerings along with its OTR tyre repairs business.

This focus will ensure the company's continued development and strength, giving customers, staff and other stakeholders increased confidence in its future and ability to meet all challenges.

## BSEM's long-term commitment to education and training

As mining equipment grew ever-larger in size, confusion often arose about optimum tyre selection for the larger machines.

BSEM was the first – and for a long time – the only company to offer customers educational seminars designed to assist with OTR tyre selection and management.

Conducted nationally and attracting up to 60

customers at a time, BSEM's seminars, along with its complementary approaches, have cemented the company's reputation as reliable experts in the application of OTR tyres, and related products and services.

Over the past decade particularly BSEM has worked at improving its resources on a national basis. The result? Massive expenditure on building and developing new branch facilities, and the introduction of Diversified Products with Topy Wheels, Wheel Repairs, OTR Tyre Repair, Servicing and Service, Service Support Products, Firestone Forestry and Industrial tyres.

These all complement BSEM's core business: the sale of OTR tyres. And their collective success testifies to the viability of BSEM supporting customers at all levels while setting industry-leading standards for product support and service.



Training – key to BSEM future.

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# IMPRINT

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## Bridgestone Earthmover Tyres: celebrating 30 years



30 years on, Bridgestone Earthmover Tyres (BSEM) is a major supplier to the mining industry, employing over 200 people around Australia.

**In December 2011, Bridgestone Earthmover Tyres celebrated the 30th anniversary of its setting up in Australia – giving Bridgestone's off-the-road (OTR) tyres business a solid base for growth in this country. In this special edition of Imprint, we look at the birth of Bridgestone Earthmover Tyres, and how it has got to its pre-eminent position in today's challenging and competitive OTR tyre market.**

Back in the mid-1970s, when Australia's mining industry was still relatively small, two visiting Bridgestone tyre representatives, Keith Minobe and

Kevin Yamamoto, came up with a radical concept: they wanted to establish a specialist company to sell Bridgestone OTR tyres in Australia directly to customers.

At the time, Japanese trading companies, including Mitsui and Marubeni, distributed the Japan-based Bridgestone OTR tyre range on a global basis through dealers.

However, successful lobbying by Mr Minobe and Mr Yamamoto saw Bridgestone Earthmover Tyres Pty Ltd (BSEM) registered on December 15, 1981, with Ken

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## Bridgestone Earthmover Tyres: celebrating 30 years *continued*



*BSEM 30th year celebrations were held across Australia.*

Minimakawa as managing director.

Very soon after its formation, BSEM acquired a number of businesses and set up distribution centres in Sydney, the Hunter Valley, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth. Brisbane and other sites followed as market demands dictated.

The challenge facing BSEM in those early days was the fact that it was distributing a product with a limited profile in the resources sector.

Its first step was to set about understanding the demands and requirements of its customers.

Getting to know the customer and understanding the customers needs became an obsessive focus for the company. So did supplying a product that exceeded customers' expectations.

BSEM's approach was to train its staff in providing exemplary customer service. High on the agenda were frequent site visits, listening carefully to customers and reporting feedback.

In tandem with this, the company also undertook numerous studies: weight studies, operating condition studies, anything that could help improve tyre life and product performance reports were constantly lodged with the BSJ Technical Centre in Japan.

This intensity contrasted sharply with competitors' attitudes at the time, many of which could only be described as "casual".

This vital body of knowledge gathered by the BSEM team of OTR tyre specialists drove research and

development for the product, which in turn quickly led to significant product advances and performance gain – to the point where Bridgestone OTR tyres were soon acknowledged and demanded on a national basis.

Today, BSEM employs more than 200 people at 13 facilities in key regional and mining centres around Australia and a further 200 people in 6 facilities throughout Papua New Guinea.

It continues to explore the customer requirements essential to product development while its OTR tyres, with their reputation for quality and improving productivity, are seen as an essential strategic purchase, not just a consumable item.



*Takashi (Tony) Yokoyama welcomes colleagues and guests to the Sydney celebrations.*

## Insights from a BSEM founder and veteran

Kevin Yamamoto, who was instrumental in setting up BSEM, and was the longest serving managing director of BSEM from 1985 until 1995, before returning to Japan to head up the company's OTR division. Kevin joined the BSEM 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations on March 10<sup>th</sup> and here he shares some insights on the development of the Bridgestone brand in Australia, and the company's highly successful mining radial tyre ranges.

An important element in the success of BSEM in Australia was Bridgestone Japan's decision to make its OTR tyre business separate from its non-OTR tyre operations.

At the time there were many technical difficulties associated with manufacturing giant OTR tyres, however, our team in Australia managed to convince BSJ that the OTR business should be independent and totally responsible for the divisions' success.

This was a critical requirement as the success of BSEM would be based on high quality product that suited customer requirements.

Today, I am still amazed at BSEM's growth over the past 30 years. Pivotal to that success has been BSEM's continuous efforts in improving both its product quality and the quality of our people.

The point of difference between BSEM and its major competitors has been its strategy of always talking to our customers directly, while being technically orientated.

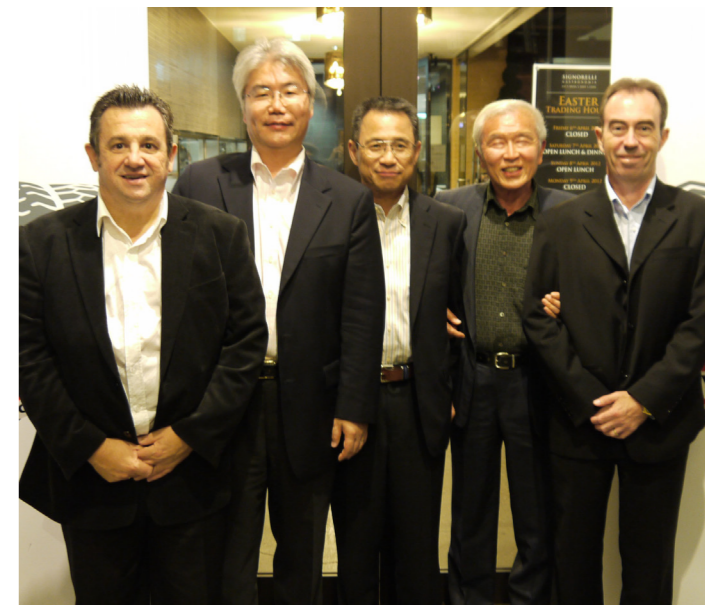
During BSEM's time in Australia, we have had three major suppliers competing for the global mining sector during the difficult economic times of the 1980s and 1990s. It is hard to imagine now, but mines were closed or production cut due to decreased demand for minerals, along with lower commodity prices.

Other tyre makers had already moved away from the giant OTR radial tyre business, unable to sustain massive investment required for radialisation.

Although we at Bridgestone and BSEM also had difficult times, we continued to focus on end-user benefits, continuously working on a technology-based service – including continuous data collection for further quality development.

From the perspective of mine management, not a lot has changed in the past 30 years. In my experience, the three issues that drove the market then remain drivers today.

Safety was, and still is today, a major issue for mine management and to help address this, BSEM became the first manufacturer to educate and train on-site



*BSEM directors Andrew Andreou (left), Takashi (Tony) Yokoyama (2nd left) and Lawrie Mainwaring (right) welcomed Messrs Takeda and Yamamoto to our 30 year celebrations.*

personnel, including workshop foremen and truck operators, about safe conduct relating to tyre and rim maintenance.

Our field engineering and 'field follow' activity saw BSEM engineers examining damage caused by cut and heat to scrapped tyres.

This led to checking haul road conditions, recommending changed mining plans to take into account haul road distances and truck speed, combined with using scales to verify load distribution and payload.

And of course, this continued development of product has enabled BSEM to keep pace with increased production of mining operations and the new designs of mining equipment.

These activities continue today; BSEM's customer-focused spirit continues to characterise our business and, to a large extent, differentiate us from other suppliers.

Into the future, BSEM needs to continuously challenge itself and provide our customers with a service approach that starts with supplying the best quality tyres and then continuously looks at ways to contribute to increased mine productivity and minimised downtime.

I am truly honoured to have been invited to share in the BSEM 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations and I am amazed and so proud of what BSEM is today, far exceeding my original vision. Today BSEM is a truly remarkable organisation.