

*In support of Leica Geosystems' machine automation technology,*

## Once Again, Malcolm Kennedy Digs Deep

**CR Kennedy & Company (CRK), distributor for Leica Geosystems, is embarked upon yet another major program to beef up its resources Australia-wide providing field support for Leica's machine automation products.**

This follows—and is doubtless inspired by—the strong market acceptance of the new generation of Leica products for graders, dozers, and excavators. CRK can claim the largest single sale of this technology in Australian history, the placement of twenty-seven 3D systems with WA's BGC Contracting for use on the \$3.7 billion Fortescue iron ore venture, and the nearby Pluto project.

BGC is building for Andrew Forrest's Fortescue Minerals Group a 270 km railway to carry ore from a group of valuable mineral resources in the Pilbara, down to a completely new port at Point Anderson, adjacent to Port Hedland. Railway construction is divided into four sections and had been progressing briskly before the construction camps were hit by Cyclone George in March (see separate story, Page 27).

### **Clients Impressed by High Accuracy**

There's always a certain amount of leapfrogging in this technology—products that were highly rated only a couple of years ago are now compared unfavourably with the latest competition. That factor certainly seems to be working squarely in Leica's favour at the present time.

Through others in the industry we'd heard reports of exceptionally high levels of reliability and accuracy from the Pilbara sites. But confirmation was closer at hand—we spoke to Roland Marsh in the cab of his Volvo grader at the Malmesbury-Bendigo Bypass in Victoria.

Roland, trading as Earthcon, is an owner-operator using the Leica GradeSmart system—he's had the latest version for about nine months.

"Obviously I get plenty of opportunities to compare Leica machine automation with other systems that I'm working alongside," says Roland.

"Being a more recent product, I have some useful advantages. For instance, mine will deal with blade crowd and tilt, whereas theirs' won't.

"But really, the stand-out difference is accuracy—I've had a brilliant run, and it's certainly something the VicRoads guys here are well aware of. We're laying 2,500 tonnes of Grade 3 per day, and my accuracy under GNSS is never less than +/- 10 mm. It's really very satisfying to get such a combination of speed and accuracy."

Roland spoke of laser final trim in the order of 1 mm, but we'll need to see it in the flesh before we can go anywhere with that (not that we doubt Roland, who comes pretty highly recommended as a grader operator, but...).

### **Not Possible a few Years Ago**

GNSS accuracy of plus/minus ten millimetres in the vertical plane would have been regarded with scepticism a few short years ago, when 30 mm was the order of the day.

There is a reason why this comes about, and it flows from what we keep telling everyone—that Australia is at the very forefront of this technology, both in its application, and in its development.

Anyone who's been involved at a senior level in the roadbuilding industry for a few years will have met, or know of, Mick Gunter. He has



**After making Australia's largest sale of GNSS systems, Malcolm Kennedy, CEO of CR Kennedy & Company, is spending heavily to boost backup for Leica products.**

quite a reputation, flowing from his early roadbuilding software, 'TP Stakeout'. Mick has for some time been part of the brains trust at the Leica Geosystems world-wide research centre at Dutton Park, Queensland. The way we hear it, his mathematical prowess has been a big factor in the heightened accuracy of Leica's GradeSmart technology.

### **New Training Facilities**

Interviewed in Melbourne a couple of weeks ago, CRK's managing director Malcolm Kennedy made it clear that he intends to invest whatever it takes to capitalise on recent success, and ensure that skilled staff are in place at all his Australian branches.

"The technology is only as good as the backup we can provide," said Malcolm. "We're putting on a large number of new people right around the country, and have taken steps to establish a CRK in-house training facility." 