

THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Brooklyn's Tim Fairbrother reflects on 18 months at the helm, and eight months of being backed by the powerhouse that is AXA XL.

BY TIFFANY EASTLAND

"There are so many synergies between playing professional sport and being in business," explains Tim Fairbrother, and he would know. A retired rugby union player, Fairbrother spent 10 years playing in Super Rugby before he joined Brooklyn Underwriting.

Fairbrother says his move into insurance came out of the blue, "I knew I wanted to get into the business world but I needed a start. Like any professional sportsman, sometimes the hardest thing is getting someone to back you." David Porteous, Fairbrother's predecessor, identified his potential and employed him as a Business Development Manager in 2013. Today, Fairbrother is proudly at the helm of Brooklyn Underwriting, an agency that writes triple the business it did when he started.

Insurance Adviser: How long have you been Head of Brooklyn Underwriting, and how has the business changed in that time?

Tim Fairbrother: I've been at the helm 18 months now. In that time, we've employed more staff and we've had 30 plus per cent year on year growth. We're determined to keep our culture, but at the same time, we want to grow and compete with the bigger guys.

IA: In September AXA completed its acquisition of XL Group, what impact has this had on Brooklyn Underwriting?

TF: We're not that small little agency anymore, we've been around for a few years, we're a good size, and AXA XL provides the stability we need to grow further. We're still very much the customer-driven brand known for helping people out when things get a little bit hairy. However, when we need greater capacity or the knowledge of an experienced underwriter, we have the backing of AXA XL. If we need expertise on the claims side of the process,

for example, we've got men and women on the ground that are absolute geniuses in their field. They often accompany us when we present to brokers.

It's so important that our clients know that we're not just going to sell the product, rather we're going to see them through to the end. We've got the best of both worlds - with a powerhouse backing us, the world's our oyster.

IA: How would you describe the culture at Brooklyn Underwriting?

TF: It's a hard thing to explain, unless you're amongst it. I'm big on trust, that's my leadership style. It's so important to have a trusting culture, and we're very careful about who we get on board - having the right attitude comes before anything else. We're also a great launching pad - I really encourage people when they start to build their own profile in the market.

IA: What can a broker expect from a relationship with Brooklyn Underwriting?

TF: For years, we've had the mantra, "making you the expert". In fact, it's what inspired Brooklyn University, our training platform that provides brokers with a real IOI on some of our products. We've found it gives new brokers a little snippet before they go on to acquire proper qualifications. When brokers are well informed, it helps us - we get better slips and there's more knowledge in the market. For a lot of SMEs, everything is on the line. It doesn't matter if it's a \$1,000 policy or a \$50,000 policy, it's their livelihood. I encourage the team to think about that every time they're underwriting.

IA: What do you perceive to be the major issues facing the insurance industry?

TF: When something bad happens, that's the thing everyone talks about. It's crazy, and it's the same in sport. There are some fantastic people in this industry, who really care about their clients - we see it on a

daily basis. Unfortunately, that doesn't seem to get through to people outside our industry. It's a sad state of affairs when insurers and insurance brokers are rated among the least trusted professions.

Then there's the whole cladding issue, which has been quite tough. EPS is another - there's a lot of disruption in the market. Brooklyn is very careful, we don't want to be a company that jumps in and out, we want to be stable and we want to be trusted - it's incredibly important to us.

IA: What does Brooklyn have in store over the next 12 months?

TF: We're expanding our suite of products and improving our existing offering, so watch this space. For us, if we just stay still, we're going to get left behind. We want to make sure we're moving with the market. We pioneered online systems, and we want to ensure we continue to pave the way.

BROOKLYN'S OFFERING

Brooklyn's current product suite includes:

- IT&T combined Professional Indemnity & Public Liability
- Resource Professionals combined Professional Indemnity & Public Liability
- Design & Construction Professional Liability
- Miscellaneous Professional Indemnity & Combined Public Liability
- Registered Trainers, Professional Indemnity & Public Liability
- Management Liability
- General Liability
- Industrial Special Risks - Expanded Polystyrene 'EPS' Facility
- Marine Cargo
- Cyber Data Protect
- Tropical Strata
- Complex Risk Liability
- High Risk Property

For more information or to receive an online quote visit brooklynunderwriting.com.au

