

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **Three generations behind Inkerman project**

Three generations of the Andrews family helped make Inkerman Mill's new remote-controlled damaged cane bin pusher a reality.

The prototype was designed and built by father and son team Bob and Alan Andrews, from Sitefix Solutions, with Alan's daughter, Kate – a 4<sup>th</sup>-year electrical apprentice at Inkerman Mill – assisting in the electrical work.

As part of an ongoing focus on safety improvements, Inkerman management decided last year they wanted to eliminate the need for employees to have to physically remove damaged bins from the factory's bin tipler area.

Inkerman Mill Engineering Manager Elliott Favale said while the brief was simple, the solution was less obvious.

"Inkerman has two tippers and, therefore, two parallel lines of full cane bins moving into the feeding station and empties moving out," he said.

"We needed something which could push empty, damaged cane bins out of one line and across another, while minimising the impact to operations and maximising safety of employees working in the area."

The challenge was given to Sitefix Solutions, with Alan taking about three months to come up with a solution - a remote-controlled shunting unit.

He said the concept utilised scissor lift components on a purpose-built chassis, using cane bin wheels modified to fit existing drive axles.

“The bins are pushed around a curved railway line which runs away from the feeding station,” he said.

“I was trying to work out how to keep the bin pusher on the line while it was pushing the empty bins.

“I was on a ride-on mower one day, mowing the lawn, when I had the idea to put the unit on cane bin wheel sets, so it could run on the same line as the bins.”

At the mill, the 1.5 tonne unit sits in a docking station, where its batteries are charged.

All of its movement is remotely controlled, with sensors at either end of the line ensuring the unit slows and stops at the appropriate place.

Alan said it was a special experience to have the family’s three generations work together on the project.

“It was great to have Kate’s input with the electrics,” he said.

“The three of us would get together and discuss ideas. It definitely made it easier.”

Wilmar Sugar Graduate Electrical Engineer John Pennisi and Hydraulics Fitter John Chapman also supported the project.

Being kind to his daughter, Alan ensured the unit has easy access for electricians and was built using parts off the shelf.

Mr Favale said the unit was working well and had delivered the desired safety improvements.

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