



Faster, smarter cheaper

Founder and Managing Director of Williames Pty Ltd, Geoff Williames, speaks to *Vegetables Australia* about how mechanisation in the vegetable industry has developed over the past 35 years, and how his company continues to be at the forefront of innovations in the industry.

Faster, smarter, cheaper. This simple philosophy has been the cornerstone of Williames Pty Ltd—one of the original design and manufacturing firms that ignited mechanisation in the vegetable industry—for more than 35 years.

Williames, you could say, was there when it all began. When

mechanisation first started to have an impact in the vegetable industry, Geoff Williames seized the opportunity, joining forces with nursery owners Bob and Bruce Bone, who he said were pioneers at utilising technology and mechanising their operation.

“They (the Bone brothers) really believed that mechanisation was the way forward and the industry owes a lot to their commitment to

improvement,” Mr Williames said.

Williames is still partnering with vegetable growers and nurseries more than three decades later, working with both big and small operators, and maintaining the same values that saw it become a success in Australia and overseas.

“We have always tried to strip away the complexity, to design machinery that does the job and takes the load off people’s

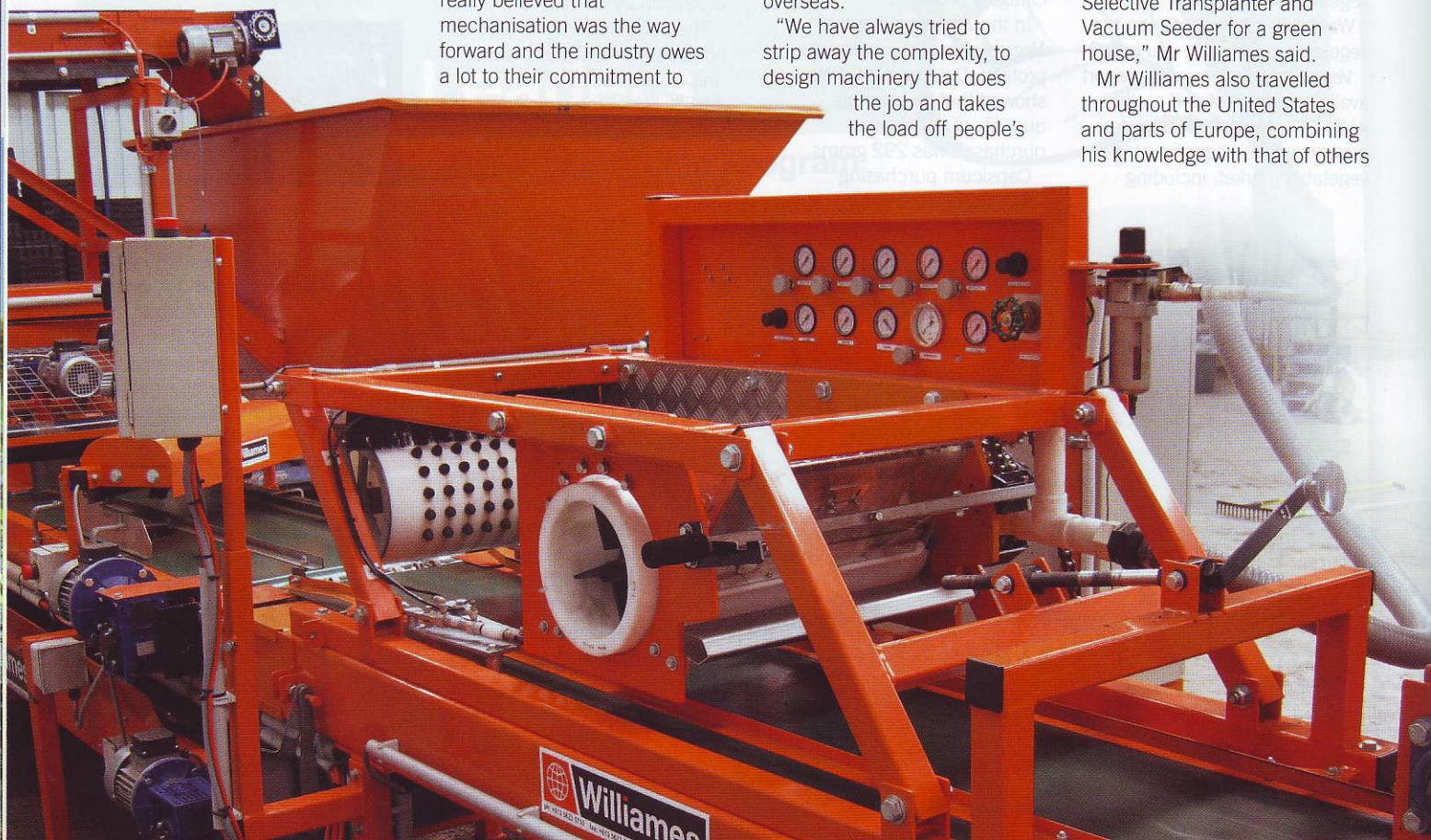
backs, and stick it on steel,” Mr Williames said.

From small beginnings

Williames made several significant advances in the late seventies, including designing world-first equipment.

“To my knowledge, we designed the world’s first Selective Transplanter and Vacuum Seeder for a green house,” Mr Williames said.

Mr Williames also travelled throughout the United States and parts of Europe, combining his knowledge with that of others





who also saw opportunities to increase the industry's reliance on mechanisation.

Working with the industry and continually listening to where the industry wanted to go, Mr Williames said, was the reason why the company had been able to deliver innovative equipment.

"We have been good listeners to the industry."

"Our aim has been simple; we have tried to design equipment in the simplest form for our clients; tried to get them the best return and therefore the best results."

"It has been a joint effort. We wouldn't be successful without our partners in the industry."

Mr Williames said the level of mechanisation that was now evident in the industry was exceptional.

"What we're seeing now is

very professional systems, computerised nursery systems that can track a product through various treatment sprays and handling," he said.

"The nursery industry is now leaning towards total system automation."

Perfect partners

Mr Williames said the company's greatest asset was its ability to work with clients to reach a desired outcome.

"We don't go along to force an idea on a person or a company. We look at their business plan and where they want to go. We look at what their practices are and what they want to achieve."

"Man is worth what man produces. If you can produce more efficiently, then there is a payback from day one."

Mr Williames added that

with the ability to segment production lines and isolate areas that were causing the greatest impact on a grower's profitability, Williames was able to design equipment that could be incorporated into an existing production line without having negative flow-on effects.

Although the industry seemed to be geared toward larger, more professional organisations, Mr Williames said opportunities would always be there for smaller firms who could find ways to do it better and cheaper than everyone else.

"We're happy to work with people who are new in the industry and continue to work with them as they grow," he said.

"A good example of this is Boomaroo Nurseries, who we supplied with their first

transplant seeder. They are now one of the leading nurseries in Australia and we continue to work with them and find ways to increase their level of mechanisation."

Williames too, has gone through similar transformation in recent years, as it has sought to become a more professional organisation.

An understanding of customers and a constant eye on developing technology have Williames on the path to remain a leader in mechanisation and automated technology in the vegetable industry.

i For more information about the range of Williames products available, please visit www.williames.com

Celery and sprouts under the spotlight

Topical talk at the Australian Celery and Sprout Growers Association AGM

Around 40 of the country's celery and sprout growers gathered in Melbourne in February for the Australian Celery and Sprout Growers Association's Annual General Meeting.

It was the turn of the Association's Victorian state branch to host this year's event, which focused on the current issues affecting the industry and heard reports from representatives of each state.

The meeting also welcomed AUSVEG CEO Richard Mulcahy as guest speaker.

Celery grower Therese Schreurs, of Clyde in Victoria, told *Vegetables Australia* that the major subject of concern discussed at the meeting was that of some growers purchasing second-hand cartons and packing their produce in them without changing the label.

Mrs Schreurs explained that this practise had serious ramifications on the traceability of produce that was placed in them.

Chairman of the Victoria Celery Growers Association, Silvio Favero, said the use of second-hand cartons with incorrect labels could also have repercussions on maximum residue limits (MRLs). He said that the Association was lobbying for a crackdown on use of second-hand cartons in this way.

Members also discussed industry matters such as water issues, and heard about the Association's promotional activities in stores and in schools.