

# 40 years of service

The PA People is celebrating four decades of serving the Christian community in Australia. *Worship AVL Asia* discovers how it has lasted so long

**FOR MORE THAN 40 YEARS,**

The PA People has been working to improve the technical setup in the Australian worship community. With previous names including Christian Sound, the roots of the company lie deep in worship. Its longevity is testament to the work it has done within Australia's churches as well as the Christian music market.

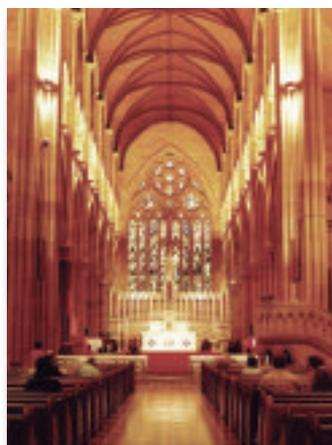
'The PA People was founded on designing systems, supplying equipment, and developing and building products to service the local church,' says Chris Dodds, managing director of the Sydney-based specialist sound, lighting, video, A/V and comms contractor. 'We started informally in the 1960s, and by the mid-1990s we estimate there were around 3,000 churches in Australia with speakers and mixer-amplifiers designed and built by the company. After 40 years of expanding our services to the wider community, it is still very much our focus to provide appropriate and fit-for-purpose solutions for churches.'

This has been key to the success of The PA People. Providing a solution is a relatively simple task, but understanding what a church wants to achieve and designing something to aid that is a whole lot more complicated. 'Like any project you need to understand the needs and aspirations of the HOW first,' notes Mr Dodds. 'Then we apply the same process of good engineering and a desire to partner with our clients for the

long term that we have with our non-worship customers, but hopefully from a knowledgeable position. Many of our staff and principles are worshipers so we understand some of the issues and processes involved.'

'When we are approached to give advice to a church, we visit, talk to the leadership and get to the heart of their worship services and what they need,' furthers Brett Steele, manager, installed systems at The PA People. 'From experience, we can look at the church and know how it will react acoustically, and from there we can work together to find a solution.'

Through the application of sound reinforcement systems, video equipment and the full range of



**The heritage listed St Mary's Cathedral has a solution from The PA People**

communications technology available, The PA People has brought clarity, reliability and new functionality to both traditional and contemporary services in a variety of churches in Australia. These include sites such as St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney, Hillsong Church, Holy Spirit St Clair in Erskine Park NSW, St James Anglican Church in central Sydney and Wayside Chapel in Kings Cross.

While a great deal of churches have benefitted from The PA People's assistance, the company believes there are more out there in need of its help. Many of the self-taught experts in worship volunteer teams may be reluctant to add to the cost of an installation by bringing in outside help, but Mr Dodds maintains that by using the knowledge and experience of companies such as The PA People,



**Hillsong has worked with The PA People on many projects and bought its first speakers from The PA People in 1992**



houses of worship can get the best value for their donations.

'We provide HOWs with value for money by applying our standard design principals and balancing out the technology with our other design goals of "fit for purpose" and "whole of life",' he explains. 'It is no good spending on the latest and greatest if it only lasts a year or so and there is no budget for replacement, or spending all the money on speakers and nothing on a winch to access them for maintenance.'

Over the years, the company itself has gone through a great deal of change – not least with its name. However, these changes are minor when compared to that of technology. 'Forty years ago we were installing analogue 120W mixer amplifiers and column speakers,' says Mr Dodds. 'Now even at the lower end we would be using far more sophisticated speakers – if they are still columns they would have some sort of shading and steering internally. DSP is universal and microphones have come a long way from an AKGD190!'

This being said, the MD does not believe in adding technology to a house of worship just for the sake of having the latest equipment, as this adds to the burden on volunteers. 'I still shudder when installed systems are unable to be successfully operated by less trained operators – less is often more in this space,' he reasons. 'One of the most common mistakes I see in houses of worship is big black boxes (usually 15-inch and horns) for what is predominantly speech reinforcement plus some music. I am a great believer in an 8-inch or a 10-inch driver (or smaller with some LF reinforcement) as the main element of a church PA. It is about the spoken word after all.'

The original aim for The PA People was to provide cost effective public address systems for churches through sales, hire and installation of 'value-for-money' equipment. It has spent the last 40 years doing exactly that, and more besides, ensuring that some of Australia's highest profile houses of worship look and sound as good as they possibly can.

[www.papeople.com.au](http://www.papeople.com.au)



**St James Anglican Church in central Sydney has an ongoing relationship with the company**