

# Transforming the landscape

**Global transformer manufacturer SGB-SMIT is setting its sights on expansion in Australia's burgeoning renewable energy sector. Here we talk to Claude Corso who is managing local operations.**

**WHEN YOU ARE BUILDING** cutting-edge electrical transformers the size and shape of a small house, the options for manoeuvring them around the factory floor are somewhat limited. That usually means the use of one large, cumbersome crane. Not so for SGB-SMIT which deploys a futuristic-looking hovercraft air cushion.

Another smart device is the use of a world first patented robotic core-stacking machine. Devised by SGB-SMIT this is said to have revolutionised the manufacturing process, saving thousands of man-hours in production.

But the company has always prided itself on being a technological forerunner, reflecting the words of electrical engineering pioneer Thomas Alva Edison (1847-1931) who said, "If there's a way to do it better – find it."

The high level of precision and automation in the manufacture of large and medium power transformers, cast resin and oil distribution transformers, coupled with just-in-time manufacturing processes, a century of experience contribute to significant cost efficiencies, and that has helped SGB-SMIT win some of the largest tenders on offer.

Renewable energy projects to which SGB-SMIT Group has supplied power transformers and or shunt reactors/harmonic filters include some of the most prestigious, among them the 6 GB Hornsea Project One Offshore Wind Farm in the North Sea.

Other notable projects include the 659 MW Walney Bank Offshore Wind Farm in the UK and further south the 300 GWh Noor Ouarzazate solar Farm in Morocco touted "as big as Paris in the Sahara Desert". With construction cost of \$3.9 billion it is also believed to be in the top five world's largest solar farms. So large it is visible on Google earth.

SGB-SMIT technology can be found at the Middenmeer Onshore Windpark in the Netherlands, and at the 66 turbine 228 MW Stronelairg wind farm south-west of Loch Ness in the Scottish Highlands.

## Downunder

Plant and equipment supplied to Australia's renewable energy sector include auxiliary compact substations for Swan Hill, Daydream, Hayman and Emerald solar farm projects, and an auxiliary transformer was recently supplied to the 100 MWp Wemen Solar Farm project in Victoria.

That is just the start as far as newly appointed SGB-SMIT Australia managing director Claude Corso is concerned. He's been charged with the task of expanding business in medium and large power transformers to Australia and New Zealand's large-scale wind and solar energy sector.

"Our aspirations are to grow business in these areas while sourcing product and services from group factories





and establishing local partnerships for installation and testing on specific projects," he told *Smart Energy*.

"We are now embarking on a renewed push and currently tendering for similar sized projects in Australia.

"Our plan is to build up to a double digit organisation and capitalise on the strength of Europe's customer base and project references."

He emphasises the company's existing presence, with the name already well established in Australian industry through third-party suppliers and agents.

"Operations dried up somewhat in recent years following the liquidation of one player, but the show goes on with newly established local offices and a team of business developers, sales and distribution staff poised for action," he said.

## Experience

We asked Claude Corso about the main advantages of using SGB-SMIT

transformers for Australian based utility scale developers.

Naturally, longevity plays a key role. "Developers can be comfortable that they are dealing with a 106 year old company with a solid shareholder backing and balance sheet," he said.

"The SGB-SMIT Group has a supply record for delivering transformers to some 80 countries, over the years we have learned a lot, overcome many challenges and taken on projects requiring specific solutions and acquired an impressive database of knowledge and experience which is second to none.

"This translates directly into know-how, knowledge and reliability," he said.

"Having supplied transformers to some of the harshest climates our database of knowledge and experience, SGB-SMIT ranks among the top tier of global transformer manufacturers.

"With over 140 suppliers on our books SGB-SMIT group's buying power is very strong."

## Range and power

European pure-play transformer specialist SGB-SMIT Group has been in business since 1914 - just 28 years following the 1885 invention of the first constant-potential transformer. Company headquarters are in Regensburg, Germany, with branch operations in the USA, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Romania, the Czech Republic, India, China, South Africa, France and Australia.

SGB-SMIT transformers and products include

- Large power transformers in the range of 100 to 1,200 MVA and voltages up to 765kV
- Medium sized power transformers in the range of 20-300MVA and voltages up to 275kV
- Auto transformers in the range of 120 – 400MVA at voltages up to 275kV
- Cast resin & resin impregnated transformers in the range of 3.3MVA to 25MVA and voltages up to 33kV
- Oil distribution transformers in the range of 50kVA to 16 MVA and voltages up to 33kV
- Compact substations in the range of 160kVA to 5MVA and voltages up to 33kV
- Reactors and shunt reactors
- Phase shifting transformers

SGB-SMIT spends around 1.6 per cent of its turnover in R&D programs and is affiliated with many universities and partners in Europe, China and US.

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