

BladePro—More Productive, More Accurate

We were talking to a Trimble laser dealer in southern NSW the other day about scrapers and graders, and the topic of BladePro came up.

“You Queenslanders are a bit ahead of us in the use of technology,” he volunteered. “I was driving along the Murray Valley Highway just the other day, and saw a gang at work widening the shoulder. They were laboriously pegging the job, moving ahead ten metres at a time, and the grader was sitting around waiting for pegs to be moved.”

“I don’t suppose I made myself too popular by getting out of the car and asking why on earth they were doing it that way. I think I might have mentioned something about living in the dark ages, because it was so obvious to me that it was a classic job for BladePro and a sonic tracer, working off the existing bitumen surface.”

“They told me that was the way they always did it, they liked it that way, and how did I feel about getting back in my car and buzzing off?”

“Actually, they didn’t use the word ‘buzzing’ ...”

Bob Bows Out

Bob Little retired last month after forty years driving a grader. He can identify with that story.

“The penny dropped for me when I was working on the new Brisbane Airport, six or seven years ago. We’d done about half the job—access roads, car parks, and so on—using the old system of pegging everything.

“Then along came a mate of mine, Robbie Johnson, who’d just had BladePro fitted. I thought I was pretty handy at operating a grader, but he ran rings around me. Frankly, I felt like a goose.”



“I can’t remember when I last turned it off,” says 12G owner/operator Kev Pauli of Toowoomba of his BladePro system. Kev has been using BladePro with laser guidance for years, and would move up to BladePro 3D if a job is on offer to warrant the upgrade.

“As if that wasn’t enough, my next job was thirty kilometres of new shoulders on the Mount Nebo Road. Another bloke came along, and did exactly the same thing to me. I could see that if I wanted to keep getting the contracts, I’d better take a closer look at this.”

As it happened, Bob was one of the first grader operators—if not the first—to have BladePro fitted on his next job, the Pacific Motorway.

“There’s no way our section could have been completed on time, without

that technology,” Bob recalls. “They’d say to me on a Monday, ‘Do you reckon we can get to chainage so-and-so by Friday night’, and I’d say, ‘Well, God allows a few miracles...’”

“Mostly I was using a tracker off a string line, but for quite a large part of the work they’d just ask if it was OK to run a line of pegs down the crown of the road. I’d key in the cross-slope, and was able to do 150 metre sections of all four lanes at a time. The results were consistently accurate, which is not

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surprising, considering the potential for human error in manual stringing, how string can sag, and so on. But the main thing was the colossal increase in speed, which really saved their bacon."

In general grader work, how much did he use BladePro?

Says Bob, "I used it all day, every day—can't recall having it turned off. Even in less precise work, such as roughing out sub-bases, it's been a great help in maintaining levels, and saves re-work."

Pioneer of the 'Pegless Era'

Later on, while still working on the Pacific Motorway, Bob Little was the first grader operator anywhere in Australia to use a 3D blade control product, functioning in all three axes.

A prototype of BladePro 3D had been sent to Queensland for field-testing. Leighton surveyor Richard Glass was quick to recognise the enormous savings to be generated by this new technology, where the design of the job is carried in an on-board computer.

As far as Australia is concerned, this work on Leighton's section of the motorway was the start of the 'pegless era'.

Working in conjunction with the company that's now known as BMS Laserplane, Bob blazed the trail for the growing fleet of machines that have since been upgraded from basic BladePro to BladePro 3D, performing high-precision final trim on major projects around the country.

This upgrade option of BladePro is one of its strengths. It's also worth reflecting that Bob was only five years or so off retirement when he tackled the 3D version, but quickly adapted to it and was able to productively apply the new computerised system to a project that was midway through construction.

Kev Pauli, Out at Jondaryan

Last week we ran into Kev Pauli, who's been working his BladePro-equipped 12G for a few weeks on the construction of a large coal loading


terminal next to the railway line between Oakey and Jondaryan.

In a similar situation to the one described by Bob Little, he'd been asked to grade the sub-base of the railway loop using his cross-slope controls working off centre pegs only. Again, the accurate results justified this approach.

The pad for the coal terminal is about 700 metres by two hundred, with several grade changes. Without any pegging, Kev followed the surface prepared by a laser scraper, keying in cross-slope alterations at the junctions of the grades.

Kev is set up with a laser receiver, and will probably use the dual grade laser transmitter that's already in use on the site, to guide BladePro on the final trim of this large pad.

His words echo those of Bob Little, "I find BladePro useful for just about every job I do—I hardly ever turn it off."

BMS Lasersat (freecall 1 800 657 980) tell us that, unlike alternative systems, BladePro sensors and cabling can generally be field-serviced in the event of damage. If replacements happen to be needed, they are comparatively inexpensive. 



Martin Huolahan (above) has joined Trimble as Sales Manager, Australasia, Survey and Construction Instruments.

Martin was formerly National Business Manager of C R Kennedy—prior to that he'd been with Leica Geosystems for twelve years, culminating in him being appointed National Marketing Manager-GPS. His new role with Trimble, based out of Newcastle, will focus on managing the land and marine survey and construction equipment business in Australia and New Zealand.


Australasian Flavour at Trimble, USA

Aussies and Kiwis are well on the way up the senior rungs of the ladder at Trimble Navigation Ltd's headquarters at Sunnyvale, California.

Mark Nicholls, a New Zealander, has moved from his former position as Vice President of Machine Control to take up the reins at the new Caterpillar/Trimble joint venture company, CTCT (Caterpillar Trimble Control Technologies).

Into Nicholl's position as VP goes Mark Forrest, a Queensland.

Dennis Lewis, of Brisbane, now has enlarged responsibilities as Sales Manager (Machine Control) for Africa, Near East, and Asia Pacific.

"There's such a massive amount of construction going ahead in China that we see this as an important market in the near future," says Dennis, who has just returned from Beijing. 

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