

# Eagle eyes on the earthmoving market



**Back** in the latter part of 1986, Warwick Doolan, then just starting out with his own business was lying underneath a float changing an aged recapped tyre that had shed its tread. As luck would have it the tyre change had to be performed in front of a pub of onlookers, most of whom passed some form of helpful comment as it was completed. It was at this point he made the decision that his fleet was never going to run anything other than brand new tyres and that his equipment was going to be the envy of his competitors. He hasn't looked back since.

When you start with nothing there's only one way you can go with your business and for Doolan's Heavy Haulage the company has grown into a major fleet operation that specialises in the movement of heavyweight plant and equipment.

Warwick started the business as a subbie for Brambles and as most Australians over 40 would be aware it would have been a great induction into the business before the Brambles group divested itself of the heavy haulage aspect of its work.

Armed with a second hand White Road Commander powered by a 350 Cummins that cost him \$24,000 (and that he still keeps in his yard today), Warwick hitched up to a similarly aged low loader and went to work. He bought his first new truck in 1996, a Kenworth cabover powered by a 525 hp N14



The Eagle's imposing dash - Excellent communications maintain top efficiency.

Cummins and then a Mack 454, also still both in the fleet, seemingly more from a nostalgic point of view than any other reason.

Cabovers are essential in heavy haulage to maintain correct overall lengths but there is growing pressure mounting from the heavy haulage providers as they see Government as being out of touch with their segment of the industry.

"There are many times these days when we are parked up in a lay-by unable to move due the legal restrictions when all day long we are being passed by B-doubles that are actually longer than we are," said Warwick. "It all adds considerably to the cost of operating," he added.

There are certainly moves by the specialists in heavy haulage to lobby Government for concessions such as the exemption from applying for a permit for every job that comes up. In an age when satellite tracking can prove a vehicle conforms to a set approved route, it should be an option that is accepted by the local authorities without having to create a paper trail of separate permit requests.

Accredited to ISO 9002 standards back when most transport companies were only just starting to think of compliance, Warwick has an immense pride in the fleet

today and the knowledge that everything is done by the book.

"We have consistently upgraded our equipment and through this time have stayed exclusively with Drake trailers. The diversity and adaptability of our trailer fleet with expanding widths and multi-axle, steerable dollies means that for many requirements we are the only operators with the right equipment to complete the task," said Warwick.

The work conditions at Doolan's are organised to enable most drivers to return home at night, or at the very least if they are away they stay in motel accommodation. It's also not unusual for part of the employee package to include the provision of a company vehicle such as a utility as an incentive for employment.

"Getting the right people is always going to be difficult but without the right people around me I don't want to be here," said Warwick. "We need to create careers for young people and to attract them into the industry. If the youngsters are keen we'll support them right through from working in the yard to getting their licence and gaining experience of the industry," he added.

The equipment required to complete heavy haulage moves today increases

## PROFILE Doolans Heavy Haulage

in complexity and in cost, to the extent that even a basic quad-axle low loader now costs around \$180,000. When you are looking at ordering a new eight line platform trailer that can increase its width to suit the load and carry up to 160 tonnes on a multiplicity of axles and wheels you start looking at an invoice for anything up to \$700,000. And if you want to compete with Doolan's, which incidentally operates around 24 specialist trailers, you'll be needing something near \$7 million in capital equipment, not including the 16 prime movers and additional two rigid trucks fitted with tilt trays.

"We focus on providing 100 per cent service and with the right level of equipment we can handle movements that others simply can't manage," said Warwick.

"Typical of the type of work we are now catering for is the movement of wind tower generators around the country. The individual blades alone are up to 44 metres in length," he said.

The consistent choice for the fleet has always remained with Kenworth and Mack through the years with the predominant engine being the Cummins 600hp Signature, but recently two International Eagles have joined the fleet as the new kids on the block.

"The engine brake of the Cummins Signature is a major advantage in our type of operation and the reliability of the engines plus the manufacturer support has been good through the years," said Warwick.

With 90 per cent of the fleet being aged less than five years, the new Eagles represent a major change in buying policy.

"Paying the added premium for a Kenworth these days does not reflect in



No expense spared for interior appearance.

the subsequent resale value when you are looking at a capital cost saving approaching \$50,000 per vehicle. The drivers like the Eagle and I am impressed by the standard of driver comfort from the interior. Internationals could well become our preferred vehicle if they continue to impress us," said Warwick.

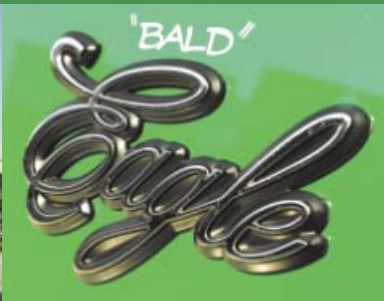
"Paul Dinicol from the Melbourne International Truck Centre came to see me and that prompted me to give them a try. It was their effort that made it worthwhile," he added.

The specs for the Eagles come in with both trucks featuring the day cab while the 9900 version has a modified wheelbase to bring it back from the standard 4.8 metres to 4.6m. This makes it easier to achieve compatibility within 19m when coupled with a quad-axled float while ensuring the correct axle spacing. It is rated at 90 tonnes and is powered with a Signature 550 hp. The driveline continues with an Eaton RTLO2918 manual transmission and with Meritor 46160 rear axles with a diff' ratio of 4.33:1. The maximum power of 550hp is produced at 1600-1800 rpm with peak torque of 1850 lbs ft (2500Nm) torque at 1100-1500. As the latest truck in the fleet the cabin interior includes the higher spec option and the steer axle runs with nine inch offset on the rims. The guards also include fibreglass flair kits.

The lower rated Eagle 9200 is also powered by Cummins but this time it's a 500 hp ISX that sits in front of the day cab. This truck is based on the 4.4 metre standard wheelbase with a day cab and with an identical 1850 lbs ft of torque it matches the Signature with the same running gear and diff ratios.

All vehicles in the fleet are subject to satellite tracking using the Minor Planet system which works in conjunction with TransLogix positioning software.

Eagles are working alongside Kenworth and Mack.



**Warwick Doolan - the founder and driving force behind Doolan's Heavy Haulage**