

Universal APPEAL

With the unique ability to morph from a conventional on/off-road vehicle to a railway line maintenance unit at the flick of a switch, Australia's first purpose-built Mercedes-Benz Unimog U400 has hit the country's roads ... and rails.

The innovative 'road-railer' unit, delivered by Unimog Sales Australia & New Zealand to Sydney-based freight operator Cavanagh Cranes & Transport, is a distinctive member of the heavy duty cross-country Unimog family.

It provides fast and independent access to work sites as well as improving work-place safety by reducing unnecessary handling of equipment. In addition to offering spades of tractive power, its function-specific design enables it to glide effortlessly along railway lines – eliminating the risk of track damage often associated with road-only vehicles.

The unit is fitted with rail running gear and an aerial work platform specifically designed for overhead rail line maintenance. In addition, it has a slew ring mounted beneath that retracts and extends hydraulically, acting like a giant jack to lift the entire vehicle so it can be quickly rotated 180 degrees in order to return along the track in a forward direction. This also enables super quick wheel changes in the event of a puncture.

These specific features are designed and installed by LH Access – a British company that specialises in the fabrication and fitment

metres with an outreach of 6.5 metres;

- Cut-slots in the basket for cable inspection;
- Mechanical slew function capable of being locked to allow operation adjacent to rail lines open to traffic;
- A boom capable of working through its full range on rail without the use of stabiliser legs.

According to Sam Cavanagh, owner of Cavanagh Cranes & Transport, the decision to

constant four wheel drive, power is transmitted to the tyres via an MB Telligent automated manual transmission with eight forward and six reverse ratios. Service intervals are 30,000 km or 1200 engine hours, whichever comes first.

For Grant Andrews, managing director of Unimog Sales Australia, the delivery provided an ideal opportunity to showcase the vehicle's effectiveness in challenging local applications.

"Unimog is a vehicle in a league of its own, and I am delighted to be able to offer such a versatile and unique solution to the Australian market," Andrews announced. "The vehicle is streets ahead when it comes to working in tough terrain; and it's widely regarded as the



Unimog Sales Australia managing director Grant Andrews (right) and technical support manager Paul Hennig (centre) with Sam Cavanagh, owner of the first road/ rail capable U400 in Australia.

of equipment for road/ rail vehicles. The vehicle also features a hydrostatic drive system that works independently of the normal driving transmission and allows an operator positioned in the aerial basket to move the vehicle in either direction along the railway lines. Other technical highlights include:

- A work platform that can rotate 360 degrees and is capable of reaching a height of 10

so efficiently on both road and rail, sets us apart from our competitors.

Cavanagh's U400 is powered by a Mercedes-Benz (MB) OM 906 LA 6.4 litre six cylinder engine that uses selective catalytic reduction (SCR) to meet Euro 5 emissions standards. The diesel delivers 175 kW (238 hp) and 850 Nm (627 lb ft) of torque and has a maximum rated speed of 2200 rpm. Featuring

acquire a Unimog for his business was an easy one.

"In adding the U400 to our fleet, we are now able to provide the perfect solution for our clients," Sam said. "The versatility of the vehicle, which works

best solution when a rugged and versatile unit is needed, especially when it has to operate both on and off-road and, in this case, on railway tracks.

"Unimog sales are increasing as more clients demand greater versatility, efficiency and reliability from their vehicles without increasing their whole-of-life costs," Grant added. "The model range offers customers unique technical solutions specific to their needs and this road-rail unit is a great example. By having standard fitment accessories such as power take-off systems and integrated vehicle hydraulics, customers don't need to retrofit such features and therefore avoid the financial and reliability costs retrofitment usually brings." **IID**