

THE VOICE OF THE AUSTRALIAN TRUCK DRIVER SINCE 1976

October 2006 • Vol.29 No.10

Truckin' Life

EXCLUSIVE

DESERT STORM

S 24° 20min x E 139° 27min

**EAGLE
TRACKED**



ROAD TRAIN

WORDS & PHOTOS JIM GIBSON

SUBJECT EAGLE TRIPLE SIDE TIPPER

LOCATION DIAMANTINA SHIRE, QLD



EAGLE SPREADS ITS WINGS



Jim Gibson heads out on an expedition to find the first International Eagle in road train flight



Our journey leads us by plane to a position on the compass in Queensland that registered 24°, 20-minutes south by 139°, 27-minutes east. This point is a small town called Bedourie, where the channel country meets the Simpson Desert. It's just north of Birdsville near the Northern Territory border.

We find the truck! It is working for the Diamantina Shire Council pulling 75 cubic metres of road building material in triple side-tippers.

The Diamantina Shire is the second largest in Queensland and extends over 95,000sq/km.

The Eagle's prime task is to carry the material to build and maintain the 1650km of roads that crisscross the arid ochre landscape dotted with scrub shielded from the burning midday desert sun by a patina of dust.

IN THE OUTBACK

One of the first engineering-upgraded Eagles to leave Iveco's Dandenong manufacturing plant was purchased by the Diamantina Shire for road train duties.

We join the truck and its driver Cyril John Stewart who hales from Birdsville, and has driven trucks in this harsh environment for many a year. He's

loading road-building material from a stockpile just out of the town.

When the loader scoops on the last bucket of material and pats it down, we climb in the cab. Cyril gets the big Eagle rolling and the three loaded side tipper trailers tag along.

His left foot breaks the drive with a dab of the clutch and his rough calloused hand glides the Eaton 18-speed gearstick from one gear to the next like a hot knife through butter, engaging the straight cut dog gears with silent accuracy as he steps up the box. It's obvious this guy's a good operator and gentle on the gear.

As we leave the unsealed industrial area and point the brawny Eagle's wide bonnet north on the bitumen Developmental Road towards Boulia, Cyril breaks the silence in the cab and says, "I love looking along the Eagle's long bonnet, and it rides well across our rough, unmade roads. In fact I did 400 kilometres bobtail recently, had the CD playing constantly and it only skipped a track once!" Cyril reckons that's a good testimonial for the Eagle's suspension.

The noise level inside the cab is extremely low and there's no need to raise your voice to communicate. The firewall is well insulated, there's only a purr from the Eagle's 550hp C15 CAT>>



The ride is excellent on the bitumen Developmental Road to Boulia and on the rough unsealed roads, thanks to Eagle's suspension

in the background. We take a left turn up the road and join another unsealed road kicking up some dust as we snake the trailers through some scrub and around a quarry where the shire has excavated material for its road building.

Cyril finds the interior dust-free except where the aftermarket CB radio fitter ran the coaxial cable between the door and the seal rubber. No fault of the truck manufacturer that has gone to great lengths by using an additional 7mm diameter rubber section inserted in the door seal to not only eliminate dust, but reduce the noise level inside the cab.

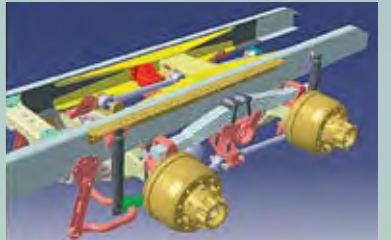
The road train trimmed 9900i Eagle has a 131tonne GCM and is fitted with the unique Iveco cantilever rear suspension. It is six-rod style with a five-leaf (11tonne capacity) parabolic camelback spring pack each side, with centre trunnion fulcrum, double acting shock absorbers on each axle and a stabiliser anti-sway bar swinging off the front Dana D170 drive axle's suspension mountings.

The front suspension on all models is parabolic long leaf dampened by heavy-duty Koni shock absorbers.

The ride is excellent across the rough unsealed road, confirming Cyril's earlier comments on ride ability.



Clockwise from above:
The Eagle waits to be loaded
Reflection of the load. The 131-tonne
GCM is fitted with the unique Iveco
cantilever rear suspension
Mud-caked springs.
International Eagle's Gone Country
Interior has North American class



The cab has been lifted 50mm to improve cooling. The airbag rear cab mounts reconfigured with new shocks enhance the cab comfort.

MORE UPGRADES

The muscular chrome beak Eagle has received extensive preening from the engineering team at Dandenong, to improve its durability, reliability and driver comfort.

Clockwise from above:
Road train Eagle driver
Cyril John Stewart who
hales from Birdsville,
and has driven trucks in
this harsh environment
for many a year.
Compliance plate
shows 131kg GVM road
train rating
The cab has been lifted
50mm to improve
cooling.



"I LOVE LOOKING ALONG THE EAGLE'S LONG BONNET, AND IT RIDES WELL ACROSS OUR ROUGH, UNMADE ROADS. IN FACT I DID 400 KILOMETRES BOBTAIL RECENTLY, HAD THE CD PLAYING CONSTANTLY AND IT ONLY SKIPPED A TRACK ONCE!"

DAYS OF THE INTERNATIONAL

International trucks are an integral part of our folklore – a brand that built its reputation as tough and durable enough to handle the pioneering days of road transport in Australia during the last century.

Back then International trucks had a model to handle any task, from utility/van on metro and country work, to tabletop tasks and interstate transport.

Any red-blooded transport man or woman old enough to remember has a place in their heart for this iconic brand.

The 180 series and R190 etched an indelible mark, never to be erased, on the Australian road map. These two models fed and clothed the populus through the '50s and '60s.

The ubiquitous ACCO, bred from a military background, entered the civilian work force in 1961 and has worked tirelessly ever since, albeit under the Iveco name these days.

The heavy-duty International brand returned to our shores produced at Dandenong in the same plant as its forebears. The model was the Eagle, its task when launched in February 2004, was to return the brand to its roots, travelling the highways and byways of our land.

However, like many new truck products introduced to our rugged environment, it suffered teething problems. In some instances it was travelling on nothing better than third world ribbons of bitumen and dirt linking our sparsely populated country.

Iveco now holds the International brand in Australia. It has worked diligently to rectify and refine the fledgling Eagle so the brand can once again roam our highways with confidence. >>



We take a left turn up the road and join another unsealed road



Wedges and wear plates have been added to the doors and frames to reduce wear on hinges and locking mechanisms.

The dash has been extensively reworked in both the fitment and securing area, as well as improved panel finish.

The firewall and under-cab floor has improved insulation reducing noise, heat and increasing air conditioning efficiency.

The gearshift tower on top of the transmission has been lowered 50mm to effect a more positive engagement and eliminate the possibility of jumping out of gear.

An additional underbelly cross member has been added for heavy-duty quad fuel tank installation.

It's a bit early yet to know how well the upgraded 9900i Eagle will live in the rigours of road train work, as it's only travelled a bit over 10,000km. However, from what we've experienced of the truck and the work done by Iveco's engineering team, the signs look positive.

SHIRE'S EQUIPMENT

Diamantina runs three road trains including the new Eagle. The other two are Iveco PowerStars, one with CAT power, the other has a 15-litre Cummins under its bonnet.

Workshop foreman Doug Peardon and

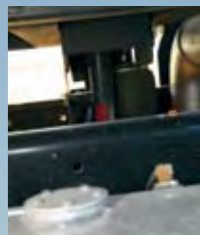
director of works James Paynter, say that while they haven't a problem with Cummins engines, it makes sense to use CAT power in the trucks because the shire has so much Caterpillar equipment with graders, scrapers and loaders.

The Cummins-powered PowerStar has clocked up over 200,000km and will soon be replaced as part of the Shire's \$1.2m equipment replacement budget. There's doubt it'll be a CAT-powered bonneted prime mover of North American ilk.

Replacement parts are not an overnight phenomenon in such a remote area, so standardising products reduces the store's inventory. 🚛



Above: The third trailer is the second to be unloaded, the front trailer is always left until last, to keep weight and therefore traction at the drive wheels
Right: The airbag rear cab mounts reconfigured with new shocks having longer travel – also enhancing the cab comfort



Obligingly seeing us off at the Bedourie airport, Diamantina Shire Council CEO Andrew Geddes, who is passionate about his town, the 110 people who live there and his job, says, "You know this is a great place to live and bring up a family. A grader driver can earn 70 grand a year. We offer training and subsidised accommodation."

As with most business today good employees are hard to find, and the Diamantina Shire is obviously no exception.

So if you like the great Australian outback and you'd be happy to relocate your family, this offer may be worth considering.

If you're interested then call Andrew Geddes on 07 4746 1202.

THE VOICE OF THE AUSTRALIAN TRUCK DRIVER SINCE 1976

October 2006 • Vol.29 No.10

Truckin' Life

EXCLUSIVE

DESERT STORM

S 24° 20min x E 139° 27min

EAGLE TRACKED

