

AUTOMATIC CHOICE

USING AN AUTOMATIC GEARBOX WHERE THE COMPETITION IS OPTING FOR AUTOMATED MANUAL TRANSMISSIONS, HINO'S 300 SERIES TIPPER HAS FOUND ITS NICHE IN THE MARKET.

Hino's ready-made tipper range based on the 300 Series is making huge strides in the transport equipment market, boasting an automatic transmission where most of the competition is banking on an automated manual (AMT) solution. According to Hino's Product Planning Manager, Daniel Petrovski, the difference between the two concepts is simple. "You still need to know how to drive a manual when you drive an AMT. In an automatic, however, you simply stock it in drive and just go," he says. "For light-duty customers you simply just can't go past an automatic." While Daniel says the AMT concept definitely has a right to exist and is already performing well in many a vehicle, it's "horses for courses" in the light tipper market. At Hino, the figures currently show an almost 50-50 per cent split between manual and automatic models, but the automatic version is gaining more and more ground. In 2013, Hino sold 76 factory-made 300 Series tippers with an automatic gearbox.

Who are those customers? Daniel says most customers work in the landscaping industry, driving the trucks with a car licence. However, classic tradies are now getting on board as well, simply because the tipper offers a better resale value. Daniel also states customers like rental company Kennards Hire are showing increasing interest, as they prefer the automatic version for its simplicity and ease of use. It has only been since 2000 that Hino has offered a light truck in the market, however it has since refined its product offering along with its medium and heavy-duty models. For instance, the 300



Series is now the only light-duty truck on sale in Australia to offer front under-run protection, which is mandated on bigger trucks.

For our road test, we drove the Hino 300 Series 616 IFS tipper, the narrow model of the range, which can be identified through an arc-shaped indent below the door handle.

The 300's four-wheel ventilated disc brake system with anti-lock braking and vehicle stability control is now a standard fitment in the light-duty truck market, but the Hino also boasts dual SRS airbags as standard across the range.





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On the inside, the Hino can boast a multimedia unit with a large 6.1-inch high-definition touch-screen, DAB+ digital and conventional AM/FM radio receivers, CD and DVD player, USB and SD input. It is Bluetooth-enabled and can be linked to up to three rear-vision cameras, with the ability to access all three simultaneously in a split-screen arrangement. While all the fancy buttons can be confusing, the mere amount of options is certainly a step forward and adding to the driving experience.

Being a smaller truck, there really isn't any effort in getting into the cab, although the Hino does have a grab handle and a step to make the process both easier and safer. The seat in our test vehicle is an air suspension model, making it surprisingly comfortable while driving laden and with the tray empty.


The most striking feature in the interior is the storage space. There is lots of it all around you – a handy compartment stretching from the passenger seat to the driver seat as well as the glove box and the almost mandatory and very handy cup holders. On top of that, the Hino also has

overhead storage. Sitting in the comfy passenger seat, everything you need to access is within arm's length. The gauges are nice and big and very easy to read, complemented by a multi-function digital display giving valuable information like fuel consumption, trip metres and the diesel particulate gauge (or DPR accumulation gauge as it is referred to on the spec sheet). Looking out of the cab, the side mirrors are basic with the spotter mirror below so rear viewing is maximised. The basic design of the mirror assembly means it is easy to look around it – lessening the chance of blind spots, which are common with chunky mirrors. The mirrors are electric and heated, making adjustment much easier. The mirror assembly combined with a very thin A-pillar means vision out of the cab is superb.

At the heart of the 300 Series tipper is the automatic gearbox – and it's just as easy to use as in a passenger car. It's just a matter of whacking the box into drive and concentrating on the road. The NO4CUS engine produces 110 Kw of power @ 2500 rpm with torque of 420 Nm @1400 rpm.

Safe to say the 616 IFS is pretty quick without the load, and the cab is very quiet while driving. When loaded, however, you can feel the weight working on the driveline. While the truck can pull off very easily when empty, the weight actually pulls it back to a comfortable driving experience. It still has enough torque to get up hills and doesn't strain to keep up with traffic on the motorways, and the exhaust brake works well too.

As a result, the six-speed automatic gearbox with a double overdrive creates a smooth ride. It may be a truck, but the 616 IFS we tested handled much like a car – perfectly suited to its target clientele.

In addition, the tipping mechanism of the ready-made tipper is simple to use. For unfamiliar drivers, however, it can be confusing that both the hydraulics lever and a separate PTO button need to be put on for the hydraulics to lift the tipper tray. Still: After driving the Hino 300 Series IFS 616 auto tipper, it's easy to realise why this vehicle is designed perfectly for its customer base – and the question remains how long it will be to tip the scales towards automatics for Hino. 



⚙️ SPECS

- Model:** 616 Auto IFS Tipper
- GVM Range:** 4495 to 8500 kg
- Power:** 110 kW @ 2500rpm
- Torque:** 420 Nm @ 1400rpm
- Transmission:** 6-speed Auto
- Tipper Capacity:** 1.9 m³
- Body Length:** 3.0 m
- Tipping Angle:** 60 degrees
- PTO:** On transmission
- PTO Control:** Lever in cab (press PTO button first to engage)