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William Adams 



Becketts Mining and Civil's new Cat® D6 XE Dozer.

Digging through history

Dick Beckett has spent his whole life helping build a better Tasmania from behind the controls of his trusted Cat® dozers. Even with his sons now at the helm of the family business he started in 1964, he still takes every opportunity to roll up his sleeves to do the work he loves.

In a large workshop in Exeter, in Tasmania's north, Dick Beckett sits flanked by his collection of trucks, cars, Caterpillar® memorabilia, and family photos that tell the story of a long and prosperous career.

Beside him, an engine recovered from an old Cat RD 6 crawler tractor is just a hint

at the impressive range of historical Cat machines displayed elsewhere around the property, regularly drawing the fascination and admiration of earthmoving aficionados visiting on business – or just to experience a taste of history.

If you ask anybody in the area, they'll tell you

that Dick is a legend of the Tasmanian civil and mining industries. Growing up on a farm in Liffey, 30 minutes southwest of Launceston, he's spent his life watching the state evolve and grow, and has contributed his 60-year career to the cause – usually from the cab of a Cat Dozer, where he can still regularly be found today.

"All I ever wanted to do was drive bulldozers," Dick says. "I was able to buy one very early in my life, and started doing jobs around for different people."

This was the beginning of Becketts Mining and Civil, officially started in 1964 when Dick was just 18 years of age. And outside of a few years working in logging, it's been mostly dozers ever since.

These days, the business is largely run by Dick's two sons Jason and Scott. Jason serves as Managing Director – though as he says, it's still a family business through and through. Jason, Scott, Dick, and Dick's wife Faye are each 25 per cent shareholders of Becketts, and big business decisions are still talked through as a family.

"While I run the business as Managing Director, the four of us are all still directors," Jason says. "I'll table opportunities, and the family is normally happy to accept what I've brought forward. But it all still gets discussed as a family, and final decisions made as a family." An adaptable niche



Dick Beckett, Founder, Becketts Mining and Civil.

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William Adams, Rob Flynn (left), and Dick Beckett.



Dick still gets on the tools whenever he can.

Dick says that today, as when he started, Becketts is equipped to deliver whatever customers require.

"Whether it be mining coal, removing overburden, clearing land, or building irrigation dams – whatever," he says. "That's how we started, and it's still how the business goes today."

Powering Becketts' range of works is a fleet of predominantly Cat machinery – Dick estimates around 70 pieces – including a large collection of dozers from D6s to D11s, and a full range of everything in between.

Jason says its Becketts' range of dozers that sets the business apart in the region.

"We think we've found a niche here in Tassie," he says. "We specialise in supplying current

and late model Cat dozers to the industry, along with good operators."

Though the business has gravitated more towards major civil and mining contracts, Jason says heavy plant hire stills plays a major part in the business.

"We specialise in dry hire as well, which many contractors are reluctant to do," he says. "But we know that Cat machinery is extremely robust, and can deal with the sort of severe and adverse conditions we work in around the state. And we have the confidence that when we send a Cat dozer out on a job, the job's going to be done."

It's a confidence that Dick has carried with him from the very start – the reliability and efficiency of Cat machinery, and the knowledge

that local dealer William Adams will always have the Becketts' back.

"William Adams has always been a very great supporter of us and our little business, and the Cat product is the best on the market," he says. "When we can afford a Cat machine, we buy a Cat machine. We've always preferred them over any other product."

Beyond simply supplying Cat machinery, Dick says William Adams has been a constant support to Becketts since the 60's – a partnership that's been foundational to his business.

"When you're starting out and you're trying to build your business up, sometimes you get paid and sometimes you don't," he says. "Sometimes you make money, other times you lose it, and sometimes there's no money to pay your bills at the end of the month."

"But William Adams has trusted us and supported us during those hard times. And you don't forget that sort of thing – when people treat you like that. And maybe it's a bit old-fashioned, but that's why I've always been loyal towards them too."

Mutual benefit

For William Adams' Rob Flynn, dealing with the Beckett family on a regular basis has provided benefits far beyond machinery sales.

"I've been dealing with the Becketts for the past eight months," he says. "I've learned a lot from them, and they've been very helpful for my growth within William Adams as well."

Rob says the Becketts' willingness to share their in-depth knowledge of Cat machinery, as well as their understanding of customers' needs in the region has proven a big bonus for his own professional development.

"Dick has been a leader in the Tasmanian construction and mining industries for a long time, and he's very passionate about his Cat machinery," Rob says. "His collection is almost like a Caterpillar museum. There's a lot of machinery there that they've kept rather than sold over the years, so it's a really good look into the history of the brand."

Rob was the man Jason and Scott reached out to when the family made the decision to purchase a brand-new Cat D6 XE dozer – partly as a sort of gift for their father, but equally as a calculated business decision.

"We've bought a lot of new excavators and very low hour dozers from William Adams over the years, but we'd never actually purchased a brand-new dozer," Jason says. "But when the opportunity presented itself, it was a good time to do it."

"We've always been a bulldozing company, so it was gratifying to be able to place that order for a new D6. There's a personal satisfaction in making that purchase for the business that our dad started 60 years ago, and it's a sign of how we've grown and progressed in that time."

And as much as Dick enjoys operating Becketts' new D6 XE, the efficiency and productivity gains on offer made it a smart business decision too.

According to Rob, it's this efficiency and productivity that really sets the D6 XE apart – even from many larger dozers.

"The D6 has a considerably smaller footprint

compared to the D8, but offers the same product efficiencies," he says.

"Fuel efficiency is key with this machine too. You're reducing all your operating costs per hour, which is a huge benefit to any business. And for the operators, the cab offers improved visibility and comfort, and a much more ergonomic setup to combat operator fatigue."

"It's a highly refined machine for today's market – especially with the 3D technology package on it. It's a very efficient, productive tool for anyone in the earthmoving business."

Dick agrees that the investment was a smart decision on Jason and Scott's part.

"It was a lot of money at the time, but we could afford it," Dick says. "And I'm glad we could, because we'll get our money back with the money we save on fuel. It also enables us to give our customers better value for their money."

"That's something we've always based our business on here – giving customers value for money. If we can't give you value for your money, we don't want your business. And with that Cat D6 XE, we can take it onto somebody's property and wrap a job up that much quicker."

Dick says the efficiency of the D6 XE, and how it feels to operate, never ceases to impress – high praise from somebody who's been operating dozers for more than 50 years.

"What it can do for its size and weight is just incredible," he says. "The way it takes the power from the engine down through the transmission and onto the ground – it's just fantastic. You've got to experience it to understand."

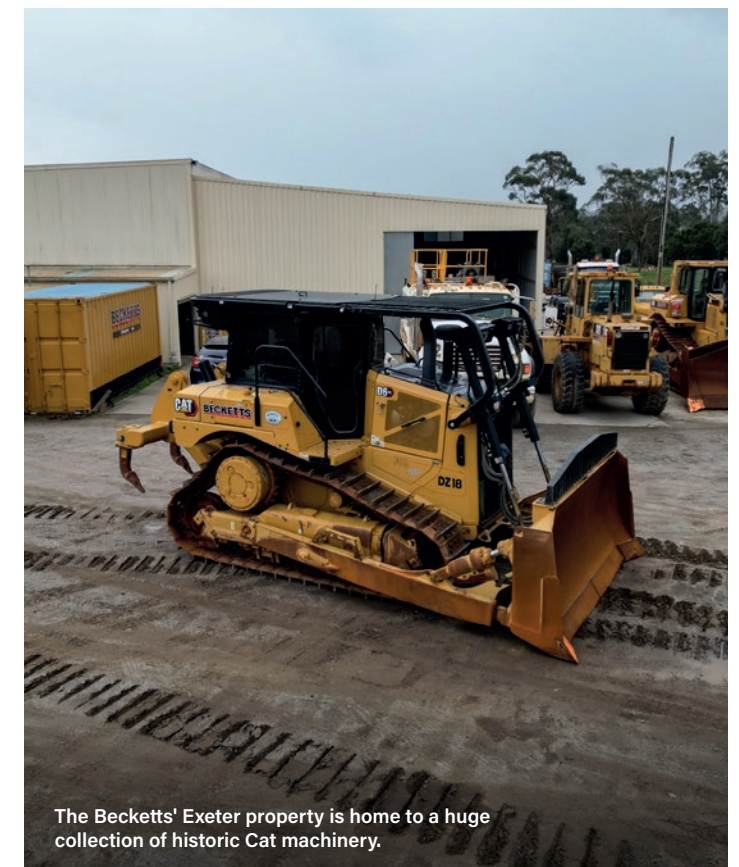
"I just cannot fault it. If I had to find some little thing wrong with it, I don't know if I could. Visibility, accessibility, and everything else that goes along with it – it's just super."



Dick has been impressed by the power and efficiency of the Cat D6 XE.



Pride of place: the engine from an old Cat RD 6 crawler tractor.



The Becketts' Exeter property is home to a huge collection of historic Cat machinery.



From left: Scott Beckett, Jason's eldest son Jock, Jason Beckett (with youngest son Charlie), Faye and Dick Beckett.



The Becketts' relationship with Caterpillar stretches back decades.

Cutting edge support

Rob says the Becketts have also taken advantage of WillCare – the Cat Customer Value Agreement (CVA) offered by William Adams.

“WillCare is one of the market leaders for parts and servicing packages,” he says. “It includes discounted rates, scheduled servicing, capped servicing, all tailored to the needs of the machine and customer for a set price.”

Of course, it’s all good and well to hear that from a sales rep, but Jason is also glowing in his praise for the service and the peace of mind WillCare offers the family business – especially when it comes to managing maintenance.

“It’s pretty amazing,” he says. “It means we don’t really need to be involved in the maintenance of our new Cat machines – William Adams just takes care of it. They’ve even got coverage on weekends, which means we’re not pulling the machine off jobs during the week. That’s worth gold to us.”

Jason says having the support of the WillCare CVA also means he doesn’t have to find extra people to service Becketts’ fleet as it expands – a real bonus in an era of labour shortages.

“Adding WillCare to the last three or four Cat machines that we’ve bought has meant we haven’t had to hire any more fitters for the business to cover their maintenance – if we could even find them to hire,” he says.

“And that means more cashflow and more margin in our business. There’s a real benefit there for a reasonable fixed cost, and it’s really worked well for us.” **///E**



Dick's collection is rich with family memories and Caterpillar memorabilia.