

Tasmanian Association of Municipal  
Supervisors

Lance Holmes Award 2003 Recipient

Robert Norris

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Investigation into the operations of  
Hume City Council and AH Plant  
Melbourne

## Programme

- Day 1 AH Plant Clayton South Depot Melbourne
- Day 2 Hume City Council Parks and Recreation
- Day 3 Waste Management  
Fleet Management
- Day 4 Construction & Maintenance  
Depot Site Visits
- Day 5 Caterpillar Site Inspection

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. My name is Robert Norris. I am employed as a leading hand for Total Workforce Rural Roads Department and I am the recipient of the Lance Holmes 2002 Award.

My report today is on the operations of Hume City Council and AH Plant's Clayton South Depot in Melbourne.

My first day was at AH Plant's Clayton Sth depot where I was introduced to the area manager Allen Morris. While working for Total Workforce Rural Roads Department, I have gained a different perspective on the amount of effort that goes into the preparation of machinery for rehire.

One of the polices is the plant cleanliness instruction form which gives detailed instructions for maintenance and transporting company plant in a clean condition.

They also have in place a 20 point checklist that covers everything from paint and decal condition to warning lights, engine and driveline condition. Also, as well as servicing their plant and equipment, check to make sure that they are equipped with current operating and safety manuals which includes a prestart checklist book in the form of a carbon copy book. This, from a hirer's point of view gives us assurance that when hiring plant, it meets all safety requirements.

Attention to detailing was evident, with an extensive management system for detailing of machinery, which all adds to AH plants image. Also as part of the advertising strategy, they like to display plant for hire in order from large to small. This might not sound important, but for the average man off the street it allows him to choose the right size machine for the job.

At AH Plant they conduct toolbox meetings and safety audits monthly and have a very detailed, but straight forward, depot safety checklist and risk assessment form.

The housekeeping throughout the depot was well maintained and employees that I spoke to have no concerns with OHS issues. Moral was good, which is important when endeavouring to maintain a safe working environment.

Hume City Council

Day two was spent in a more familiar surrounding with Hume City Council, where I was greeted by Geoff Bird manager of works.

It was from here that I spent time with parks and recreation, waste management, fleet management and construction and maintenance.

The first area visited was with parks and recreation coordinators Ed Storey and Mark Kennedy who gave me the royal tour through their many parks and reserves and football grounds. Whilst touring I spoke with mowing crews who ran me through their action request forms for work to be completed which were similar to our service requests. We discussed issues such as rotation of work so as to reduce work fatigue eg from being on brush cutter day in day out and also to maintain multi skilling. We also talked about tractor mowing crews and discussed the purchase of a new Pegasus tri deck towable mower. This machine has advantages for Council and more importantly for the operators. Whilst it is envisaged that this machine will increase productivity by 30-40% it will also have substantial benefits for their operators with easier greasing points and better access for cleaning mowing decks which will decrease the risk of spreading unwanted weeds.

I was also pleased to see that as part of the replacement procedure, operators had a lot of input to the purchase of plant.

Back to the depot and to the next department which was Waste management run by Steve Shannin. I am convinced that waste management in Hume is huge and the men who operate there eleven compactor trucks have their work cut out for them. These fella's start early and don't stop until they have all finished their runs, helping others where needed. I took interest in their rear load compactor and spoke to Steve and the crew who operate this truck about problems involved with riding on the rear whilst travelling between bins.

Vic Safe has introduced new guidelines and has banned riding on the rear as from July 1<sup>st</sup> 2003 due to many injuries sustained in this field of work.

We at Total had an incident where one of our colleagues struck his head whilst going over a hump and fell off unconscious, seriously injuring himself. He is on the mend and has returned to work but at the time this not only put enormous stress on the families involved but on his workmates.

My next port of call was with fleet management coordinated by John Williams. We discussed the tendering process for the purchase of new plant, this also included input from plant operators. Once purchased it would then undergo a plant induction checklist where employees involved would be trained and taken through procedures involving work instructions, document location and maintenance check lists before plant is put into service.

This process is important for making certain that operators know and understand correct procedures involved after purchasing new plant. I inspected the workshop which was well set out with focus on housekeeping being a high priority. I was particularly impressed with the truck hoist which was a valuable asset when servicing trucks, having the advantage of thorough inspections of the underside components of vehicles, not to mention the fact you are also in an upright position. With eleven garbage trucks, maintenance was an important issue, with these trucks constantly stopping and starting putting a lot of wear and tear on brakes and other components.

This resulted in the need for daily checks which are carried out at the end of the day on operational hazard lights, indicators, tyres and anything that is visibly wrong, all being repaired so that downtime is kept to minimum allowing trucks to be ready for their next shift.

Construction and maintenance was the next department on the list coordinated by George Alki.

We hopped in the ute left Hume and headed for the Sunbury Depot where I inspected the purchase of their new Tonne cat excavator. Every Council should have one of these machines their versatility alone is an asset.

The performance of this machine over another backhoe was due to operations involving the digging of graves where headstones were being accidentally damaged when the backhoe was in confined areas. The O swing feature of the excavator makes this machine ideal for the job and has reduced these incidents plus the costs of repairing damaged headstones. The other benefit worth mentioning is that it is also transported by trailer which increases productivity by reducing downtime.

Travelling from site to site we left their Sunbury depot and headed towards their IZh grader which was carrying out edge grading, and once on site, I had taken notice of the way signage was well placed and the way in which there was minimal disruption to traffic moving through this site. One of the hardest problems with any roadwork operation is keeping the flow of traffic and yourself out of the way. Sometimes this is not easily achieved.

With the day drawing to an end it was back to the main depot at Barry Road where I was invited to browse through their auditing checklists and OHS policies and around the depot. Hume's auditing was kept well maintained and checklists were detailed but simple to complete, this itself makes it easier for people like me who carry out these audits.

Some of the best OHS policies I find can be the simplest and a couple which I have brought back to Total Workforce and are in the process of being implemented were a simple entry and exiting sticker placed on cabs of vehicles explaining correct mounting and dismounting of vehicles and the other of wearing Hi Vis Vests once past the main office. Also, with any organisation today, saving money with simple solutions such as Hume's recycling and making their own street signs, all of this not ground breaking stuff, but at the end of the day its money that can be used somewhere else.

My last destination before my trip had drawn to an end was at Caterpillar Laverton plant where the only thing that comes to mind was that they were unbelievable.

The attention to detail and policies including quality assurance and OHS would take the next two TAMS meetings to discuss. Needless to say, when touring the depot housekeeping in all areas was excellent. This is no wonder when you consider the millions of dollars worth of machinery that passes through their doors. One of the many QA policies that they have in place is when any machines oil lines or hydraulic lines are detached or removed from a machine, it has to be plugged to eliminate contamination from entering the lines, and to eliminate oil being spread over work areas which could result in someone slipping and injuring themselves.

With over \$300,000 dollars worth of stock on the shelves, it gives you an idea of what sort of turnover that Caterpillar would have. One thing that I was impressed with was the fact that there were three branch managers and one main manager; all of them were trained from being mechanics to managers.

The servicing bay was extremely well designed, having a sublevel floor fitted with all the tools required, toilets and wash facilities. They can service 6 prime movers at any one time or three B doubles side by side.

Earthmoving plant was another important issue with Caterpillar. All plant being serviced or purchased after trade in is thoroughly inspected and clean before it is allowed to leave the depot. They have strict guidelines in respect to contaminated soils leaving their site, let alone the State.

In finishing my report, I would like to thank TAMS, William Adams, Steve Robinson of AH Plant and Geoff Bird and all of Hume City Council for the time they took to show me their operations and answer questions.