

# Stamas' presidential decree to assist SMEs grow their businesses

*Director of GfK Facility Services, **George Stamas**, spoke with INCLEAN's editor Kim Taranto about his role as national president of Building Service Contractors Association of Australia (BSCAA) and what he'd like to achieve during his time at the top.*



George Stamas

Stamas started on the Victorian division committee and then served as state president for four years, three of which as the national vice president under former BSCAA national president Terry Corby. He stepped up into the role of national president 12 months ago and is privileged to be filling the big shoes left behind.

"I come from cleaning; I started out cleaning part time and went through the ranks, worked my way up the management layers and had some really good employers that taught me a lot," he shared. "To come from that and work all the way up to be president of the BSCAA – that's just an immense honour, and I hope I fulfil the role as diligently as Terry did.

"I'm involved in the industry because I have a passion for cleaning; it's in my family going back quite a few generations," he shared. "But at a BSCAA level, the big organisations don't need the full support that the association can offer but the smaller SMEs do – and that's where my focus is. We all started off there and I know we can support them more, not just as a state level but a national level."

When Corby and Stamas took over the Association, they had to restructure it, says Stamas. "We needed to reenergise and refocus on the goals of the Association, which is to support our members, give the SMEs a voice, and help them become in the next five to 10 years the larger operators in the industry."

However, Stamas has a few professional goals he'd like to kick during his time as president. "The industry has predominantly

changed in that we were dealing more with property and facility managers, and now we have a new breed of procurers wanting our services." He said. "Even though they are fairly skilled, they need us to support them and guide them when they are making an assessment as they not familiar with the industry and we need to ensure there are maintainable and sustainable outcomes.

"Slowly we are starting to change that, there's a different focus in the Fair Work Ombudsman's office of accountability through various layers, and this is a step in the right direction. Its mostly around education, there's no outcome from passing blame, but teaching and guiding people on how to do it the right way is a solution. We've had some consultants come through our industry and they understand realistic overheads, productivity levels, and are engaged with customers."

Stamas revealed that the constitution for the Association's national office will be revised under his rein and that many of the states are showing signs that they will follow suit. "It's nothing dramatic to how we do business but we wanted to tidy up a fairly old constitution," he said. "It has to be updated so that it's relevant to our current membership and, as the industry changes, we have to change with it."

Having built a company from a handful of people to a larger national employer, Stamas sees his role as leading from the front. "I know what it's like to build and run a business in this industry. You worry about it; you worry about your people; it becomes like a child. It becomes part of you and part of your success, you nurture it. With the common thread of being one of the larger contractors, I see my role as leading from the front," he noted. "I can't preach to the industry if I'm not abiding and supporting all the platforms that we talk about.

One of the issues that Stamas, and the entire cleaning industry has to constantly deal with is 'sham contracting' and his views are quite strict. "I don't want people to mix the term with the real contractors, as there are good workers out there, people who do the right thing," he declared. "The issue should be around what people are paying their staff, as per the award wage.

Contractors get a lot of negativity and the problem is the ones doing the wrong thing take shortcuts and by doing this they create an artificial benchmark, which makes it tough for those doing the right thing," he continued. "But like I said, we are trying to combat this through education.

"I think cleaning has changed. In my old days it was only about the service delivery but that has changed. People are looking for project management, reporting, risk mitigation, OH&S compliance and our customers look at us for those services," he noted. "The service provision is still very important but you need to manage the overall package for the customer, and while that's more cost, I think there's merit contributed to it – not just for the client but for your business as well.

"Customers are happy to engage with companies that understand prohibited conduct, sustainable platforms, green cleaning, and sustainable practices. What I've noticed with high- end customers the master/servant role that existed has disappeared and the dialogue is about partnerships and alliances now.

Stamas finds this heartening. "It shows that we are getting another skill level coming through our industry, and we are being seen for the value we actually provide. We have a different calibre of person coming through. Our people represent the customer, and it's become a blurred line as they work for us delivering a service, but they also work for the customer who owns the brand, so it's a great thing to see," he commended. "Our industry is changing for the better, and I hope to play a part in that."

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