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FEATURE

SYNCHRONICITY

Hino's 500 Wide Cab raises this Japanese contender into a more sophisticated market segment.

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The everyday life of a heavy-truck driver in any of our cities is certainly not getting any easier, with the need to cope with growing traffic congestion and the increasing number of young drivers that have no idea of how to share the road with a truck while they are contemplating their next texting session.

Anything that reduces the frustration levels of driving a truck has to be worth consideration, and, if at the same time it's possible to reduce fatigue, improve concentration and minimise distractions, it's a win for both safety and sanity.

Hino's 500 Series Wide Cab range certainly delivers on these parameters by teaming a choice of two different capacity, six-cylinder, turbocharged diesel engines, with the Allison 3000 World Series six-speed automatic transmission.

Visually, the difference between the two engines can be spotted by the cab positioning being lower, with a two-step cab entry for the 8.0-litre, versus the three-step up to the 9.0-litre.

PowerTorque had the opportunity recently to drive both engine options in a 4x2 curtainsider configuration in day-long peak hour traffic through the suburbs of Sydney from Taren Point to Silverwater and the surrounding areas.

Normally, there's always the risk of frustration setting in due to the unpredictability of other drivers, or having to stop and start three or four times to successfully get through a congested junction due to poor traffic light phasing.

Constant gear changing and clutch actuation is part of everyday life for many drivers, but that doesn't mean it is an enjoyable part of life. All too often you just get rolling and ready to go for a higher gear when the lights turn to amber and you stop again, having advanced all of 20 metres.

An automated manual transmission (AMT) takes the effort out of gear selection, but in many cases it doesn't make your progress any quicker, especially when trying to get through a set of traffic lights as the gap ahead of you opens up but you lack the performance to take advantage of making it through the junction.

An AMT follows the time lag of manual gear shifting that's caused by lifting off the accelerator, depressing the clutch, selecting the next shift and releasing the clutch. And when running a non-synchro 'box you'll be increasing that time delay to full engagement and traction.

A full-fluid automatic transmission, complete with torque converter, enables the driver to benefit from full power shifting without a time lag. It doesn't sound a big deal, but for a driver spending their day in town we reckon that it's likely to save at least half an hour a day off transit times.



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FEATURE

“Hino has been working hard to raise its profile, by adding further customer benefits”

With the 500 Series, Hino is fitting Euro 5 emissions engines using SCR and AdBlue, but without diesel particulate filters that require an occasional engine regeneration.

Make your choice between the 8.0-litre Hino J08E engine, with peak power output of 280 hp (206 kW) at 2500 rpm and a seven percent increase in torque to 883 Nm at 1500 rpm, or the Hino 9.0-litre A09C engine with 320 hp (235 kW) and 1275 Nm, as the two options for matching up to the Allison transmission.

If you are not spending your day in town and get out onto the open road, then from a fuel-economy perspective your time and effort is probably better spent by changing gear manually. If that's the plan, the options are the Eaton ES111109 or the Hino M0090D, each of nine speeds. Power and torque outputs for the 8.0-litre remain unchanged, but increase in the case of the 9.0-litre to 350 hp (257 kW) and 1422 Nm.

In assessing the 500 Series for inner city work, *PowerTorque* concentrated on the two Allison alternatives, and found that for general use the 280 hp match maintains really good progress on the road, regularly trumping other rigids wearing a 320 hp badge and leaving them to recede in the rear-vision mirrors.

The 320 hp version of the 500 Series is a real eye opener, noticeable quicker on the road and probably capable of knocking off a full hour from an eight or nine-hour day.

But the 500 Series is not just impressive for the speed of its gear changes. Visibility is excellent, thanks to the twin-mirror set-up on each door, aided by convex mirrors on the lower section and a kerbside mirror off the passenger door.

This is a truck that sits really well on the road. The steering has sufficient feel to give the driver feedback, but it doesn't jump about, even if the road surface is a bit



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secondhand. The exhaust brake doesn't follow the usual Japanese butterfly valve type, but is best described as a Japanese Jacobs brake. A quick flick of the column stalk brings on the exhaust brake and actuates a downshift process through the transmission to aid retardation.

It all works well, and, thanks to a top-level air-suspended ISRI driver's seat, everything comes together for the driver. The gauges, rev counter, speedo, and indicator controls are all easy to find and see when you need the info, raising the 5600 Series to a standard that makes it equally comparable with the best of the European alternatives.

And while contemplating the European options, there's the question of driver safety to consider.

The all-new Hino 500 Series Wide Cab boasts the most comprehensive active and passive safety package of any Japanese truck in the medium-duty truck category in Australia.

Structurally, like all Hino models, the 500 Series Wide Cab has a cab safety cell that meets the globally-recognised ECE R29 European crash certification standards, while its ADR84/00 front underrun protection system (FUPS) protects other road users in the event of an accident.

In an Australian first for this class, vehicle stability control (VSC) is now fitted as standard across the 500 Series range. Additional class-leading safety features include ABS, traction control (ASR), a driver SRS airbag, cruise control, fog lamps and hill start assist (with manual gearbox only).

Working in conjunction with the ABS and ASR systems, the VSC maintains overall vehicle control by monitoring wheel rotation speed, steering angle, yaw rate, lateral G-forces and braking.

VSC is able to enhance vehicle stability on slippery surfaces or in emergency situations by autonomously reducing engine power and applying the brakes to individual wheels, helping to prevent the truck from sliding in a direction contrary to where the driver is steering.

To optimise visibility, a reversing camera, including night vision, plus a microphone on the camera, combine to assist the driver when manoeuvring the vehicle. Two additional cameras can be fitted.

There are more than 50 different variants in the 500 Series range, encompassing models such as the FG, GH, FL and FM, and running from 4x2 to 6x4, and with a 6x2 featuring an additional lifting lazy axle alternative as an aftermarket fitment by the bodybuilder.

GVMs run from 10.4 tonnes through to 26 tonnes, with GCMs from 16 tonnes to 45 tonnes. Currently, only one version is pre-bodied ready for immediate sale, and that's the FC 4x2 tipper.

Electronically controlled air suspension (ECAS) equipped rear suspension is available on the new models utilising a Hendrickson HAS230 on GH models, and HAS400 on FL and FM models. Pricing for the range starts from \$123,155, rising to \$177,503 (plus GST),

Hino has been working hard to raise its profile, by adding further customer benefits such as roadside assistance, maintenance agreements, five-year extended warranty and three-year/unlimited distance parts warranty as adjuncts to the standard three-year/200,000 km warranty. There's also a customer help line that's available 24/7, bringing support to those that need it, whenever or wherever that may be. 