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**GIPPSLAND’S TEQUA PLUMBING & CIVIL SHARE STRATEGY FOR FLEET SUCCESS**

Occupying a massive patch of southeast Victoria, the Gippsland region is all about diversity: from its pristine landscapes to its growing population, down to the scope of work that’s required to maintain the region.

It’s a big job to tackle, with the region being home to the state’s electricity industry and key primary production sectors, covering an area of over 40,000 square kilometres.

Chipping happily away at the task are plumbing and civil construction experts, [Tequa Plumbing & Civil](https://www.tequa.au/), who have been servicing Gippsland and Melbourne metro for just shy of 50 years.

The company first opened doors in 1975 as [P&R Smolenaars Plumbing](https://www.tequa.au/our-story), with a small base situated in the regional centre of Sale. Since then, the business has flourished, according to Managing Director Daniel Smolenaars—the second generation of the Smolenaars family at the helm.

He says that Tequa’s point of difference from their market competitors lies in an ability to provide a local option ‘outside the box’ and not limiting themselves to any single offering for their clientele.

“We’re insanely curious about providing long-term solutions for our clients and thinking outside the square to give them the full breadth of our experience,” Daniel said.

“If a client requests a job and we see an opportunity to significantly increase its value—potentially doubling the impact with a minimal cost increase—we will always recommend the option that delivers the superior result.”

**Diverse offering**

The company is well-versed across the breadth of plumbing and civil works: commercial and residential plumbing, sewer and stormwater works, electrical and gas through to directional drilling and bulk earthwork.

A smartly specified truck fleet is well maintained to transport Tequa’s highly specialised equipment and tools.

Several Isuzu [FXY 240-350 Autos](https://www.isuzu.com.au/our-range/series/fx-series/) (GVM of 24,000 kg) fitted with beavertails take on transporting heavy-duty equipment like excavators, specialised plants and directional drills.

Isuzu [FSD 140-260 Autos](https://www.isuzu.com.au/our-range/series/f-series/) (GVM of 14,000 kg) come in the form of smart hydro tankers for non-destructive digging.

This is also supplemented by a variety of light and medium-duty Isuzu NMR, NQR and FRR [Ready-to-Work Tippers](https://www.isuzu.com.au/our-range/ready-to-work/tipper/) with automated manual transmissions (AMT), which are roped-in for more general work as site clean-up vehicles or general transporters.

**Strategic thinking**

Like any well-established business, sustaining quality service while also meeting growing demand is an ongoing challenge for the team at Tequa.

Five years ago, they implemented a fleet modernisation program to ensure they have reliable equipment in their lockers, suitable to tackle any job presented by a client.

A core part of the program is to upgrade two of the fleet’s older trucks with new vehicles each year. Before this strategy was conceived, Tequa relied on second-hand vehicles that fit the description, going for “trucks they could get their hands on at a fair price” according to Daniel.

Tequa’s preferred brand is Isuzu Trucks going forward, due to the diversity of cab chassis options and pre-built tippers that their work requires.

A few key models, such as the [FXY 240-350 Auto](https://www.isuzu.com.au/our-range/series/fx-series/) and [FSD 140-260 Auto](https://www.isuzu.com.au/our-range/series/f-series/) are highly desired models to carry Tequa’s essential equipment and machinery.

“As our business has grown and we’ve ventured into new areas of operation, we’ve also expanded our client base—so naturally, our fleet needs to cater for this,” Daniel explained.

“The client has an expectation that we want to hit and exceed every single time.

“We need to make sure that we continue to upskill our staff with the right training and provide the right equipment that’s going to support them.”

**People-centric**

As any forward-thinking business understands, equipping staff with the right tools leads to a more engaged, efficient and high-performing workforce.

Tequa currently employs around 100 people: project managers, supervisors, support staff, engineers, plumbers, technicians and 23 apprentices across their operation.

Updating their vehicle fleet regularly with quality products also keeps staff feeling supported, playing into the company’s desire to retain experience—specifically, the multi-skilled technicians who are driving trucks and operating from them each day.

“People feel good about driving new assets, there’s a sense that if you’re investing in the company’s future, you’re also investing in them,” said Daniel, sagely.

**The big four**

Trucks in Tequa’s fleet spend more time on-site than anywhere else, clocking a moderate number of kilometres (around 20,000 to 40,000 km per year). The primary focus of the fleet is its ability to move critical assets from A to B without hassle.

It’s no surprise then, that ‘reliability under operation’ comes in as the top characteristic sought by Tequa’s staff and management team. Number two is listed as operator comfort, number three, is the usability of the vehicle and then smart features and a comprehensive safety suite.

“The trucks start every single time, they have not failed us,” Daniel said of their Isuzu truck fleet.

“Operator comfort and usability of the trucks is as simple as being capable of getting the job done, but anything additional that helps the driver is a bonus.

“We find the (Allison) automatic and Isuzu AMT transmissions take a lot of the hard work out of operating the trucks.”

Isuzu’s [Advanced Driver Assistance Systems](https://www.isuzu.com.au/our-range/series/n-series/#Safety) (ADAS) safety suite, which features advanced emergency braking (AEB) and Lane Departure Warning (LDW), and a host of other features designed to reduce the chance of an accident or mitigate damage if one occurs, comes standard in Isuzu N and F Series trucks.

This ranks highly with Tequa drivers who note collision avoidance as a desirable feature.

“We also install aftermarket telemetry to help with our maintenance programming and scheduling. It also assists drivers to manage their fatigue,” Daniel said.

**Fundamental links**

Purchasing all Isuzu trucks from the local [Gippsland Truck Centre](https://www.gippslandtruckcentreisuzu.com.au/), Tequa relies on support from the dealership to move forward with its fleet modernisation program.

They choose to maintain trucks using genuine [OEM parts and componentry](https://parts.isuzu.com.au/?_ga=2.7811314.113255079.1725231648-1842761401.1704844914), intending to avoid putting any “Achilles heels” into the fleet thus sustaining their operational longevity.

“The relationship we have with Gippsland Truck Centre is fundamental, as is their relationship with the Isuzu brand for the success of our business,” said Daniel.

“They’re not interested in just selling an asset, clipping the ticket and getting their commission.

“They care about us and want to make sure that what we’re buying is something that’s going to suit us and help provide the right outcomes for our team and our clients.

“The team is very good at getting the services done promptly,” he added.

“Because of their supreme reliability, I feel like I have nothing to sing home about other than to say the trucks do exactly what they’re supposed to do.”

**ends**

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