

Droppoint services Australia from Kiama

When brothers Richard and Peter Asquith and their business partner Gareth Thomas established logistics services provider Droppoint in 2004, they feared they would need a Sydney business address to attract blue chip companies as customers for their planned nationwide network.

Brothers Richard (left) and Peter Asquith who established logistics services provider Droppoint with business partner Gareth Thomas.

But after working in senior national and international roles, Richard in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Peter in Management Consulting, both were eager to return home to the Illawarra to establish their own business in the idyllic seaside town of Kiama, just south of Wollongong.

A decade on, with a portfolio of customers that includes global companies like Coca-Cola Amatil, Konica, Ricoh, Canon, Xerox and Gilbarco, and expansion into New Zealand and the United States, Droppoint is proof that regional-based businesses have advantages that allow them to thrive in a national and international business environment.

In Droppoint's case, those advantages include:

- a highly skilled, loyal workforce who appreciate the coastal lifestyle, short commute and lower property prices in the Illawarra;
- access to graduates from the world-class University of Wollongong for a range of business functions from accounting to ICT and marketing;
- lower base price for quality professional services; and

- quality infrastructure including Kiama being one of the first towns in Australia to be connected to the National Broadband Network (NBN) and working with the region's burgeoning ICT sector to develop state-of-the-art business software.

Droppoint has established a network of 24-hour outlets across Australia's major cities, and partners with major transport companies to offer a service for field technicians, who can pick up parts, technical information and equipment delivered overnight. Droppoint's service allows the technicians to simplify their van stock while avoiding costly, time-consuming trips to the company warehouse to collect parts and equipment - greatly improving productivity.

Since Droppoint introduced the concept to Australia and built up its network of "drop points" at convenient locations such as 24-hour petrol stations on major arterial roads, it has been enthusiastically embraced by service companies. They use it extensively to supply their field technicians whose work includes repairing petrol pumps (Gilbarco), vending machines (Coca-Cola) and copiers and other

office equipment (Konica, Ricoh, Canon and Xerox).

Droppoint started in a one-room office in 2004 but its headquarters is now one of Kiama's iconic heritage-listed commercial buildings, a former bank. Its Australian operations employ 15 people at the Kiama head office, as well as state service managers in each state capital.

Richard, who is the company's Executive Director with a responsibility for the technology side of the business, said access to the NBN gave Droppoint a distinct commercial advantage.

"We are an information and knowledge-based business that transmits a high level of data every second of every day. We need to be connected to our customers in the smartest possible way," he said. "We recently revamped our hardware and software (with the help of Illawarra-based software development company Compuease) and being connected to the NBN is of key importance for us. Without it we would really struggle."

He said since Droppoint started a decade ago he had seen what he described as an explosion of the

region's ICT capability. "When we started there were limited ICT service companies in the region, but now we can meet all our needs here, from our software developers to the company that handles all our production hosting and servers (Aftershock)."

Peter, the Managing Director, said Droppoint is proud of its regional location.

"In the early days we tried to look like a Sydney company, but now we are proud that our global office is here in Kiama," he said. "We actually see a natural advantage in working with local companies, like the ICT companies and our lawyers (RMB Lawyers), who are as good or better than those in Sydney and have a significant price advantage."

Richard said Droppoint had also benefitted from being part of NSW Trade & Investment's Jobs Action Plan for payroll tax rebates, the Federal Government's Enterprise Connect program and the University of Wollongong's Univative work experience program, which had introduced the company to talented students who joined the company as employees when they graduated.



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