

HINO TAKES A



WIDER VIEW

The launch of the new 500 Series sets Hino on a path towards increased market share – Words by Dave Whyte.

Once upon a time, Japanese trucks were regarded as a no-frills, around-town workhorse. While their reputation for reliability, and the ability to carry a bit more than they should, made them a crowd favourite, they were in no way the technological leaders of the transport world.

The release of the new Hino 500 Wide Cab series is a great demonstration of just how far they have come, with a number of improvements, better features, and upgrades, adding to what was already a good offering in the Hino medium-duty range.

The Hino 500 Series Wide Cab range has undergone a long and extensive development programme, with over seven years of work going into the new model. The list of improvements includes engines, transmissions and safety equipment, with the chassis also coming in for some attention. The result is a range of 4x2, 6x2 and 6x4 models that will compete in the hard fought 16 t to 26 t GVM rigid market. This not only brings improvements in the trucks themselves, but also, it seems, a new level of energy from within the ranks of Hino Australia.

As with most new truck releases, we have had to wait a while to get our hands on the new Hino 500. Thailand and Indonesia were introduced to the new 500 Series in 2015, with product being built in both countries for their domestic markets. However, the 500 Series models that come to our shores will be built in a brand-new manufacturing facility situated just out of Tokyo, so the chances are the quality of this product will make it worth the wait.

At first glance, the new 500 Series has a fresh new look, with new panels wrapped around the cab bringing a contemporary, but unmistakably Japanese, appearance. Entry and egress are easy, with those models powered by the new 8.0-litre engine having two steps up to floor height and the 9.0-litre models having three steps.





Convenient grab handles make the climb to the seat a simple affair, allowing for the industry standard three points of contact without the need to stretch out. Once onboard, getting comfortable is also easy, with an ISRI seat providing plenty of adjustment and a tilt-and-slide steering column offering a good view of the dash and a comfortable driving position for all sizes of driver. An air-suspended passenger seat is also standard on wide-cab models.

The biggest news though, is under the cab. The new 500 Series Wide Cab range features a host of driveline improvements, starting with the engine options. The updated engines, the 8.0-litre JO8E and 9.0-litre AO9C both achieve Euro 5 emissions standards through the use of SCR (AdBlue) aftertreatment, doing away with the need for EGR or a DPF. Not only does this simplify the system, but it reduces the ongoing cost of ownership significantly by eliminating carbon build up within the engine and the need to replace the DPF later in life.

While Euro 6 is not on the cards for the 500 Series at the moment, mainly due to the fact that Hino sells a lot of trucks into markets where Euro 6 isn't even on the horizon yet, the fact that the SCR-only system meets Euro 5 means that Euro 6 should be easily achievable through the fitment of a DPF when it does come around.

The clean emissions from these engines don't come at the cost of power, either. The 8.0-litre variant delivers up to 280 hp (206 kW) and a 7% increase in torque over the previous version, bringing it up to 883 Nm. It's bigger brother, the 9.0-litre, is now rated up to 350 hp (257 kW) and 1422 Nm when matched to the manual transmission, but when paired with the Allison automatic is limited to 320 hp (235 kW) and 1275 Nm. Given my experience on a recent drive, this doesn't detract from performance, as the Allison makes great use of the reduced power output.

Given the rise in popularity of two-pedal AMT and automatic drivelines, it's no surprise to see the Allison automatic on the options list of the Hino 500 Series. While the other options include Hino six-speed and nine-speed manuals, along with an Eaton nine-speed manual, the smoothness and adaptability of the Allison auto should see it as the popular choice on these trucks.

The new Hino nine-speed manual is a very good transmission, offering good ratios and an easy shift, but, given the stop/start nature of the local tasks these trucks are intended for, I think that anyone who goes for the manual option would only be making more work for themselves or their drivers. The Allison auto has come a long way in recent years in terms of shift quality, ratios and efficiency. The ability to select and maintain a particular gear also answers a lot of the concerns operators have had over automatic transmissions in the past.





With all of that in mind, the biggest news with the 500 Series Wide Cab range is the standard fitment of Vehicle Stability Control (VSC), which includes Anti-lock Braking (ABS) and Anti-Slip Regulation (ASR).

Given the operating environment, and the frequently changing load conditions, it's surprising to think that these are the first Japanese trucks in this category to have this technology fitted as standard.

A simple test of the VSC, on a skidpan, was enough to demonstrate the virtues of the system. On a wet track, with a cab/chassis 4x2 model, the VSC kept the vehicle under complete control no matter what throttle, steering or braking inputs I threw at it. While the run with the system turned off was fun, the feeling of security when the system was active was much more comfortable for both me, as the driver, and my passenger. Other standard safety equipment fitted to the 500 Series Wide Cab range includes a reversing camera, driver's airbag, front underrun protection and Easy Start (hill hold) on models fitted with manual transmissions.

While a lot of thought has gone into the driveline and safety, Hino has also made life easier for the truck body manufacturers. A smooth top flange on the chassis rails and predrilled modular chassis design allow for easy fitment of various body types. Thought has also been given to those applications where PTO hydraulics are used, with provisions built in for easy fitment.





Hino trucks have been available in Australia for over 50 years, and have built a strong following based on the strength and reliability that operators have always looked for.

The introduction of the new 500 Series Wide Cab range looks set to build on those strengths, but also brings along a few new smart features for the ride. The talk among operators these days is increasingly based around safety and efficiency, and, while there may be a misconception around Japanese trucks and their ability to provide these features, the new 500 Series certainly delivers in these areas.

The day of the basic Japanese truck is long gone. In its place is a new breed of efficient, safe and smart trucks, and the Hino 500 Series Wide Cab range is right up there with the best of them. **DT**

