

Brief History of A. L. Underwood Company – Cairns Est. 1926

Alfred Louis Underwood Builder, Innovator and Family Man

- 1926 AL Underwood arrives in Cairns and establishes A. L. Underwood Builders & Contractors Undertaking repair, maintenance and renovation works within the Cairns area.
- 1927 Purchases PO 444, Cairns QLD 4870 – which is still in use by Underwood's today.
- 1929 Great depression hits and A. L. Underwood continues through doing maintenance work.
- 1930's Purchased 102 Buchan Street property and built family home.
- 1942 A. L. Underwood contracted by US Army to build numerous buildings during their occupation in Cairns/FNQ during the war.
- 1943 AL Underwood's first son, John joins the business at 12 years old.
- 1945 Started to build timber boats on order for skiing and other recreational uses.
Imported first Mer Cruiser and De Havilland jet engines into Australia for boats.
John Underwood will be the inaugural President of the NQ Ski Club.
- 1947 Purchased 5 allotments in Pease Street, Edge Hill to sell as house and land packages.
- 1947 Purchase additional adjoining properties in Buchan Street and Bollard Street to expand operations including furniture manufacturing as Rex Manufacturing Works.
House and land purchasers can select furnishing for their new home.
Operations now include manufacturing of roof tiles and plaster works that supply the region.
- 1950 Purchased 10 allotments in Whitfield (Hodel and McManus Streets).
House and land packages sold to returned servicemen families where A. L. Underwood provide finance for these families to purchase these homes to be paid off over 8-12 months.
- 1950's A. L. Underwood supports 200 employees through the operations.
- 1953 AL Underwood's second son, Peter joins the business.
- 1955 A. L. Underwood contracted to build worker accommodation in Weipa.
Establishes manufacturing of prefabricated structures in Cairns to be barged to Weipa.
Contract is for approximately 11 years.
- 1957 First son, John is the 16th pilot with the NQ Aero Club and is flying employees in and out of Weipa during worker accommodation construction. Later flying employees to other remote work areas.
- 1960's Various government contractors in Mareeba, Babinda, Burketown, Herberton, Bloomfield, Thursday Island and Weipa.
- Late 1960's Contract hire of Kerb and Channel machines from the Koppen Family to operate Cairns first Kerb and Channel construction service.
Also providing mowing and slashing service to council and state.
- 1970 More than 40 builders now operating in Cairns.
- 1971 Underwood Hire Service established to provide building equipment hire to booming construction industry. Continues to 2006 when portioned off and sold to Kennards.
- 1970's Grandson, Louis works within the business outside of studies and trade apprenticeship.
- 1973 John Underwood passes away ending Kerb and Channel services.
Louis continues contract for mowing and slashing.
- 1975 Mowing and slashing services end.
- 1978 Underwood Party Hire established with 200 beer glasses, 50 tables and 500 chairs.
- 1979 Louis Underwood made a director.
- 1980 Underwood Party Hire commences service and long-term relationship with significant events, Cairns Amateurs and Cairns Show.
- 1985 Underwood Hire Service establishes Port Douglas branch to service the construction of the Mirage Resort and Country Club, also adding Ute Hire to the offering.
- 1989 Grandson Glen joins the business.
- 1989 Pilot Strike
- 1989 Establish Network Car Rentals – purchasing cars from struggling national car hire firms. Network Car Rentals is the only car rental operating for some time post the pilot strike.
- 1993 Underwood Party Hire – Major event contract with David Field Special Events – Field of Fire. An event that goes on to win international awards.
Significant investment in event hire equipment and temporary structures.

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1996	Reef Hotel Casio and Cairns Convention Centre Open
1996	Business establishes Total Exhibition Services to cater to business events and expo sector.
2006	Kennards purchase building equipment hire service.
2006	Network Car Rentals sold.
2009-10	Supplier of temporary roof structure for the Melbourne Desalination Plant construction and featured on Mega Structures series.
2018	Gold Coast Commonwealth Games – major subcontractor for the Cairns region.
2019	Cairns Regional Council seeks advice for the levelling of the Eastern Events Lawn on The Esplanade to improve event space.

Service to the Event Industry Since 1980

Advisor and service provider for the establishment of the following events:

- Ironman
- Targa Great Barrier Reef
- Crankworx
- Savanha in the Round (plus following subsidiary events)
- Cairns Amateurs
- Italian Festival

Ongoing supplier and advisor for the following events:

- Cairns Show
- Cairns Chinese New Year
- Cairns Regional Council events
- Cairns Jockey Club
- Cairns Youth and Careers Expo
- Indian Festival

Other significant events:

- Israel Isuzu Challenge – 50 day moving event
- Eco Challenge
- My Kitchen Rules
- Local, State and Federal Elections
- Australia Wide Jobs Expos
- Survivor Australia
- Mt Isa Rodeo

Continued Service to the Construction Industry

Temporary structures during construction for various projects including:

- Hutchinson Builders
- Melbourne Desalination Plant
- Wind turbine repairs on delivery at Port of Cairns
- US Army and Australian Navy

Underwood's are Cairns' largest builder based on the number of build completions per year.

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A. L. UNDERWOOD & SON
Builders and Contractors
Est. 1926

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Construction of prefabricated worker accommodation in Weipa.