



# HMS GROUP

Mining innovation is very much in the blood of HMS Group's founder, Jamie Howard. Pioneering strap and mesh ideas developed by his father are still used in the underground mining world today.

Based on 25 years of industry experience, Jamie's own great idea, the HMS Mini Loader, recently went international. It has been recognised with industry prizes including at the NSW Mining Suppliers Awards, Hunter Manufacturing Awards and the Diesel, Dirt and Turf Expo two years running. Most recently, HMS was awarded the prestigious Board Award at the 2017 Hunter Manufacturing Awards.

The loader has particular value in cleaning under operating conveyor belts. The idea goes back to the formation of HMS in 2008 as a full-service mining company. As well as manufacturing, the group includes training, equipment hire, and Australasian distribution for electronics company Hetric.

Around 20 local businesses in the HunterNet network have contributed to the Mini Loader's development. Collaboration is what advanced manufacturing is all about, says Bryce Parker, HMS Group's Chief Operating Officer.

**“We can't do it all on our own; so we rely on our strategic partners, on our suppliers, and our network of professionals,” he says.**”

“As well as the tangible relationships, there's also relationship with AMGC and with HunterNet, to draw on the support we've got in our region, not just from a product perspective but also for networking and events to bring everything together and make the best product we can.”

The remote-controlled loader weighs 1.6 tons, is 1.3 metres wide and 0.625 metres high, with a payload up to 300 kilograms. It can clean waste and runoff product in tight spaces, eliminating safety risks from doing the job manually.

“Depending on coal prices, that can range from \$100,000 to \$200,000 per hour, which effectively makes the return on investment ridiculously low at two or three hours,” explains Bryce of not having to shut a conveyor down to clean under it.

There has been interest locally and from South America, but HMS sees the real potential in China, which Jamie first visited in 2014 on a trade mission. He says there are only around 120 black coal mines in Australia, a small fraction of the number in China.

Jamie credits an Accelerating Commercialisation grant with facilitating the first sale in that market, where they now have distribution to 20 provinces through channel partner JKZZ.

“In regard to the AC grant, without that we would not be the worldwide company we currently are,” Jamie tells us.

“In China there's around about 13,000 mine sites. We're only concentrating on the larger mine sites from Yangquan to Shenhua. We're pretty excited about that market, obviously.”

The Mini Loader has attachments including a trencher, forks and road sweeper, with potential applications in many places beyond coal mines. Bringing this versatile little vehicle into the world wasn't easy.



“From my concept of the mini loader to where we are now we've had a lot of sleepless nights and spent a huge amount of money,” says Jamie.

“And money is not my drive, it's about Hunter jobs. And we're pretty proud to put the Australian flag on things and make in Australia.”

**“The regional collaboration that enabled the loader will remain essential as HMS evolves it further. HMS is also excited about the expertise they might be able to tap into throughout the rest of the country.”**

“We're not sure who is in Queensland or Victoria or Western Australia,” says Jamie.

“So regarding AMGC, I'm pretty excited to work with these guys to help us: we may need a small amount of work completed over there for example.”





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