

Offering a Customised Product

MELBOURNE-based manufacturer GSB Chemicals has had a long apprenticeship in the printing industry - since 1954, in fact. Originally established by managing director Graham Byrnes as a general chemical company supplying paint strippers and surface coating cleaners, the business is focusing on developing specialist expertise and customer service in silicone emulsions, blanket and roller washes and fountain solutions for the printing industry.

General manager Tennyson Byrnes is actively investing R&D dollars in this area, and it is paying off: "Printing accounts for about 35 per cent of our business now. It's an area we want to grow in."

GSB Chemicals has always been involved in the printing field, but has previously marketed its products under various companies' banners. Yet that is all changing now: the GSB management team has its sights firmly fixed on expansion under its own name and will open a Sydney office at the end of this year.

The company aims to provide a full range of press consumables that are Australian made, with as many locally sourced ingredients as possible, and are tailored to the Australian market and to the individual needs of each pressroom.

Says Tennyson Byrnes: "We listen to the printer, the guy actually using the products, and make the product to suit him. Most printers have the same basic needs, so we adapt where necessary to suit individual presses and working styles."

Technical manager Mladen Dugec has been with the company for 18 months and has previously studied waste management of printing chemicals in the USA and Europe. "High speed web presses are an area of interest and challenge to us, and we have been developing silicones for heatset presses and fountain solution for newspaper presses," he said.

"We're doing a trial with Streamline Press in Brunswick at the moment. They print mainly foreign language and specialty newspapers with short runs and tight deadlines. We've had our fountain solution running for a few weeks now and it's solved many of the catch-up problems they were having."

Dugec's interest is in making every GSB product not only technically the best, but also in keeping environmentally damaging aspects to a minimum. The product list is extensive and shows a definite bias towards specialised solutions in all areas including web offset and UV. "People want to reduce solvent emissions, but the entire removal of solvents is not really successful on a commercial level. Most new highspeed presses today can run alcohol-free, but the tradition persists."

The company is also moving actively into silicone-based products. Heatset printing has some specialised requirements. As the web passes through an oven to dry the ink and then through chillers to harden it, the paper becomes brittle, causing problems with delivery and folding.

Silicone emulsions are both antistatic and a slip agent, so reducing problems in this area. "Silicone emulsions are sensitive to climatic variations," says Dugec. "That's why we work so closely with our customers to make sure that our products help their individual press to operate at peak efficiency."

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