



Air-ride Wind fires up for BlueScope Steel's new furnace

South Australian manufacturer, Air-ride Wind Pty Ltd has fabricated vital components for the \$100 million expansion of BlueScope Steel's Port Kembla Steelworks.

Air-ride Wind supplied large ductwork and a section for the stack, as part of the expansion project which will increase the nominal capacity of the Hot Strip Mill at Port Kembla Steelworks from 2.4 to 2.8 million tonnes per annum.

Expansion plans include the construction of a second walking beam reheat furnace. This will provide capacity to add value to an additional 400,000 tonnes of steel slab per year through further conversion to hot rolled coil.





The additional hot rolled coil production will help to support the expansion of BlueScope Steel's downstream steel coating and painting facilities and also assist in meeting demand for flat steel products.

Air-ride Wind has fabricated five hot air ducts and a section of the stack for the new walking beam reheat furnace. Mainteck Services, a Port Kembla based construction company contracted to part manufacture and erect the new walking beam reheat furnace, approached Air-ride Wind to undertake the work.

"We were recommended to Mainteck Services as a result of previous kiln work we'd completed for Blue Circle Southern Cement," says Peter Hall, Contracts Administrator at Air-ride Wind.

With over 80 employees working from its state-of-the-art premises in Islington, Air-ride Wind is one of the largest manufacturers of wind towers in Australia. Although wind towers are a speciality, the company also undertakes other heavy fabrication work.

"Ninety five percent of our work would be wind towers," explains Peter. "This job was a little bit different for us, but we do undertake other heavy fabrication work when the opportunity arises. This job suited our facilities and capabilities."

About 30 tonnes of 250 Grade XLERPLATE® steel from BlueScope Steel was used for the ductwork, and about 20 tonnes of XLERPLATE® steel was used for the stack. The massive hot air ducts measure nearly three metres in diameter, and range from about five to ten metres in length. The stack is over three metres in diameter, and eight metres long.

The XLERPLATE® for the project was supplied by Smorgon Steel, one of BlueScope Steel's distributors. The steel was delivered to Air-ride Wind's Islington factory already profiled into the shapes required for fabrication. Air-ride Wind then carried out all manufacturing processes including surface treatment and outfitting prior to delivery to the Port Kembla site.

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Peter Hall, Contracts Administrator, Air-ride Wind Pty Ltd



“The schedule for the job was reasonably tight, but everything went very smoothly,” says Peter. “The manufacturing process was simple. The steel is cut and profiled by Smorgon Steel before being delivered to our workshop.

“We then form each duct and weld it. The welds are straightforward, the same system that we use for our towers.

“The duct components are then fitted together. Each section of plate has had elliptical holes cut into it for branches - other pipes that come out of the main ducts so they can bolt onto other areas of the furnace. Fitting the branches into the holes correctly is a complex procedure that requires a great deal of accuracy.”

Above: Fabricated duct and stack sections at Air-ride Wind's Islington, SA works.

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Peter Hall



"Some ducts were a little more complex than others, due to the number of kinks and bends that have been incorporated into their design."

Once each duct was assembled, it was then blasted and painted, and then transported to the site at Port Kembla.

In a project like this, there is little room for error, says Peter. "The partnership between ourselves and Smorgon Steel is critical to the success of the project, and the relationship with BlueScope Steel as the steel provider is equally vital.

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And BlueScope Steel more than fits the bill, especially given that it's an Australian company, supplying Australian-made products. According to Peter, using a local supplier for the project was important. "Our first preference is to use local suppliers wherever possible, provided that they are able to meet the performance and price objective of the project," he says. "We have a good relationship with BlueScope Steel."

Air-ride Wind commenced work on the project in early September 2005. Work was completed in mid November 2005.

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