



# Hino FE 1426 Auto

## Review

### Ease of use, comfort and capability characterise Hino's 500 Series FE 1426 Auto, which is now available in four wheelbases

**As the rain bucketed down in torrents, lightning streaked across the sky and the traffic on Sydney's congested streets slowed to a crawl, it struck me how the conditions for testing Hino's FE 1426 Auto couldn't have been any worse – or, for the purposes of a vehicle review, any better.**

As we pushed on through the middle suburbs of Australia's most populous city, on a damp and chilly mid-winter's day, life inside the FE's cab was immeasurably better than the alternative. Comfortably cossetted by the ISRI air suspension seat, a variety of lumbar and spinal supports complementing the supportive cushioning, I basked in the warmth of the heating system, while following the sat-nav's directions from Hino HQ in Caringbah to the open and photo-friendly spaces of Sydney Olympic Park, in Homebush.

Had the FE been fitted with its standard six-speed synchromesh manual transmission progress would have been that little bit more arduous, with the slow pace requiring countless shifts. However, as this truck's full model name reveals, our journey was enhanced by an automatic transmission, allowing me to keep both hands on the wheels and my eyes on

the road, as the Allison 2500 five-speed auto skipped lightly through its available gears.

It's a true automatic with torque converter and lock-up clutch. Acceleration from a standing start is smooth and virtually uninterrupted, and free of the momentary pause generally associated with automated manual transmissions. And, of course, it's a two-pedal affair – which for fleets opens the truck up to a far broader pool of drivers.

Though older truckies may find it difficult to fathom, it's getting steadily harder to find drivers proficient in the use of manual transmissions – especially non-synchromesh Roadranger-style set-ups but even basic synchromesh manuals, as found in manual cars.

The passenger-car world has slowly but surely drifted towards favouring the fuss-free auto in recent years and it seems the truck world is following suit.

In response to that demand, Hino recently expanded its FE 1426 range. Part of the company's 500 Series medium-duty line-up and boasting a standard GVM of 14 tonnes, the FE 1426 Auto was

already available in a short-wheelbase (3750mm) format primarily for use as a street sweeper, but now Hino is vigorously pursuing the metro distribution market with the addition of medium (4250mm), long (4850mm) and extra-long (5500mm) variants, available in both manual and automatic formats.

Our test truck was the extra-long wheelbase auto – a 4x2 rig complete with rear duallies and a 12-pallet curtain-sider body. With a nominal payload of around 10 tonnes, after the fitment of a body the FE 1426 Auto ends up with payload of around eight tonnes – rivalling the load-lugging ability of some 15-16t GVM trucks, says Hino.

Our glamorous load for the day comprised numerous bags of sand, giving us a running weight of around 13 tonnes – just one tonne shy of its maximum GVM.

Fortunately, the FE 1426 Auto has a heart more than up to the challenge. Hino's JO7 is a 6.4-litre in-line five-cylinder turbo-diesel, and the company claims it's the most powerful Japanese truck in the 14-tonne GVM class. The specs sheet states it's ►

good for 191kW (260hp) at 2400rpm and 794Nm at 1500rpm, and over Sydney's undulating suburban sprawl there was no reason to dispute the claims.

The truck never faltered, even when moving off from steep hill-starts or trickling up inclines in heavy traffic, the tachometer on the modern and highly legible instrumentation rarely moving far beyond 2000rpm. In fact, for the most part, the Allison tranny keeps the engine ticking over at bang on peak torque at 1500rpm, the truck ready to surge forward at a moment's notice, while peak horsepower falls just on the indicated redline. It feels punchy and potent throughout the majority of its rev range.

Emissions compliance is handled by an EGR (exhaust gas recirculation) system with DPR (diesel particulate reduction).

The auto was developed by Allison in partnership with Hino for these longer-wheelbase FE variants, and it adds \$4750 to each truck's asking price. However, purchase a truck before September 30, 2015, for delivery before the end of this year, and buyers can upgrade to the auto at no extra cost (excluding fleet, rental and government purchases).

It's a smooth operator on the motorway, where the overdrive button on the shifter cleaves around 900rpm from engine speed to see the FE humming along at 100km/h and roughly 2000rpm. It's really pretty quiet in the cab at this pace, and though the growl of the engine is easily noticeable when under acceleration in slower going, it's never overtly intrusive – it actually sounds quite tough.

We have no complaints about the ride, either. The standard suspension package sees leaf springs and shocks at all four corners, but our test vehicle was fitted with optional Hendrickson airbags at the rear.



The resulting ride was smooth and composed, the setup more than a match for Sydney's potholes (all those I encountered, anyway).

Cab comfort too is a highlight. The doors open wide, almost to a full 90 degrees, and entry and exit is aided by a generous step and sturdy grab handles – on the A-pillar, on top of the door sill, and at the rear of the cab. Between the ISRI air suspension seat and the tilt-and-reach-adjustable steering wheel finding the perfect position is easy, and the seat itself will surely win the approval of all who call it home through the working week.

The skinny A-pillars, expansive glass and large side mirrors deliver clear vision front, side and rear. The standard side mirrors have electric adjustment, as you'd hope these days, and there are mirror heaters too – a feature utilised to good effect through our damp and cold outing.

Pulling up in Sydney Olympic Park to do our photographer's bidding, we had a chance to make a close inspection of the cab's appointments, of which there are many. Cab storage is generally good – there's no glove box to speak of and the door side pockets won't accept anything thicker than your standard A4 clipboard, but there are twin overhead lockers, twin pull-out cup holders on the dash, and a mass of room on the rear bench.

The rear bench is actually a day bed of sorts – it's long enough to accept this reviewer's lanky 188cm frame but it's a fairly narrow space. The foam isn't exactly sumptuous but it's not intended for overnighting. Hino describes it as a 'rest area' and that's about right – it's ideal for a short snooze if the opportunity presents.

The centre seat is a basic jump-seat affair with just a lap belt, but the seat back does fold down to ▶





provide a handy plastic tray and there's a lid that lifts up to reveal concealed laptop storage – a neat idea.

Other niceties include air-conditioning and a multimedia display. There's a 6.1-inch touch-screen, and in our test vehicle's case it featured sat-nav (a factory option). It's not the fastest GPS system we've used but it is truck specific, the software taking a truck's dimensions and weight into account as it calculates a route.

Unlike the manual models, there's no cruise control in the FE 1426 Auto, but Hino says the feature will be added from early next year.

On the safety front, the FE 1426 Auto comes with antilock brakes and a driver's airbag as standard. There's no passenger airbag or vehicle stability control, while traction control is currently limited to the manual models.

Recommended retail pricing for the FE 1426 Auto begins at \$102,920 plus on-roads, while the extra long wheelbase example reviewed is priced from \$108,665 (plus on-roads) as a bare cab/chassis. Of course, as is the way of the auto industry, dealers will be only too happy to thrash out a case-by-case deal, and will work with customers to determine a body that best suits their needs.

As the sun finally showed its face for the return leg of our metro run, we stuck to the arterials and gave the motorways a miss, giving the auto one last workout on our way back to Hino's head office.

Our time spent in the FE was, in a word, unremarkable – in the sense that the truck did the job for which it was intended with complete ease. It's comfy, refined and capable, and it comes with a pragmatic list of features that simplify life for owner and driver alike. As Sydney run amply demonstrated, city work in a medium-duty truck needn't be difficult – in fact in an FE 1426 Auto it can actually be pretty darn pleasant.

To see the original review please go to [www.trucksales.com.au/content/reviews/2015/review-hino-fe-1426-auto-52576](http://www.trucksales.com.au/content/reviews/2015/review-hino-fe-1426-auto-52576)

## HINO 500 SERIES FE 1426 AUTO SPECIFICATIONS (AS TESTED)

**ENGINE:** Hino J07 6.4-litre in-line, five-cylinder turbo-diesel

**POWER:** 191kW (260hp) at 2400rpm

**TORQUE:** 794Nm at 1500rpm

**EMISSIONS:** ADR 80/03 (Euro 5)

**EMISSIONS SYSTEM:** EGR and DPF

**TRANSMISSION:** Allison 2500 five-speed overdrive automatic

**CONFIGURATION:** 4x2

**WHEELBASE:** 5500mm

**BRAKES:** Drum