

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Long Term Okuma Managing Director – Phil Hayes Retires**

It is confirmed today that Mr. Philip Hayes, Managing Director of Okuma Australia Pty Ltd and Okuma New Zealand Limited will step down after a career spanning 27 years with the Okuma brand.

Mr Hayes, who had gained 14 years’ experience with machine tools and robotics at John Hart Pty Ltd, commenced with the Okuma brand at Gilbert Lodge and Company Limited in 1991 at the very depth of the Keating recession. He was confronted with a machine tool business that needed significant change management suitable for emerging trends in new technologies, customer service, marketing, sales methodology and applications support.

Accordingly, the machine tools division of Gilbert Lodge was rapidly overhauled and fortunes began to change almost immediately. A fire that destroyed most of the Oakleigh premises couldn’t prevent the Company moving ahead in leaps and bounds and achieving a market leading position within 3 years.

In a revived cooperation with the management of Okuma in Japan, massive annual gains were posted year on year. Valuable local assistance by Geoff Coffey, then of Atlas Steels, and employees placed in strategic positions, attracted and gained the trust of the best of the best toolmakers, manufacturers and jobbing shops. Their investments delivered a complete transformation of the Company and helped set in concrete the foundations for one of the most successful and consistent operations in machine tools in Australia.

In 2002, on behalf of Okuma Corporation in Japan, Mr Hayes negotiated the purchase of all the shares in Gilbert Lodge and Company Limited, by then known as Atlas CNC Machines, from Email Limited and in 2004 established Okuma New Zealand Limited and appointed long-time Okuma champion Fred deJong as GM Okuma New Zealand.

Mr Hayes said “Most people gave me little chance of recovering Gilbert Lodge. But it was what I strongly wanted. I also employed the people that I wanted. Those who weren’t suited to a new and active regime soon found out and made appropriate decisions about their own futures for themselves. Our employees over the years have done well for the various incarnations of our business but fabulously well for our hundreds and hundreds of Customers whose trust we have to thank for honouring our hard work and our truly great Okuma machines”.

Mr Hayes went on to say “It’s been a role I’ve truly enjoyed and I depart leaving a clear path for my successor, Dean McCarroll who has held the post of GM at Okuma Australia since 2002. Dean will explore and continue to deliver innovative change and seek sensible progress of Okuma’s subsidiaries in both Australia and New Zealand.”

Mr. Hayes said of many highlights, the greatest was the Company’s work with Ford Motor Company in Geelong and his biggest regret is the closure of Ford Motor Company’s manufacturing facilities in Geelong. “Bob Hallett, Brian Makin, Lindsay Goss, Noel Wenning and even Don Deveson were all men of vision in full scale automotive manufacturing. They are sadly missed from today’s fray” Mr Hayes concluded.

Externally of Okuma, it was Mr. Hayes, as President of the Institute of Machine Tools Australasia (IMTA), who initiated, guided and orchestrated the merger with The Australian Machine Tool Association (AMTA). That merger resulted in the birth of AMTIL and the securing of the exclusive rights to the AUSTECH exhibition.

**ENDS**

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