



THE LITTLE AUSSIE THAT CAN

The PA People is taking on the best in the world and winning.

When Chris Dodd started working at the PA People in the early 1980s it was a holiday job while he was attending university.

Thirty-five years later he's the director of the company and has watched the business grow to now have 40 full-time staff, new products and an uncanny ability to compete on the world stage.

The PA People has three main business focuses:

- 1 Sales and hire of PA equipment to schools, churches and other small organisations;
- 2 Installing AV systems in major stadiums nationally; and
- 3 Event communications, which is now seeing the company travel the world to assist with major event logistics.

"What we're known for is large venues and stadiums. The Adelaide Oval redevelopment, Dockland Stadium in Melbourne, Canberra Stadium, the Sydney Football Stadium, the Sydney Cricket Ground, ANZ, Newcastle, Carrara Stadium (Gold Coast), Robina Stadium, The Gabba, Lang Park and installations in around 30 performing arts centres, including the Opera House, are all our venues," he says.

Aside from the organic growth of sales and hire of PA equipment to small clients, the big mover for the company has been its expertise in event communications which really began at the Sydney Olympics.

"Before 1996 we were one of the leading production rental houses in the country, providing equipment to the touring [band] market," Dodd explains.

"In 1996 we had to make a decision to invest many millions of dollars to maintain our revenue in this space. We made a decision not to do so and to exit this sector.

"But as we came towards the Sydney Olympics we realised that there was still an opportunity to provide service in the specialty rental space that we came to call event communications and which centred on providing operational capabilities for ceremonies and sporting presentations and functions at events like the Olympic Games.

"We did that for the Sydney Olympics, thinking that it would be a one off. Then we got called to provide ceremonies communication solutions in Athens, and we won that. The reality is that today there are only two companies in the world that provide these services to large scale events on a worldwide basis."

Put simply, what they provide are two-way radio communications devices and the necessary hardware and IT infrastructure that drives the process. And, with events becoming more complex, the systems are becoming far more advanced.

At the European Games in Baku in 2015 the PA People provided 1200 two-way radios with 100 channels which were then interfaced to around 400 head-sets and 40 high definition video cameras and monitoring systems.

"If you look at the Sydney Olympics, we provided 100 radios and the customer provided another 3 or 400, and you could count the number of radio channels on your fingers," Dodd explains.

"Events are becoming far more complex which is why they are calling on us to provide them with the solutions.

"We believe international business will grow. We're gearing up for that. The job we just came off was UAE National Day. Traditionally an event of that nature wouldn't attract a producer of the calibre who was used - Five Currents from the US - nor would it attract people like us.

"We also completed a job in the middle of the year - the 550th anniversary of Kazakhstan. Jobs like that traditionally have not used international producers or people like us, or require the



F1 in Melbourne.

complexity that we would be asked to resolve.

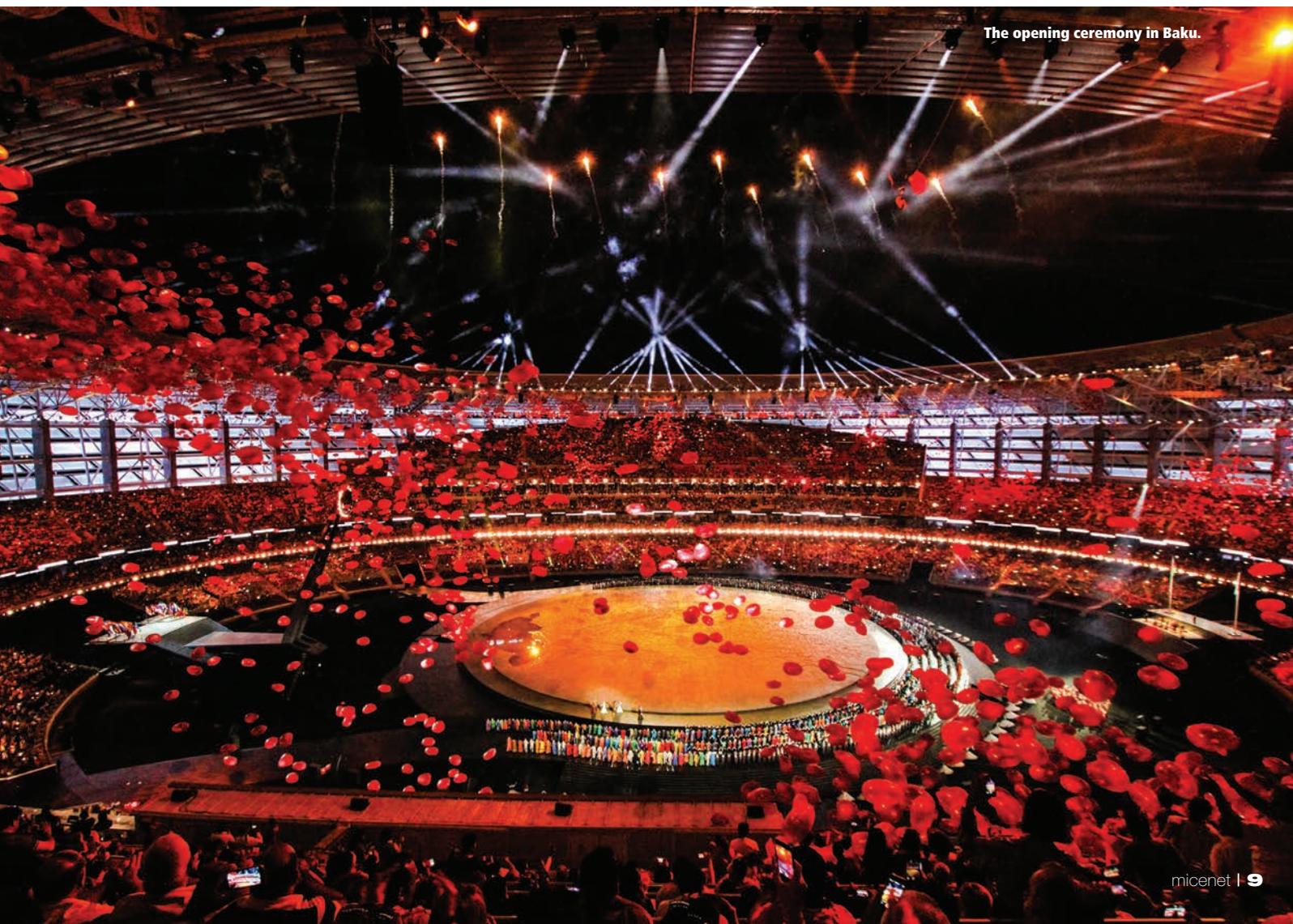
“The number of sporting events is increasing, and the number of country events are growing.”

Dodd said he was proud of all the events the PA People has been involved in, including its regular local client, the Australian Grand Prix, however, the European Games in Baku was a flagship one for the company in 2015.

“It represented, to the best of our knowledge, the largest system of its kind. It was bigger in terms of equipment than the London Olympics and the Sochi Olympics. It’s fair to say it was a very technical show and required a lot of communications management.

“The show we’re likely to see at the Brazil Olympics will be very cast focused in comparison to the European Games which was very technically focused, and they required a different skill set and a different communications requirement.”

“We’re looking forward to continuing to grow in this space.” **m**



The opening ceremony in Baku.