

# FLOWER POWER

## High horsepower and immaculate presentation are all part of the Miles Transport approach to customer service

If you've ever been to Monbulk to the East of Melbourne you'd know just how pretty this area is, with its forests, tree ferns and general abundance of flora that towers above the winding roads and encroaches right up to the verges.

Well, down amongst the flower growers that sustain one of the major industries in this area (the other is wine growing), you'll find the most unusual location for a major trucking company, virtually tucked in amongst the gum trees.

Mary Miles like flowers. In fact, Mary's background was in running a family plant nursery business before she and her husband Nick found there was a better business to

grow by providing transport to the local growers that wanted to get their plants and produce up to the markets as far away as Sydney and Brisbane.

There's always been a strong element of transport operations in the family with Nick previously running furniture and then general freight. But six years ago, Nick and Mary decided that their future was to specialise in the very unique requirements that surround moving flowers with maximum care, as befits a perishable and easily damaged product.

Like the flowers they carry, business has blossomed and with a long standing liking for International Trucks the company can now boast an impressive line-up of four brand new

International Eagle 9900s, one Eagle 9200, plus a PowerStar, two T-Lines, one EuroTech and one further interloper, a Hino.

And don't expect that with a relatively low weight cargo of an average 36 tonnes these flowers would be carried up to market with a minimum of horsepower. The blooms from Monbulk get the very best treatment and travel behind high horsepower engines such as the Cat C15 running at either 550hp or 475hp.

Out of the four Eagle 9900s, two run with 550hp Cat motors and two with Cats at 475 hp, both with 2918B Roadranger transmissions, leaving the 9200 to make its



Mary and Nick Miles choosing high horsepower for perfect flower delivery.

own progress to market powered by a 525hp Cummins ISX. The cab selection is that of the 51-inch Pro-Sleeper for the 9900s running with a 5750mm wheelbase and 46,000 lbs rated rear axles. The 9200 boasts a 56-inch sleeper. Two of the 9900s have double chassis rails and are rated at 130 tonnes while the remaining two are running with single rails and the lesser rating of 90 tonnes. The EuroTech naturally runs with a Cursor motor while the Powerstar features a C15 Cat at 550hp, again with a 2918B Roadranger and running on Hendrickson air bag suspension. The T-Lines still have their original Cummins motors with 13-speed Fullers.

With all this high horsepower and relatively light cargo you could expect the rigs to be pulling pretty high axle ratios and you'd not be mistaken. The 550hp and 475hp Cat motors are backed up by a diff ratio of 3.9:1 while the ISX Cummins engine runs with a ratio of 4.33:1.

In visual terms the 9900s have the traditional big square bonnet of a conventional with set forward axles, while the 9200 features a set-back front axle and a sloping bonnet. Tyre choice is set at 295/80R22.5 sizes on the steer axles with 11R22.5 sizes on the drive axles. Tyre life is currently running at around 125,000 km for the steer tyres and 250,000-300,000 km for the drive tyres before they are re-grooved my Nick and moved back for trailer duty.

In years gone by, specifications such as 550hp and 3.9:1 diff ratios would have seen the potential for the truck and its contents to be literally leading the pack up and down the Hume at speeds that today would be considered highly illegal and totally undesirable.

Today, thanks to effective and mandatory speed limiting and sensible operating practices you'll find this high horsepower and tall axle ratio approach is extremely capable of maintaining consistent cruising speeds near



The fleet is always immaculately presented.



Michelin 11R22.5 are fitted to drive and trailer axles.



Michelin 295/80R225 are exclusive to the steer axle.



the legal maximum while returning exceptional fuel economy.

When you consider that the Eagles with Miles Transport are returning fuel economy figures as impressive as 2.7 km/litre you'd be reassured that everything in the fleet runs at the right speed, with the right driver and operator attitude. And the precious cargo gets to market with its petals all intact at a pre-determined temperature that's maintained at just four degrees by using Carrier chillers in Maxi-Cube trailers.

Nick has been in transport long enough to remember that some of his first trips from Melbourne to Sydney took an on-road journey time of 17 hours and those memories might have just coloured his decision to stay with high

horsepower for the ease of driving that also ensures minimum fatigue.

Health and fitness levels of the drivers are an important part of the Miles Transport approach and all drivers complete a Fatigue Management Course with the National Transport Institute of Australia. Workloads are carefully rostered and you'll find that drivers in the fleet usually complete a maximum of two Melbourne to Sydney trips each week. The flower and produce business is fairly labour intensive and that is actually a plus for the drivers in that loading and unloading keeps up a level of physical fitness that many line-haul drivers simply can't achieve.

Drivers are responsible for their own trucks and they manage their own part of the business even down to booking in the prime movers for servicing. In fact it's usually left to the driver to select which service outlet is most convenient between a choice that includes the Melbourne International Truck Centre, which supplied the vehicles or William Adams, the local Cat specialists at Clayton or Truck and Compaction at Bayswater.

According to Mary Miles the drivers appreciate having the responsibility for their own vehicles and they also manage their own approach to diet and lifestyle. "We have fridges in each prime mover and that enables each driver to carry what they want to eat without having to rely in high fat content food served in some truck stops. Health and wellbeing is very important to us," added Mary.

