

New Drifter Cuts Costs in Underground Mining

With ongoing softness in metal prices placing a hefty amount of pressure on mining companies to cut costs and improve productivity – Rockdrill Services Australia (“RDSA”) is playing its part in the competitive mining services industry with its game-changing advances in drilling technology.

RDSA has its origins set in the well-known WA mining town of Kalgoorlie, having been established in 2001 and servicing predominantly local operations in the area.

“The founders of the business were actually involved in contract drilling originally and discovered that there was very little choice and very little expertise available in repairing and maintaining rock drills,” RDSA chief executive officer Hamish Christie-Johnston said.

“So they started to do it themselves and over time developed a strong level of in-house expertise.

“They actually started focusing on the rock-drill repairs, product improvement and servicing as the main part of the business – and the business took off.”

Fast forward to 2013 and RDSA has strengthened its position as Australia’s largest independent manufacturer and servicer of rock drills with branches in Melbourne, Kalgoorlie and Townsville.

RDSA’s newest offering to the market is the Variable Stroke Drifter (VS Drifter) which is not only satisfying the company’s current clients but also attracting the attention of a number of new and potential clients.



The VS Drifter came about after the company identified the need for a drill to be able to vary its energy delivery depending on the application and ground condition – effectively saving both time and money.



Enter the VS family of rock drills.

Flexibility and adaptability are undoubtedly key components of the VS Drifter's DNA, essentially allowing users to transfer them between existing rigs in order to extend their functioning life.

"There is no question that the new VS model reduces the overall cost per metre for drilling. It is also allowing companies to derive more from their existing assets," Christie-Johnston said.

"What we have been able to do with these conversions is upgrade existing rigs for a fraction of the price of replacing them – making them more productive and operating them at a lower cost per metre.

"A key feature of the patented design is there is no external control of the stroke adjustment – it's all controlled within the drifter and without the use of electronics which can be unreliable. We can fit the drifter to the rig and start drilling."

One of RDSA's clients taking full advantage of the VS series is Macmahon Contractors Pty Ltd, which is one of the leading providers of underground mechanised cable bolt installation in Australia, with 10 mechanised cable bolting rigs as well as a modified scaling rig currently in operation. Macmahon has made the transition to the VS Drifter across several of its major mining projects.

Macmahon GM Operations – Mining Services Brett Maney said the company has been impressed with the benefits of utilising the VS Drifter, such as increased uptime and more metres drilled.

"Our drifter service intervals have increased by 50%, which is a significant cost saving for us," he said.

"The increased and variable power output of these modified drifters has allowed greater penetration rates while also increasing the consumable life – which is very unique as typically more power output means sacrificing longevity of the drill's consumable life."

Other significant benefits include dramatic reductions in noise and vibration and lower rig maintenance costs.

Taking into account the tangible benefits associated with RDSA's newest drifter, Macmahon is able to increase value and pass on savings to their client base.

"Everyone is a winner when we are able to drill and install more metres per month as our revenue is higher with less costs and the clients have an overall cost per metre saving particularly when we have a fixed and variable style contract in place," Maney said.

The VS Drifter can be used in a wide range of applications including jumbo development, ground support and production drilling.

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