

WHILE

looking at any of the Japanese truck makers through the past

50 years there's a commonality amongst the products of providing cost-effective cargo transport that is reasonably priced and fit for the intended application.

Japanese trucks have not generally been associated with high levels of technological innovation, that's something usually left to the Europeans to announce. But, in the case of Hino, here's one truck maker that differs from the others by having established strong links to a major car manufacturer, such as Toyota.

Where the truck makers go for solid engineering reliability, major car companies develop higher technology applications that tempt the buyer. Items such as anti-lock brakes and seat belts in the early days, and, more recently, lane departure assist, adaptive cruise control, rear-vision reverse cameras and parking sensors, all started off in the passenger-car market before transferring into a more commercial role with trucks.

Back in the early 90's, Hino Bus was experimenting with hybrid drivetrains, using the HiMR platform for route buses in central Tokyo. Gradually this technology was refined for passenger-car use in Toyota vehicles such as the Prius and Camry hybrids, as battery technology caught up with the demands for storing electrical energy. That in turn enabled Hino to leverage off these advances and launch its own hybrid light truck range in 2007, which today is the leading supplier of this technology in the Australian market.

Back in June 2010, *Delivery* was testing the Hino 614 factory tipper, commenting on the benefits of its fluid automatic transmission as a better alternative than automated manuals and dual-clutch gearboxes. At the time, the spec also included disc brakes all round and ABS, features that are still missing from some of its competitors.

In 2012, *PowerTorque Magazine* gave its prestigious *Technology and Innovation Award* to the Hino 300 Series, being the first light truck on sale in Australia to incorporate Vehicle Stability Control, plus the provision of Sat/Nav and reverse camera system. Also included in the spec of the

300 Series were SRS airbags, four-wheel ventilated disc brakes, electronic brake pressure distribution, ABS and integrated FUPS.

As it celebrates its first 50-year anniversary, Hino can offer a diverse product range that effectively covers customer demands in the light-truck segment with the 300 Series, the medium-truck segment with the 500 Series and in the heavy-truck segment with the 700 Series.

The company continues to lead with its technology offering, and at the Brisbane Truck Show it displayed a 300 Series 921 Auto equipped with the Hino Lane Change Visual Assist system and the Hino DVR (digital video recorder) dash cam. Both accessories were released on the Australian market this year.

The Lane Change Visual Assist system consists of cameras mounted on both sides of the truck body that display a rearward view on the multimedia display when the driver uses the turn indicator.

The system increases safety by providing a clear view of the left and right side of the truck, eliminating rear-view blind spots.

The Hino DVR dash cam can help avoid disputes about driving incidents by recording events as they occur. It features a 5.0 megapixel front camera and a 2.0 megapixel rear camera, and records driving footage in high definition with two channels. Supported by Android/iOS technology, the unit also features a digital zoom and parking monitoring.

Other Hino genuine accessories released this year include daytime running lights (DRLs) designed to help prevent accidents by increasing vehicle visibility during daylight hours. The DRLs turn on automatically when the ignition is switched on and are overridden when regular headlights are activated. LED driving lights, which offer high power, five-watt LEDs activated by a dashboard switch, are also available.



Hino's FE Auto is a straightforward, no nonsense, highly sensible truck for inner city deliveries.

As a benefit to truck-driving music lovers, Hino even has a speaker upgrade available to match up with the in-dash multimedia system. This plug-and-play upgrade kit features three-way coaxial speakers with a 210 W peak power rating.

Amidst all this available technology, Hino used the Brisbane Truck Show to launch its latest model, the FE Auto, adding to its growing line-up of two-pedal, fully automatic trucks aimed for use in the inner city and designed to reduce driver fatigue.

After the Brisbane show closed its doors to visitors, *PowerTorque* snaffled an FE 1426 Auto with a five-speed Allison 2500 Series automatic and headed into the depths of traffic congestion around Blacktown.



HINO'S HALF CENTURY

NOTCHING UP A 50-YEAR MILESTONE IS A TRIBUTE TO HINO'S ABILITY TO INNOVATE

FEATURE

Hino recommends staying with five ratios for those spending all their time in heavy traffic, but, for those able to head into the country as part of their run, it's an easy enough task to unblock the selection of a sixth gear that is already in the transmission.

As product engineer Daniel Petrovski told *PowerTorque*, both 5th and 6th gears are overdrive ratios. Limiting the 6th gear selection option stops any tendency for the engine to shift between both 5th and 6th as it tries to provide the best driveability. Staying with five gears for inner city work with its overdriven ratio of 0.74:1 is therefore more peaceful, but enabling 6th gear (at 0.64:1) could give better fuel economy and lower engine noise when out on the highway.

The FE 1426 Auto *PowerTorque* drove was running on steel leaf springs at the rear with a 4850 mm wheelbase and was fitted with a 10-pallet curtainsider body by Prestige Truck Bodies of Melbourne. The next cab off the rank (so to speak) is a 5500 mm wheelbase model that comes with rear airbag suspension. Able to take a 12-pallet body with its additional deck length, this combination is also very popular with tilt tray operators. For those wanting a shorter alternative, the FE is available with a wheelbase of 3750 mm or 4250 mm, with the same total GVM spread for the FE of 14000 kg.

Spending a day with the FE 1426 was a pleasant enough experience. The cab floor is a fair step up from ground, but once on board it's a quick process to settle comfortably into the ISRI air-suspension seat. As a longer-legged member of the human race, I would have preferred slightly more rear movement on the seat base, but, nonetheless, soon found a comfortable relationship between seat and adjustable steering column that enabled me to view every gauge and operate every switch with ease.

Interior noise levels from the 6.4-litre, five-cylinder diesel were a little higher than anticipated, but the most memorable part of driving this model was the excellent visibility. Mirror heads are where they should be and are power adjustable from the cab. Spotter mirrors also increase the driver's view, and with a rear-vision camera it provided a very safe environment when we reversed onto loading docks.

The driver can select between Power and Economy modes (as if that's ever going to happen), which changes shift points and offers the opportunity to improve fuel economy. Operating the exhaust brake (through the steering column stalk) brings in a strong level of engine braking with downshifting of the transmission ratios as speed decreases. It works well and is a surprising benefit to inner city driving. Maximum power of 191 kW (260 hp) is produced at 2400 rpm, with peak torque of 794 Nm rated at 1500 rpm.

The FE is aimed at a large sales segment, of between 400 and 500 total annual registrations, that regularly sees more than 60 percent of purchasers preferring automatic transmissions. In that area, the FE Auto looks as though it will make a lot of new conquests for the Hino brand. 



The addition of an Allison full fluid automatic is a great benefit for reducing driver fatigue.

