



As featured in *The CEO Magazine*  
[www.theceomagazine.com.au](http://www.theceomagazine.com.au)



# WHEN TWO BECOME ONE

THEY SAY IT TAKES TWO TO TANGO – AND IN THE CASE OF STRALLIANCE, IT HAS BEEN THE BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP OF GARY CAULFIELD AND BENNI ARONI THAT HAS TAKEN THE COMPANY TO GREATER HEIGHTS.

Being a builder and a developer has become more and more relevant in this market. The pair, therefore, is a match made in heaven, as both Gary and Benni come from different backgrounds, forming the perfect power couple. With a law background, Benni had always been a developer, but had the aspirations to expand into the building arena. “I’ve always been a big believer in property; it’s a great way to create and protect wealth,” says Benni. “There’s a limited amount of property available for people, and it’s probably the biggest purchase people make. Therefore, it’s a great industry to get involved in. ❦”

ESTELLE JUDAH PHOTOGRAPHY

*Dulux, Watersun Homes  
and Stralliance Developments.*

*Developing perfect solutions  
both inside and out.*

**Dulux**<sup>®</sup>

Worth doing, worth Dulux<sup>®</sup>



**HALLIDAYS**

**Heating & Cooling Specialists**

Hallidays Heating and Cooling is a family owned and operated business that has been supporting Australia's largest domestic home builders for over 40 years. One of Melbourne's largest heating and cooling companies, Hallidays specialises in the design and installation of quality heating and cooling solutions to suit both its clients and their client's specific requirements.

Hallidays is proud of its close partnership with Watersun Homes /Stralliance Developments and thanks them for their ongoing support.

13 Phoenix Court  
Braeside VIC 3195  
T: (03) 9587 9900  
E: [info@hallidays.com.au](mailto:info@hallidays.com.au)  
[www.hallidays.com.au](http://www.hallidays.com.au)





“We’ve built a reputation for credibility and integrity in the marketplace and created a brand without marketing, which is almost a miracle.” - Benni Aroni

“There is almost an unlimited opportunity here in Australia. We don’t have a speculative building industry or a massive oversupply, so we’ve got a fundamentally strong base.”

Gary and Benni met through a mutual friend, and the complementary partnership grew from there. “I think we realised we were just a perfect fit together,” Gary admits. “Benni and I jointly strategise, and I guess we are both natural deal-makers. I focus on construction and addressing the hands-on issues, Benni handles areas such as contracts, accounts and large corporate relationships”.

Gary is the Managing Director of Stralliance and its subsidiaries Watersun Homes and Watersun Constructions, and having over two decades of experience in the residential construction industry is crucial to the company’s growth and success story.

Early in his career, Gary established Cruise-Pro, which he built into Victoria’s largest provider of fascia, gutter, roofing and scaffolding to the residential building market, employing over 350 people. In 2006, he sold the company to concentrate on developing Watersun Homes. “I’ve always had a passion for building, and so another friend of mine and I formed Watersun Homes about 12 years ago,” explains Gary. “After several years, we had an offer to buy the roofing company back, which I readily took as I was keen to expand.

“Then when Benni came along and suggested going into partnership with Stralliance, it was an offer I couldn’t refuse.”

*“When it comes to homebuilders, Watersun–Stralliance Homes are a dream to work with. The team at Essendon Carpet Court love working with their supervisors, who are reliable and always professional to deal with, making our part of the job uncomplicated.”*

-Nathan Hodge, Director, Essendon Carpet Court

It is now five years since Benni suggested to Gary that they combine to establish a property development business to grow Watersun Homes into a significant player in the house and land market.

Despite having to face the global financial crisis and the subsequent liquidity issues, there have been several milestones achieved by Watersun Homes and its parent entity Stralliance Developments. One of these has been securing over \$140 million in projects. Another is a regular place in the top 10 list of Victorian single home builders.

New projects are only the tip of the iceberg, though, as Stralliance has put together a quality team of over 90 full-time staff, enabling it to provide a full service offering from concept development, design, QS costing, planning and permitting, marketing, legal, finance to construction. As well as this, the company has created superb mutually beneficial relationships with a range of suppliers, subcontractors and land developers while completing several major projects.

The model that the men have created is all about mutual respect, mutual benefit, and ultimately mutual profit.

When it comes to suppliers and subcontractors, the company has built up several alliances over the years, especially with Gary’s background in the residential field. “We’ve got people here that started with me 20 years ago in my roofing and scaffolding company, and now their daughters, mothers, sons and fathers all work for us too,” comments Gary. “Naturally, they gravitate towards this business and its philosophies. Everyone works as a team and we encourage everyone to feel like they are part of the family. Benni and I become very involved in their lives, trying to help them and help build their careers. Everyone is here to help everyone else, and that is the way we do business.

“As well as this, we’ve always believed in paying our people on time or before so that there’s no stress involved. While most builders pay their subcontractors in 30 to 50 days, we pay our smaller suppliers and family businesses in seven days so they can more easily meet their obligations.”

This is something that a lot of the smaller subcontractors appreciate. “The most important thing is longevity. We don’t try and screw them for the best price, but we’ll try to get a good price for a longer period,” affirms Benni.

“Relationships are so vital, particularly if the project is ongoing, and you need suppliers to be able to go back and fix things. It’s about looking after the evolution of the property, and maintenance is part of that.”

The people you surround yourself with are the ones who help you achieve goals and create success, so Gary and Benni have made sure they have moulded an amazing team of people who will lead the company to the next level. “We’ve achieved incredible growth through our teamwork and innovations,” Benni says. “We’re interested in sustainability and everything that will help us in the future environment.

“We’ve built a reputation for credibility and integrity in the marketplace and created a brand without marketing, which is almost a miracle.

“The ultimate satisfaction is that we’ve created a great foundation, and it’s really up to us as to where the business goes now.”

The team at Stralliance are not only ambitious and dedicated in the office, but also very active within the community. ❖





hg  
hynesgroup



*“The Hynes Group has been a supplier of tiles to Watersun Homes and Stralliance Developments for over five years. Our goal is to build long-term relationships by being recognised as a respectable, reliable, and hassle-free supplier to the building industry.”*

*- Michael Hynes, Director, Hynes Group Essenden Carpet Court*

“I am finding our projects for me, are about stimulation and new challenges,” mentions Benni, “and we’re very keen to have a social footprint.”

Over the past three years, a unique partnership has grown between the company and the Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative in Shepparton.

The partnership – which includes other local Indigenous organisations and federal and state government agencies – is delivering improved health and community facilities and services for the Indigenous community in Shepparton.

“It’s a project we started a couple of years ago, based on the philosophy of just trying to help people,” says Gary. “We started it with no government funding behind us and probably spent about a million dollars of our own money, just to get the project recognised.”

The circa \$28M project and the corresponding employment program has been an outstanding success. To date, 50 Indigenous jobs, including 12 Indigenous traineeships/apprenticeships have been created.

One of the reasons for the success of the employment program has been the recognition by Watersun that it must work differently with an Indigenous workforce. The construction company was responsive and flexible in its approach, recognising cultural sensitivities and adapting working models to ensure its Indigenous workforce remained engaged.

A lot of the suppliers went over and above what they needed to and became mentors to some of the Aboriginal kids in the program. “At the end of the day, if it weren’t for the Aboriginal people, the community, and the suppliers who wanted to work on it, then it wouldn’t have happened,” states Gary.

And it’s something that will see the benefits for years to come. Not only has the Rumbalara project changed lives by giving many Indigenous people their first job, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations found it to be the most successful Indigenous employment program delivered in Victoria under the Jobs Fund.

Gary and the team at Stralliance also compete in the Melbourne-to-Hobart Yacht Race. “I’ve done a couple of Melbourne-to-Hobart’s,” Gary says. “I think it’s great to be out on the water, and it’s no accident that we called the company Watersun Homes. We like to be outdoors in the fresh air. So the boat is a way of doing this while working together.

“Your true colours really come out on a boat, so if you can do a Melbourne-to-Hobart boat race together, you can build a house together.

“We can achieve fantastic results as a team. Benni and I are constantly analysing and checking each other. You’ve always got someone to lean on and make decisions with, so it’s a nice way to run a business.” •

Tiles  
to suit your lifestyle

For more information call 03 8742 9640  
visit [www.hynesgroup.com.au](http://www.hynesgroup.com.au)



ourstyleourfamilyourgroup