

HINO

HAULER

MORE COMMONLY SEEN HAULING CONTAINERS AROUND THE INNER CITY, DAVE WHYTE CHECKS OUT THE 700 SERIES AS A LOCAL OPERATOR

There are certain things you come to expect from specific manufacturers, but every now and then something comes along to surprise you. When I was offered the keys to a Hino 700 Series recently, I had an idea what I was going to find – a basic truck, loaded with Japanese simplicity and built for practicality over comfort. The reality is that the Hino 700 does still have the Japanese practicality, but it also has the comfort and driver friendliness levels that are generally associated with a much higher price tag. In fact, the 700 Series Hino has taken some distinctly European features and used them to raise the bar for standard fitment on Japanese trucks.

The truck I drove was the top-of-the-line Hino 700 2848 Hi-Roof, which comes with a few surprising features as standard. These include the ZF-AS Tronic 16-speed AMT, hydraulic retarder and air suspension under the cab. An ISRI seat is also fitted, making the driving position very comfortable for all sizes of drivers. All of these features take a little pressure off the driver, and add up to a very different driving experience for those who are used to driving a Japanese truck. The ZF AMT and retarder also provide big benefits for the owner, with reduced wear on the driveline and brakes.

The Hino 700 2848 is powered by the 13-litre Hino E13C, which uses a combination of exhaust gas recirculation (EGR) and Select Catalytic Reduction (SCR)

to meet ADR80/03 (Euro 5) emissions standards. This engine produces 360 kW (489 hp) and 2197 Nm (1620 lb-ft) of torque, offering plenty of power for the single-trailer market, and with a GCM rating 72-tonne offers the flexibility to do B-double work when required.



For my stint behind the wheel I decided to hit the hills to see how the Japanese powerplant and Euro AMT would work together. We have seen plenty of Euro-American hybrid drivelines, but this was my first drive of a Japanese-Euro combination, and so I set out to make it work hard. The ZF transmission is one of the best AMTs I have driven, and is the standard gearbox for many non-Hino models including the MAN TGX and a range of Iveco models – so it is well proven. Its fitment behind this engine did nothing to alter my opinion, as the changes were smooth and quick, meaning very little time off the power and smooth acceleration.

The drive route took in a combination of conditions including heavy metro traffic, country highways and freeways towing a single trailer loaded to 40 tonnes gross. The communication between engine and gearbox meant that the right gear was selected in all conditions, and the



Leaning towards European influences, the Hino 700 has the ZF-AS-Tronic transmission and an SCR Euro V engine emissions rating that incorporates AdBlue/DEF.

engine was working within the green economy band for the majority of the time. The gear selector enabled easy selection of manual or auto mode, requiring a simple tap to the left to alternate between the two. Whether in manual or auto mode, the driver can still opt for a gear change by pushing the lever forward or back, depending on whether an upshift or downshift is required. By pushing through the first detent, a two-gear change can be made in a single motion, without the need to “double tap” the gear lever, making manual changes quicker and simpler.

The hydraulic retarder is fitted as part of the ZF AMT package, and in my opinion is one of the best features of this model. A hydraulic retarder enables you to reduce speed or descend hills without using your service brakes, and offers better retardation than any engine brake I’ve ever used. It also works very quietly, making it suitable for use in areas where engine brakes are frowned upon. On the Hino it works in conjunction with the engine brake, in five stages, to provide as much stopping power as is needed. The engine brake itself works very well, as opposed to the usual exhaust brake that is found on Japanese trucks. While neither of these takes over the role of the service brakes, they do reduce the reliance on them, meaning fresher brakes when they are needed and longer intervals between brake shoe or pad replacement.



DRIVEN

The air-suspended cab and ISRI seat meant the ride quality was very good. While it wasn't right up to Euro standard, it was definitely close, even on the fairly poor surface of the country highways. On the freeway the ride was smooth, though I suspect moving the turntable forward of the centre of the drive axles would have improved it even further. The steering was light and a little vague at highway speeds, but again a little extra weight up front may help the situation. Noise levels inside the cab were relatively low, with the cab still sitting down low on the engine. Vision was excellent, with three wipers keeping the screen clear, and large electrically-adjusted mirrors to help to see what's happening behind.

The high-roof cab felt very roomy, but, with the engine cover containing various controls and storage compartments, was a little awkward to move around in. The lower of the two beds required the seats to be moved forward in order to fold out the end sections to full width. The upper bunk is full width, but has very little head room, with access being tricky for a larger framed driver.

There are full wrap-around curtains fitted to provide darkness and privacy, as well as those that run behind the seats. These factors mean the Hino 700 would likely not be a good full-time interstate truck where "liveability" is important, but for the odd night here and there it would be perfectly acceptable.

It is an interesting thing to see how Hino has adopted the Euro niceties. In a world of global platform truck models, here is a unit with Japanese power, a European transmission and an American rear end all working together seamlessly.



Hino is pulling out all the stops to make a good first impression as illustrated by taking the effort to add checker plate and stainless steel to add to the appeal.

What this truck provides is a great combination for durability, operating costs and driver comfort, without blowing the budget. While it may not be a candidate for the big end of town, it is definitely a contender in the local and metro markets, especially where an operator is looking for a little flexibility or expects the odd trip away.

The performance of the 13-litre engine is very respectable, and the benefits of the AMT and retarder are obvious for those running in hilly country. Add to that an established, and growing, dealer and service network, and you have plenty of reason to think that this truck will find a place in the Aussie market. If you are looking for a truck for local work, and like the idea of Euro comfort without the price tag, the Hino 700 is definitely worth a look, and is another great weapon for Hino in the battle for market leadership. 

