

# AUSTRALIAN MANUFACTURER BATHES IN GLOBAL EXPORT SUCCESS

FTA CASE STUDY | MAY 2019

Stormtech has been designing and manufacturing drainage systems since 1989. With the help of Australia's Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), the company is now sharing its innovative ideas with the world.

Located on the south coast of NSW, Stormtech is an industry leader in the design and manufacture of linear grate and drain solutions. The company was established in 1989, after its founder, John Creighton developed the original Slot Drain.

From there, Stormtech developed a range of linear specialised drainage systems, which lead to the development of the shower channel that sits flush with adjoining floor surfaces and reduces the mobility and access limitations of traditional systems.

Their drainage solutions can also be applied to courtyards, balconies, driveways and spa areas.

In 2004, Stormtech's system won a Design Mark at the Australian Design Awards. Since then, the company has flourished, increasing employee numbers from five to thirty five.

## Growing the business through exports

Stormtech currently exports its drainage systems to markets around the world, including the United States, Thailand, New Zealand, Malaysia, the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates.

Managing Director of Stormtech, Troy Creighton, says the company chose to start exporting as a way to ensure the company was not solely dependent on the domestic market.

'After seeing the demand for our products increase significantly in Australia, we decided to look towards international markets. This gave us the opportunity



**'Australia's free trade agreements provide us with countless benefits and opportunities to distribute our products on the international stage.'**

Troy Creighton, Managing Director at Stormtech.

to spread the demand for our product across multiple markets and find business security,' he says.



Australian Government

Australian Trade and Investment Commission



## Free Trade Agreements open the door to new export markets

Australia's Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) are helping Stormtech on their export journey.

Creighton says FTAs play a major role in Stormtech's export strategy, influencing which markets the company enters.

'Australia's FTAs provide us with countless benefits and opportunities to distribute our products on the international stage. We absolutely consider markets with an FTA in force first, because we know our chances of success are much higher,' he says.

Exports currently make up 10 per cent of Stormtech's business, but Creighton hopes this figure will rise due to agreements like the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), which has recently come into force for Australia, Canada, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Singapore and Vietnam.

'The CPTPP and Peru-Australia Free Trade Agreement cover about 15 per cent of the export markets we are active in and will certainly play an important role in the future of our business,' he states.

'FTAs help open the door to new markets, allowing us to continue expanding the business through exports.'

## Protect your Intellectual Property

Stormtech's export journey hasn't always been an easy ride. Over the years, Creighton says the company has faced numerous challenges, including in relation to Intellectual Property (IP) rights.

'Protecting your IP is very important as an exporter. We have run into trouble a few times by not understanding the IP laws of different markets we're exporting to. You really need to know what your rights are and be prepared for any issues you may encounter,' he explains.

Creighton says understanding the paperwork requirements for each export market is another lesson Stormtech has learnt along the way.

'Our customers are unable to receive the reduced tariff benefits if we don't fill out the required paperwork correctly. It's really important as an exporter to be organised and fully understand your requirements.'

## Austrade and TradeStart Advisers – valuable tools for new exporters

Stormtech has worked closely with Austrade throughout its journey, gaining export advice and market insights from TradeStart Advisers. Creighton encourages new and potential exporters to consider doing the same.

'The company definitely wouldn't have progressed as quickly in international markets without the help of Austrade. The initial advice they gave us has been extremely valuable and has set us up for success,' he says.

Creighton believes thorough research of your export market, including cultural barriers and competitors, can help guarantee success overseas.

'To succeed in global markets, you need to know your product and your market really well. Make sure you research any cultural or language barriers and understand the market's demands. Also, know who your competitors are and what your point of difference is. Doing so, will help you identify where your products fit in the market,' he says.

## About Austrade

The Australian Trade and Investment Commission – Austrade – contributes to Australia's economic prosperity by helping Australian businesses, education institutions, tourism operators, governments and citizens as they:

- › develop international markets
- › win productive foreign direct investment
- › promote international education
- › strengthen Australia's tourism industry
- › seek consular and passport services.

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