

ONE HUNDRED NOT OUT

Bus Stop Sales & Service delivered its 100th Yutong bus in Australia during early May this year. ABC takes a look at how it got started and how things are going for one of Yutong's biggest dealerships mid-way through 2017



Bus Stop Sales & Service, headed up by director Pete White and supported by his father Dick White, delivered its first Yutong in March 2014 to a western Queensland mining operator.

Since that time, the company has established itself as the leading supplier of Yutong vehicles in Australia and become one of the nation's largest suppliers of new and used buses and coaches.



According to Pete White, the most demand right now seems to be for vehicles in the mid-sized sector – up to 40 seats.

“There is a limited range of quality products in this realm and, as such, this has been a key focus of our business, with these vehicles comprising about 65 per cent of all sales,” he says.

“We are finding that the industry demand is generally coming from the education and inbound tourist sector.

“So working to customise vehicle solutions to schools and universities, in addition to international clients, has proved very effective.”

The 100th vehicle, a new Yutong 39 passenger school/coach, was delivered to Brisbane-based operator Charter Services Qld early last month. It is the customer's fifth Yutong overall, having initially purchased two second-hand vehicles before upgrading them with three brand new models.

Charter Services Qld managing director Jeff Osborne says he is very pleased, not only with the quality of the product and value, but also with the aftersales support and parts availability.

“The Bus Stop Sales and Service team strive to support my bus operations in every way,” Osborne says.

To celebrate the milestone, Yutong Australia general manager Neil Wang travelled to Brisbane to participate in the festivities at Bus Stop's Archerfield sales and service facility.

“This milestone reflects the industry-leading sales and customer partnership programs that the Bus Stop team has implemented across its Australian dealership locations,” Wang says.

Bus Stop Sales & Service currently has three bases in Queensland, northern New South Wales and Western Australia.

As a Yutong dealer based in Brisbane, having supplied 100 vehicles of this make in just over three years is a good effort. Pete says what operators want most when buying a new bus is pretty simple.

“We find that operators look for value, service and support,” he says.

“We focus on fostering a relationship over the vehicle's life, rather than only during the initial sale or warranty period.”

“The owner of our 100th Yutong, Jeff Osborne, first purchased a second-hand Yutong from us which we had traded back to help him into a new vehicle of the same model, even though the used bus was only four years old.”

CAN'T BEAT EXPERIENCE

The Whites came to be Yutong dealers after a long history in the bus business as well as other industries.

Pete had a career spanning 12 years at Virgin Blue Airlines – culminating with managing the brand through its rebirth as Virgin Australia. He grew up in the bus industry under his father Dick, who has more than 40 years' experience in the bus industry.

This included ownership of Motorcoach Australia, a bus manufacturer in Brisbane, as well as long-term positions at Denning and Leyland in sales and service.

In late 2013, Yutong identified Dick as its ideal partner across a number of Australian states.

As the Yutong brand had only recently launched in Australia, Dick encouraged Pete to return to the bus industry and assist to build the Yutong brand. Bus Stop Sales & Service was then formed in January 2014.

“Over the last three years, Yutong has led the field as the fastest growing brand [by sales] in the country,” Pete says.

Its head office based in Archerfield, Brisbane has a fully equipped mechanical and service facility, accompanied by more than \$350,000 worth of genuine spare parts to support the Yutong product.

“Our new and used sales locations in Brisbane are spread across two sites to ensure that Bus Stop has adequate new and used vehicles to match their customers' requirements,” Pete explains.

CHANGING ATTITUDES

There are some operators who are still not willing to fully embrace Chinese bus brands, despite their relative affordability. However, the team has seen a definite shift in these attitudes over the last three years, and also in the quality of build.

“The Chinese bus product has developed significantly since the early imports pre-2010,” Pete reveals. “Since that time we believe that all manufacturers have continued to refine their products to meet the markets expectations.

“Based on our own perception of Chinese buses, we were initially hesitant to endorse the Yutong brand but, after personally visiting the manufacturing facilities of the world's biggest bus builder, any quality concerns were extinguished as Yutong is at the forefront of quality compliance.”

The refined manufacturing lines are very different to the low turnover products where it is very hard to ensure a consistent product on every vehicle, according to Pete.



We focus on fostering a relationship over the vehicle's life

“Every Yutong bus product is subjected to the equivalent of one million kilometres of testing across all terrains, including 24-hour-a-day testing at Yutong's own test tracks in Zhengzhou, China,” Pete says.

Although Bus Stop Sales & Service is primarily a new bus sales facility, it also buys, sells and trades used buses. Pete says used bus and coach sales roughly equate to about 20 per cent of the total operation.

There are currently four Yutong agents in Australia which are retailing the product, and Bus Stop Sales & Service has the largest area coverage of any dealer throughout Australia.

Bus Stop Brisbane has two sales outlets in Archerfield. The second location was added in 2017 due to customer demand. There is also Bus Stop NSW based at Ballina in Northern NSW and Bus Stop Perth in Western Australia.

Clockwise from top left: A Yutong for school application; Australia Zoo is on board; The Bus Stop Sales & Service team celebrate

Pete says its rapid growth can be attributed to providing an honest and genuine service and looking at things from a bus and coach operator's perspective. This has led to repeat customers and allowed them to grow, providing the revenue needed to expand into new locations.

“We are very pleased with the support that the industry has provided us in launching and growing the company,” he says.

“Our experience and commitment to customer support gave us a good platform to start with. Since that time, good old service and support all day, every day has ensured that we continue to obtain business from our competitors.”

Pete has also re-invested heavily to develop Bus Stop across Australia, with the objective of being the ‘go-to’ location for all bus needs across the school bus, tourist, coach and urban bus sectors.

“I've always recruited staff based on attitude rather than their skill set.

“The can-do culture at Bus Stop across both the operational and commercial teams, extensive parts back-up, and the quality Yutong product has proved to be a winning combination.”