



Altus raises the bar on traffic management

In the nearly seven years since founder David Lundberg started Altus Traffic Management in Melbourne, the company has opened branches in all major Australian cities and two years ago made the bold move to open in the US.

CEO FOR AUSTRALIA Steve O'Dwyer said Lundberg, then in labour hire, saw an opportunity for top end traffic management expertise.

His timing was excellent and after Melbourne, the private company moved to Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland, and Tasmania and in the last few months New South Wales, to complete its national footprint.

It makes its services available 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year, for anything from road maintenance, roadside construction, the laying of communication cables, street festivals and even film shoots. Wherever traffic has to be controlled or detoured, Altus claims it will have the perfect solution.

In order to be the best, the company recruits staff with broad traffic control and traffic management experience and a focus on client relations and OH&S. To further support this recruitment policy, the company provides true career paths and opportunities within the industry, and employs a full-time training and quality manager.

Altus employs about 500 people in Australia and is largely involved in manag-

ing traffic around various road based projects like road construction and maintenance, power, water and electricity installation and maintenance programs, new subdivisions, and keeping triathlons, bike rides and other special events safe.

Bollards, a few signs

O'Dwyer said there was still a perception that traffic management involved "a bunch of backyarders with utes putting out a row of bollards and a few signs." But Australia wide it is a \$300m industry employing perhaps 10,000 people with several businesses in it employing in excess of 200 staff and turning over more than \$10m a year.

He said, "Behind the bloke on the road, there's a lot of hazard assessment and management that is ongoing throughout a project, to reduce the risk of incidents. Also, the job must go ahead relatively unimpeded and traffic must not be unnecessarily delayed either."

For example, on St Kilda Road, Melbourne's main thoroughfare to the south of the city, new tram stops, a turning bay and a tram storage bay had to be installed. The new lines were installed over a weekend

when Altus stopped all traffic. But the work on the stops had to proceed while trams on Melbourne's busiest tram route, continued to trundle through.

In any event it involved Altus in many hours of planning to implement the best way of managing the traffic and trams for main contractor John Holland.

Eastlink complex, demanding

Another major project in the southern capital was the Eastlink tollway project completed in the middle of last year. O'Dwyer said Altus came onto the job with 10 to 12 people about 18 months after the first sod was turned. "It was complex and demanding," he said.

He said Altus was the first Australian traffic management organisation to operate internationally after opening in the US. "There did not appear to be the commitment to OH&S there that there is in Australia, which seems strange seeing that nation was the home of crippling litigiousness, starting in the mid 1980s. But they are lifting the bar slowly and surely and beginning to understand our full service proposition," O'Dwyer said.

Altus controls night traffic as a bridge is erected on the Western Ring Road for the Deer Park Bypass Project



Altus put major diversions in place as excavators and hammers made short work of replacing tramlines at Melbourne's busiest intersection outside Flinders Street station, during Easter 2008.

Altus' main US business – it has eight offices there - has been in managing traffic around a major copper cable retrieval project across a number of states. It has slowed since the global financial crisis hit and the price of copper collapsed. However, after entering these markets, Altus has built a solid customer base which softened its exposure to this single project, he said.

National database

Altus Traffic has also taken traffic management into the computer age, by developing a

national database of traffic controllers, team leaders and team supervisors, to meet both emergency call-out and programmed maintenance works. This technology allows the company to maintain communications with experienced traffic control staff throughout Australia so it can determine who is available - and most suitable - for each particular job. The company also offers a full e-commerce capability and on line traffic management ordering.

No matter how big or small the operation – from implementing the controlled

movement of motorists and pedestrians at sites ranging from a one-day single lane closure to a major rail installation project involving the deployment of a heavy-lift crane over several days – Altus' primary concern is safety. It is one of only a few companies in the field to hold ISO 9001:2000 quality and AS 4801 OH&S accreditation throughout its national network.

NAB partnership

In today's environment, financial stability is also important, and this has been achieved through a partnership with National Australia Bank's Capital Division. While Altus Traffic's managing director David Lundberg maintains a controlling interest, NAB has taken a significant equity position. This has allowed the company to fund growth through acquisition, including the takeover of Traffic Management Services (TMS) in Brisbane, which resulted in Altus Traffic being a significant full service supplier of traffic control services in southern Queensland.

For the Civil Contractors Federation's national conference, in Perth from October 21 to 25, Altus is the number one ticket holder.

Protecting powerline installation and maintenance crews are an important part of the company's work

