WATER SPORTS

Hino's 300 Series joins the battle to conserve water – Report by Chris Mullett

Forget about the gold, silver and coal mining magnates, none of the multi-billion-dollar projects are worth a cracker if the areas in which they are based are totally devoid of water.

Until Australia has a cohesive federal government programme in place that stores, creates or moves ground water from where it is plentiful to where it isn't, our growing population needs to be very aware of how to conserve our water resources, as we plan to provide water for future generations.

That scenario leads us to Cairns Regional Council, where the WaterWhys Education and Training (WET) programme already in place to educating school children and students from prep to Year 10 about water usage, conservation and supply, is having an impact.

As Graham O'Byrne, general manager of Cairns Regional Council's Water and Waste Division explained to *Delivery Magazine*, if you can educate the children about water conservation, you educate their families and future generations.

"The programme is part of our overall Demand Management Strategy to reduce water consumption by 10 percent over the next 6-10 years. To change the view of kids and to then influence their parents," said Graham.

A key element of the WET programme has been the development of a purpose-built mobile education centre based on a Hino 300 cab/chassis with bodywork by Varley.

The Varley Group builds specialised equipment for the emergency services, with unique designs for applications such as mobile blood donor vehicles, plus trailers and bodywork used for entertainment or education as well as providing local health service requirements.

The research and development of the WaterWhys Education and Training (WET) programme was completed over an 18-month project, overseen by Lia McDonald, marketing and communications coordinator of Cairns Regional Council.

"We brought together designers and suppliers to create a vehicle that could deliver education programmes about water conversation on-site at schools and other venues.

"The displays are very tactile, with touchscreen displays that explain how we find, store and use water in our society. The children take part in practical experiments that illustrate the difference in water usage from manual

to automatic watering systems, during which they can monitor and check the differences in water flow.

"Obviously, as we are dealing with young children, every part of the design has been carefully thought through to prevent any risk of injury through their involvement," Lia added.

"Presentations are made to children at schools and to associations, so they learn how to conserve water as a valuable resource. The Hino display truck can operate completely independently through its own onboard power generation system, but generally links in to local electrical and water supplies while the demonstrations and interaction take place," added Lia.

The programme is already scoring goals, as confirmed by Graham O'Byrne.

"We have had interest from other local government areas in Queensland together with local authorities that are keen to understand the programme.

"We have major investment programmes planned for the future that are costed at $300 million to expand our infrastructure to meet future proposed water demands. If we can achieve a 10 percent reduction in water use, that $300 million investment can be postponed for an additional ten years, during which time other solutions may also be available for consideration.

"Activity now future-proofs the community, and also in the long term it promotes the acceptance that water is a very valuable commodity. It's a valuable resource that people can't do without," added Graham O'Byrne.

Finding the right vehicle to form the basis of the WET demonstration unit led Cairns Regional Council to Hino and the 300 Series.

Lia McDonald explained that the Hino 300 Series provides the right balance of car-like driving performance with high safety levels.

"It's important that the WET demonstration can be driven by our staff holding a standard car licence, and while driving they are protected to the level of safety that we expect from our car fleet. The turning circle is excellent, the driver's suspension seat irons out the bumps, and, with airbags, disc brakes and vehicle stability control, it matches our safety criteria.

"The automatic transmission makes driving in the city really effortless, and, with up to three cameras to monitor the road, including when reversing, it extends the safety levels to all corners of the vehicle," added Lia.

The Hino 300 Series was actually the first light-duty truck available on the Australian market to be fitted with vehicle stability control (VSC), and it comes with traction control, cruise control, ABS braking, the six-speed automatic transmission and SRS airbags for the driver and left-hand passenger, coupled with emergency locking retracting (ELR) pre-tensioning seatbelts, electronic brake-force distribution (EBD) and brake assist (BA) as standard equipment.

The wide-cab Hino 300 Series is powered by a 4.0-litre, diesel engine with Euro 5 emissions compliance that produces 110 kW of power at 2500 rpm and 420 Nm of torque at 1400 rpm (N04C-UT), with a six-speed, double overdrive, fully automatic transmission.

The project management relating to the completion of the Hino WET programme as administered by Cairns Regional Council was completed by Brandi Projects, with the Varley Group completing the fabrication. Artwork and interactive equipment and displays were supplied by Redsuit Advertising and Link Electronic Solutions of Brisbane and Think Virtual Reality of Cairns.