

**H**ino is full of optimism for a record year as this year it celebrates the highest sales figures since the truck sales boom of 2008. With an improved product range, and with more upgrades to come, there's every reason to believe the positive attitude of the company is set to continue.

Bill Gillespie, Hino's general manager of brand and franchise development, told *PowerTorque* the company was also buoyant about its current record order bank, with fleet orders undergoing a surge in response to the committed focus of the company on safety, aftersales service and customer support.

"Our 'Built to Go' range of pre-bodied trucks represents about 25 percent of all sales, with the remainder being cab/chassis models for individual bodybuilder selection. Since making fully-automatic transmissions available we have seen around 80 percent of 300 Series buyers and 50 percent of 500 Series buyers choose the full fluid automatic option," said Bill.

Product strategy manager, Daniel Petrovski, is confident the adoption of a fluid automatic transmission is the key to future sales success, this being a far more popular trend for drivers than a corresponding automated manual transmission (AMT).

"A fluid automatic transmission is much smoother in operation and it enables the engine and driveline to benefit from full power ratio changes, without the engine having to power down between gear shifts. The vehicle doesn't lose momentum during gear changes, and for the driver it provides a much smoother and faster shift pattern," said Daniel.

The 300 Series and 500 Series wide cabs also benefit from being the first Japanese truck ranges to include vehicle stability control (VSC) throughout the product line-up. This feature, together with reverse camera monitoring, will be continued throughout the remaining members of the Hino range as the next-generation models are introduced into the market.

"It is our view that items such as vehicle stability control, reverse cameras and blind-spot cameras should be included on every light truck as a safety benefit," said Daniel Petrovski.

The "Built to Go" pre-bodied options apply to the steel-bodied tipper and the Trade Ace aluminium dropside tray range, with or without ladder racks, on the 300 standard and wide-cab models.

# HAPPY HINO

*Greater refinement adds appeal to Hino's 300 range*



The 4.0-litre, four-cylinder, turbocharged and intercooled, direct injection diesel engine is the standard engine throughout the 300 Series. This produces maximum power of 110 kW and 420 Nm when fitted with the standard cab and the five-speed manual gearbox with single overdrive ratio, or the six-speed automatic transmission, with double overdrive ratio. The wide-cab versions have a higher output rating of 121 kW and 464 Nm and are available only with a six-speed manual gearbox or six-speed automatic transmission.

With the engine emissions level currently conforming to Euro 5 rating, the 4.0-litre engine exhaust system uses a catalytic converter with diesel particulate active reduction system, rather than the next step of incorporating selective catalytic reduction (SCR) and the use of AdBlue.

Without the need for AdBlue, the DPF filters the soot particles from the exhaust to minimise these emissions into the air. As the DPF is a sealed filter in the exhaust system it needs to be regenerated to avoid blockage. In order to do so, as the exhaust system heats up, the DPF can self-clean by burning off the soot particles. Alternatively, engine management systems can activate a regeneration sequence if the DPF has not sufficiently regenerated.

*PowerTorque* drove examples of the short-wheelbase, factory-bodied steel tipper and the medium-wheelbase Trade Ace range, both of which can be plated for a GVM range of 4495 kg to 8500 kg. The tipper body dimensions come in at 3.0 m, 3.1 m and 3.6 m with volumes of 1.9 cu m, 2.1 cu m and 3.0 cu m respectively. The tray dimensions are 3300 mm long by 1880 mm wide for the standard cab with the 2525 mm wheelbase, or 4500 mm by 2100 mm for the longer 3430 mm wheelbase wide-cab version.

If you have personal memories of bouncing around in early steel-bodied light tippers, then you are in for a treat as the ride quality is so far ahead of those early examples. Access into the cab is easy, thanks to wide opening doors and a well-placed step and grab handle.

The driver gets a spring-suspended seat (wide-cab only), which takes out any final roughness, and there's plenty of leg and shoulder space to find a comfortable driving position, aided by a steering wheel that adjusts for reach, height and rake.

Instrumentation-wise it's all easy to see, with column-mounted wipers, washers, indicators, exhaust brake and cruise control actuation.



RESERVED



The large-screen infotainment system displays vision from the rear-facing camera and locks in vision from the right and left-mounted blind-spot cameras fitted at the front of the chassis immediately behind the cab. Those familiar with the 300 Series will also notice the air intake has been extended in height to mount flush behind the cab roof on the driver's side. This was changed in line with the new 4x4 version and continued across the range.

Running with just over one tonne of payload in each truck, the engine and automatic transmission showed how well they work together, with a performance ratio well up to the movement of traffic around Sydney streets. There was never any suggestion of sluggishness, despite each unit having turned over less than 2700 km at the start of the drive.

The 300 Series is light to drive, the steering for the wide cab is a power assisted recirculating ball design, while that of the standard cab is power assisted rack and pinion. There is sufficient steering "feel" to satisfy most drivers and the truck tracks straight and true on the road, without any tendency to wander.

The turning circle is amazingly tight, seriously better than the majority of utes, and enabling the driver to turn the truck around without the usual back and forth shuffle.

The key to driver acceptance lies in the six-speed fluid automatic transmission, as this is able to push through the power supply smoothly and continuously without the annoying on-again/off-again/on-again shift protocol of the AMTs fitted to light commercials. AMTs work really well in heavy trucks, but universally become a real annoyance when fitted in light commercials and passenger cars.

The original justification for fitting AMTs was based on lower cost and improved fuel economy, but with some AMTs adding a price tag in excess of \$2000, when the price of a fluid auto was usually around \$1000-\$1500, clearly debunks that argument. Hopefully in time the AMT

may go the same way as the space saver tyre, largely now discontinued from Australian spec vehicles.

The light truck design has in the past been something of a lone forgotten sheep when it came to perceived safety, but, with the 300 Series, Hino has brought safety into being a major feature.

Driver protection starts with active safety, and the inclusion of ventilated disc brakes front and rear make sure the stopping department is up to top levels of performance. Anti-lock braking with vehicle stability control and traction control should temper the behaviour of any younger drivers that might let enthusiasm overtake their ability.

If something untoward does occur, the cab is rated to ECE R-29 rollover protection and cab strength, and is fitted with dual SRS airbags.

In terms of service and maintenance costs, the Hino 300 and its larger cousin the 500 Series are covered by fixed-price servicing with intervals of 20,000 km or six months.

Hino's service network understands the trucking fraternity's need for availability during the working day, with many of its dealerships offering out of normal hours servicing. So you can drop off your vehicle after work and collect it the following morning ready to start a fresh day.

Some dealerships also offer a mobile service unit option, and there are also contract maintenance options available for those that like that reinforcement of delegation with full record keeping. If something goes pear-shaped, there's a full 24/7 breakdown service support in place.

In a nutshell, the 300 Series rewrites driver expectations in terms of ride comfort and safety, producing a well-engineered and well-executed product range that's not short of interior space, while offering a high level of equipment. 