

The Multi-Loader 6.0 is the largest crawler carrier. Equipped with the bi-levelling system and radio remote controls, it is designed to carry loads of up to six tonnes.

KEEPING PACE WITH ALMACRAWLERS

Almac Pacific recently announced that Pace Cranes had been appointed the national distributor for the AlmaCrawler range of Multi-Loaders. Almac Pacific general manager Bob Mules, Pace Cranes managing director Anthony Heeks, and Pace Cranes national sales manager Michael Cawston provide the background to the development.

“WE’VE BEEN LOOKING FOR A DEALER FOR the Multi-Loader product for the last 9–10 months,” said Bob Mules.

“I’d approached and had several conversations with a couple of different crane companies that were maybe looking at diversifying their offering, and then I was looking through a copy of *Cranes and Lifting* magazine and I saw Pace Cranes. I knew of the business from my previous life with Gillespie Cranes back in the early 2000s when I was helping run their EWP fleet.

“Looking at the range and what they offer I saw they had the track carrier and I wondered if our AlmaCrawler range would be competing with their offering or was it going to align with, and maybe compliment, what they had.

“I rang Anthony, and we decided it was worth at least a conversation. Anthony

confirmed they’d been getting calls from their customers about the carriers, but they wanted larger capacities or something a little bit different.

“As we chatted, we thought the AlmaCrawler range would probably compliment what they already have. And, from my perspective, the relationship really fits into that crane and lifting environment and also infrastructure and construction sectors we are looking to target with the range.”

Anthony Heeks explains how he sees the range fitting into the Pace Cranes suite of products.

“The tracked carriers work very well with spider cranes, which do have limited pick and carry capabilities,” he said.

“Our Madea range is ideal when you are working on sites with narrow access, or working behind houses, whether

it's working with steel, spas, or pools, or anything like that. The problem is how do we get the gear there?

"In the past, the solution was to lift it over the house with a large all terrain crane, which is expensive. The Maeda mini crawlers have been a great option for the lifting aspect of these projects, and they are far more cost effective, but you still have to get the gear to the crane. We could see the tracked carriers being a great solution to this problem.

"The AlmaCrawler range really complements our existing product line-up. It fits in nicely because where the capacity of our other products finish, the AlmaCrawler range takes off. The range has larger capacities, they feature self-leveling capabilities and they have a lot of options including diesel or battery options. They also have carrier and crane options. Our business is based on this type of niche market and our products are specialised."

Mules explains what a crane hire company can expect to see from the relationship between Almac Pacific and Pace Cranes.

"From a product availability point of view, we've always got product on the water. We sold a couple of units recently, and I've got three 2.5t capacity units and three 6t capacity units on the water. We will then have a further six of our new three-tonners arriving early November. So it's about keeping that pipeline coming and understanding what we think the stock levels need to be," he said.

"The new three-tonner will appeal to a different market compared to 2.5t and 6t capacity Multi-Loaders, which feature the bi-leveling system. The new 3t ML 3.0FX Multi-Loader doesn't have the bi-leveling and so it is a little cheaper. It is ideal for the tighter applications.

"The ML 3.0 FX is smaller overall and weighs less than 800kg. They are ideal for production-type facilities, warehousing and industrial environments, where people have them online, and I know there are a couple of rental companies operating them and they see opportunities in lift and shift-type applications."

Mules discusses the application for



(L to R) Anthony Heeks, Pace Cranes, Bob Mules, Almac Pacific, and Michael Cawston, Pace Cranes.

the 6t capacity Multi-Loader 6.0 and why a crane hire business should be looking at this capacity and at tracked carriers in general.

"With a 6t capacity and a mini crane with a 1t lifting capacity, we see the Multi-Loader 6.0 working well in large infrastructure projects, like the tunnelling we are seeing up and down the east coast. It would be ideal for transporting equipment and materials into areas where cranes or other pieces of large equipment cannot access," he said.

"They are designed to transport equipment and materials from point A to point B and then allow the cranes to lift them into place. Both the 2.5 and 6.0 Multi-Loaders self-level up to 20 degrees, meaning the carrying platform remains level whilst traversing up and down inclines. These are the opportunities we

see our Multi-Loaders excelling in and the team at Pace Cranes have that connection and long-term relationships with those customers. That's the exciting opportunity for all of us," he said.

Heeks is confident the Multi-Loader range will prove to be popular, even though it still a new concept for much of the market.

"In the past, we've been successful with niche products that have been new to the market. Some have been new concepts too and we know it is important to have the machine available to not just demonstrate, but to have stock units here, which we can hire out and get them in the market," he said.

"That way they are seen and recognised. Customers can see them operating and they can 'try before they buy'. Or, if we have machines available, we can offer them

as loan machines, we have that flexibility. This strategy has worked with a lot of our products, and it gives the customer the option to see the product in action. With any new product, you really need to get it out there, there's no sense in sitting here in the showroom," he said.

Mules goes on to explain how customers are utilising the Multi-Loader and what they think of the concept.

"We have a customer in New Zealand and they have both the Multi Loader 2.5 and 6.0. They have shared videos with me showing different applications they have used these units in: from moving long beams down steep, narrow driveways, through roller doors of a small warehouse, with the ML2.5, to relocating large statues down grassy inclines with the ML6.0 with the crane attachment.

"They have also used the ML2.5 in the film industry – when they were shooting a commercial down on a creek, they had to get the equipment down a steep incline into this wet, rocky creek area below. They were able to strap the camera and boom onto the ML2.5 and drive it down the incline. They said they'd normally have three or four people up and down the incline, carrying the equipment," he said.

Almac Pacific and Pace Cranes will work together in terms of product support and the service side of the business explains Mules.

"Our technical manager, Josh Coulson, works out of Melbourne and will support the Pace Crane team. He will provide the team all the relevant training on the products, so customers can feel confident they will receive the right levels of support. We also have a full range of spare parts on the shelf in Melbourne, so from that perspective, we are fully supported by the factory," he said.

Michael Cawston discusses the Multi-Loaders potential in the crane sector.

"From a couple of conversations we've had I think there's potential for us to sell multiple units to our existing customer base," he said.

as far as it can, but it just keeps going even further with something," he said.

Mules recently received a call from one of the head ergonomic engineers from Work Cover who had seen an article on the Multi-Loader 6.0 with the crane.

"He rang for a bit of a chat. He'd been talking to a kitchen fit-out business and they had a job which involved big, heavy stone bench tops. Apparently one of the guys tried to lift it and hurt his back.

"He wanted information to see what was available, how much they were, and discuss the capabilities of the Multi-Loader range. I said for a little builder they may seem a little expensive. He said,

"We are talking about picking up safely and completely avoiding Occupational Health and Safety issues."

"When you are talking to crane hire companies who are purchasing cranes, when they look a Multi-Loader it isn't that expensive. We are trying to get a handle on exactly how many we sell. But I think the potential is certainly there.

"We think a major driver will be the focus on safety on sites. The days are over when people are breaking their backs carrying materials, it's just not allowed. We keep thinking the safety industry has gone

if it helps to reduce injuries and claims, then it's not expensive at all. Their policies and premiums won't increase and if they can cost it over two or three jobs, it isn't that expensive for them.

"It's not a bad point. We are talking about picking up safely and completely avoiding Occupational Health and Safety issues. There will no doubt be numerous applications that we aren't even thinking of. Tier One construction sites, infrastructure sites, and mines are focused on safety of their crews on sites.

"Customers that are using the Multi-Loaders understand how to utilise the gear and when it becomes a well utilised asset, the price becomes less of an issue. It's about getting the concept out there and once people see what it can do, they understand just how valuable an asset they can be, and then it snowballs from there," he said.

"If you've got injuries and Work Cover is involved, and you are looking at workers comp and your staff is off work, that gets to be very expensive. We are very confident that when the market fully understands the benefits of the Multi-Loader concept, and the role they can play in and around work sites, the acceptance levels will increase," he said. ●



The ML 3.0 FX is a powerful and versatile flatbed truck carrier with a load capacity of 3,000kg.

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