

SAFER MANHOLES. SMARTER SOLUTIONS

ROADS & INFRASTRUCTURE LEARNS HOW MANHOLE FORM HIRE'S LATEST INNOVATIONS ARE ONCE AGAIN LIFTING INDUSTRY STANDARDS AND DRIVING NEW LEVELS OF SAFETY, EFFICIENCY, AND PERFORMANCE ON WORKSITES ACROSS AUSTRALIA.



Since its beginnings in 1994, Manhole Form Hire has built a reputation as a trusted name in civil construction, delivering certified and patented in-situ forms known for their reliability and strength.

The company was founded by master concreter Cliff Rae-Smith, whose ingenuity in building his own manhole forms in his backyard sparked an industry shift. Rae-Smith's early designs allowed chambers to be cast in-situ, with precision that was previously unheard of, saving time and improving outcomes on work sites across Queensland.

Today, Manhole Form Hire operates out of Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, and the Sunshine Coast – a remarkable expansion from its early days as a small Queensland operation. The company's steady growth reflects not only increasing demand for its trusted systems but also a reputation built on precision, safety, and reliability.

"It's been incredible to see how far we've come," says Managing Director, Barry Kuster.

"Demand has continued to grow year after year, and expanding into these regions allows us to better support contractors working further afield. We're proud to now offer the same trusted service and reliability to projects across a much broader footprint.

DRIVEN BY INNOVATION AND SAFETY

"From the very start, we've looked at how to make the process easier for crews on the ground," says Kuster. "We're not just supplying gear; we're creating solutions that make jobs safer and more efficient."

That mindset has led to a string of innovations that are now industry benchmarks. The latest include improvements to Manhole Form Hire's patented scaffold system, designed to make working at height during pours safer and more efficient. The full scaffold is quick to assemble, straightforward to use, and makes working at height simple and secure.

After listening to customer feedback, the team developed a half-scaffold, ideal for sites with limited space or where a shoring box is in place. Customers asked, and Manhole Form

Left: The new stair system provides safe, stable access to scaffolding and in-situ forms.



Every form is meticulously cleaned and treated to ensure its delivered to site in optimal condition, ready for the next pour.



Images: Manhole Form Hire

Above: Damaged forms are carefully repaired and refinished in-house, maintaining the reliability and performance that customers depend on.

Hire delivered a solution that keeps the same safety assurances while fitting into tighter conditions.

Building on this success, the scaffold arms have been redesigned to allow secure clearance for stairs supplied by Safe Smart Access. Manhole Form Hire has recently added these stairs to its hire fleet, providing a safer and more stable alternative to ladders. Designed with integrated lifting points, the stairs can be positioned with an excavator, eliminating manual handling and improving on-site efficiency.

This upgrade enhances accessibility and ensures crews can work securely and

productively. Fully certified to Australian Standards and engineered for real-world site conditions, it reflects Manhole Form Hire's ongoing commitment to smarter, safer, and more practical designs.

At the core of Manhole Form Hire's operations are its certified inner and outer drums, offered in the largest range of sizes in the industry. Inner drums span from 900 millimetres (mm) to five metres (m), while outer drums range from 1150mm to 5.7m. This versatility

allows contractors to complete projects to exact specifications, whether they're dealing with smaller pits or large-scale chambers with thicker walls.

Kuster explains, "We know every project is different. By offering such a wide range, we give contractors flexibility. They can complete their work

"WE'RE NOT JUST SUPPLYING GEAR; WE'RE CREATING SOLUTIONS THAT MAKE JOBS SAFER AND MORE EFFICIENT."



Designed for confined sites, the half-scaffold improves mobility and safety, with the backdrop form ensuring a clean pipe exit at the base.

without compromise, knowing we can supply the right forms for the job."

Manhole Form Hire has also refined the tools that make the process smoother. Pour boards, for example, were developed to allow concrete to be poured directly from an agitator truck while keeping the inner shaft free from excess material. This not only reduces waste but also helps crews achieve a neater, safer, and faster pour.

The company's heavy-duty boxes are another standout innovation. Designed for large square or rectangular boxes, the panels can be configured into L-shapes or T-shapes simply by reversing the corners.

Kuster explains that they're "easy to assemble, adaptable, and perfect for custom requirements."

Manhole Form Hire's heavy duty panels were the first of their kind in



Heavy-duty panels and corners easily configure into L-shapes for flexibility on-site.

the industry and remain unmatched for flexibility and ease of use. The panels range from 150mm to 2100mm and can be configured to suit customers' exact needs.

Another safety advancement is the introduction of patented lifting lugs, designed to enhance the structural integrity of each form. These make the handling of heavy components far simpler, allowing crews to move them with confidence and efficiency while maintaining strict safety standards.

Together, these innovations form a complete system that has transformed how manholes are poured on site. Crews can now work faster, with less physical strain, fewer hazards, and more predictable results.

"Safety has always been at the heart of what we do," Kuster says. "If we can reduce risk for the crew while also saving them time, then we've achieved what we set out to do."

SUPPORT THAT DELIVERS

For Manhole Form Hire, innovation doesn't end with the equipment itself. The company prides itself on offering comprehensive support to every customer, from helping select the right forms for a job to answering questions about assembly and setup.

"Our gear is straightforward to use, but sometimes customers like the reassurance of having us pop out to site and walk them through it," Kuster explains.

"It's that extra bit of support that gives crews confidence and keeps jobs running smoothly."

This customer-first mindset has

cemented strong relationships with contractors across the country. It has also contributed to the company's reputation as a trusted partner rather than just a supplier.

Kuster emphasises that this approach comes from the company's roots.

"Cliff built this business on reliability. If he said he'd deliver, he delivered. That's something we've kept front and centre to this day," he says.

The legacy of Cliff Rae-Smith continues to shape the company's direction. His eye for detail and passion for innovation still inspire the team, while Kuster's own leadership has added new layers of inventiveness and efficiency.

Having joined the company in 2002, Kuster has been instrumental in driving quality control, developing new patents, and overseeing the national expansion. His ability to solve problems quickly has earned him the respect of colleagues and customers alike.

Under his stewardship, Manhole Form Hire has become not only a provider of forms but also a driver of industry standards.

Each new piece of equipment introduced is carefully considered, tested, and certified before being released to the market.

This focus on quality has allowed the company to stay ahead, even in a competitive environment. While others

may attempt to replicate their designs, Manhole Form Hire continues to lead through originality and reliability.

Looking to the future, Kuster sees plenty of opportunities for further innovation.

"We'll keep investing in smarter, safer equipment," he says. "The industry is evolving, and our goal is to make sure crews always have access to the best solutions available."

For contractors, this means more than just efficiency, it's the assurance that every pour will be backed by equipment that has been designed with safety and practicality in mind.

It also means knowing that behind every piece of equipment is a team committed to support, service, and continuous improvement.

That combination of innovation, certification, and customer service has made Manhole Form Hire a leader in its field, a position it has held for over three decades.

From a backyard vision to a nationwide



Engineered solutions are setting the benchmark for manhole construction across Australia.

operation, the company has never lost sight of its founding values. Precision. Reliability. Innovation.

And with each new system developed, each form delivered, and each chamber poured, those values continue to shape

the future of civil construction.

"We've got some exciting new complementary products in development, innovations the industry hasn't seen before. Watch this space," Kuster says. ■



Manhole Form Hire's elongated drum demonstrates on-site versatility, the freedom only in-situ construction can provide.