

STRONG OPTIMISM AND UNITY HELPING THE INDUSTRY SUCCEED

In my 15-plus years serving as Chief Executive Officer of the AAAA, I can't recall a period where there has been as much enthusiasm and unity across the industry as we are experiencing currently

There is a collective 'team spirit' underpinning the steady stream of innovation and productivity that our industry is known for.

There's a variety of reasons why this is the case depending on your point of view, but I think it stems from a combination of factors. These factors have been evolving over recent months and years to reach a sweet spot of positivity for our current outlook.

It is fair to say that COVID, as much as we all want to forget it, has played a role. During this difficult time circumstances converged to create an economic boom for much of the industry, which continued beyond lockdowns and booster shots. Furthermore, the restrictions of that period renewed our appreciation for face-to-face interactions, and that has carried forward into industry attendance at events across the nation.

Another aspect of this optimism has been as a result of our expanding membership levels. More businesses are realising the positive impact the AAAA plays supporting them. One of the strongest examples of this was our successful campaign championing the implementation of the Motor Vehicle information Scheme (MVIS) and Right to Repair. Workshops across the country have now experienced firsthand how our work directly benefits their business. Knowing achievements like this are possible for our industry is a powerful agent for confidence and optimism as we move forward through current and emerging challenges.

Reaching more businesses through increased member levels also enables us to directly communicate to a larger cross section of the industry and conduct a variety of exclusive member events, which are experiencing unprecedented attendance.

Our recent Annual General Meeting (AGM) was

a perfect reflection of this industry enthusiasm, with over 100 guests joining us for the event in Melbourne. As dry as financial reports and general overviews of strategic wins and future plans can be, we kept these reports succinct and added an engaging Q&A session with Noel Meehan, the Chief Executive Officer of BAPCOR. Noel was another voice of optimism, imparting his industry wisdom, and sharing how proud we should be of our incredible industry.

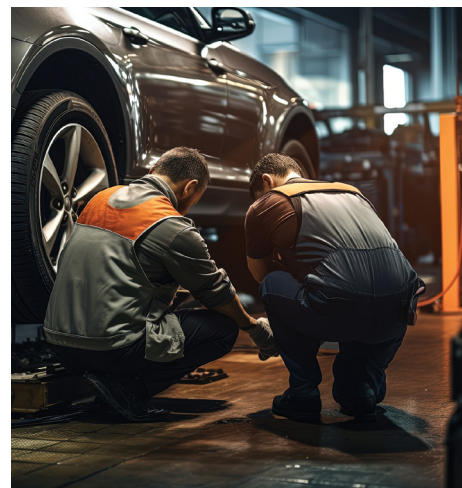
Something else that really stood out for me at the AGM was the diversity of attendees. In my earlier years at the AAAA, our AGMs were much smaller and attendees were nearly exclusively male. This year's AGM was starkly different, with a huge contingent of women present in the buzzing room.

I'm very proud to see that as an industry we are turning this tide and that women are making up a larger percentage of our industry, not just in office roles, but also on the workshop floors. I look forward to this positive shift continuing.

The industry positivity continues across our specialist councils. The 4WD Industry Council (4WDIC) has been extremely active this year, with valuable networking events across the country. Our Australian Repairers Council of Australia (ARCA) is taking strides representing the independent service and repair segment, while the Automotive Products Manufacturers and Exporters Council (APMEC) supports our automotive component industry domestically and in our key export markets.

We are currently engaging with the industry about reinvigorating the Performance Racing and Tuning Council (PRTC) to better support this exciting area of our industry moving forward. You can learn more about our specialist councils, and how you can get involved on our website at www.aaaa.com.au

Another showcase of optimism in the industry has come from a slightly counter intuitive area, the forthcoming transition to EV. Far from being a doom and gloom assessment of the automotive service and repair industry being on the verge of extinction, our industry is actively anticipating and adapting to the opportunities ahead. The AAAA is proudly taking the lead on this vitally important industry transition to support the industry in a number of ways, and we are delighted to see so many workshops, technicians and manufacturers diving into training, research, and development to create expertise and opportunities for themselves and their customers.



On a final note of positivity, excitement for the Australian Auto Aftermarket Expo and Collision Repair Expo is ramping up. It will be an extremely valuable, and enjoyable event and it is free for anyone in the trade, so please join us in Melbourne across April 11 – 13, 2024: register at aftermarketexpo.com.au or collisionrepair.com.au to secure your place.

If you want to supercharge your learning at Expo, due to popular demand we have just announced an exciting new technical training program. This optional paid program will feature some of the worlds' top diagnostic technicians and other world-class industry experts. Tickets are limited, and available via the Expo website, so don't miss out!

Of course, our industry still has challenges like the skills shortage which we are working very hard on, and any change can create uncertainty but riding this wave of positivity and with a real sense of team spirit, together we can accomplish great things.

There is no doubt that we are stronger together, and that more members means more influence, ideas, and momentum to achieve great outcomes.

We welcome industry feedback and look forward to hearing from you at info@aaaa.com.au or 03 9545 3333.



Stuart Charity
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