Jeff Rainer (below) has added a new Eagle 9900 with Hiab crane to the fleet complete with a specially designed Freighter drop deck trailer.

Expansion is often the result of driven enthusiasm. The experience of knowing what you do and doing it well can take a company along the road of discovery as it adds components to its business and spreads its areas of operation into new areas.

Southern Rigging of Colac, West of Geelong is one such company where the business today is most significantly different from the way the company started, even as recently as 2003.

Just four years ago the company was created with the intention of providing expertise in scaffolding and general hire of equipment for trade assistance. As the business reputation grew it attracted additional work from new areas such as with gas and oil refineries where remedial work completed during a plant shut down called for a rapid and full response within a short timeframe.

'In those days we had a 25 tonne Tadano and a small rough terrain crane that were used with the erection of scaffolding. Workplace safety called for all work over a height of 1.8 metres to be completed on a properly constructed work platform. As a result we went through a rapid expansion phase," said Jeff Rainer, the company's managing director.

"The "Do you have" question resulted in our saying yes as the enquiry

Southern Rigging

rate increased and this led to us expanding into heavier equipment. We added 50-70 tonne all-terrain cranes and then we found we were hiring vehicles from other companies just to move our equipment to new sites," said Jeff.

"Very often we would have to compromise on a delivery time because we couldn't tighten up our hiring of outside assistance to collect and deliver. That meant we might be on-site a day early and not able to pick up as soon as a job was finished. Obviously this doesn't offer perfect equipment utilisation so we had to look for a better alternative," added Jeff..

The solution to transport requirements came in the form of a conversation with Paul Dinicol, a member of the truck sales team at Melbourne International Truck Centre at Dandenong.

Working in conjunction with Hiab Cranes, Paul was able to develop a specification of an International Eagle 9900 bogie-drive, long wheelbase prime mover that is fitted with a 26 tonne capacity Hiab crane forward of the fifth wheel coupling, nestling behind the truck cabin.

The specification is typical of a 9900 long wheelbase tipper in order to gain the length in the chassis for mounting the crane. With its 20 series, 18-speed Eaton Roadranger, 46 Meritors and Hendrickson Primaax air bag suspension there's an abundance of power thanks to the Caterpillar C15 rated at 475 hp. The Eagle is the largest vehicle in the fleet, joining other trucks which include UD Nissans, Isuzu and Ford.

"What we have done is to build the most adaptable unit we could have for our business," said Jeff. "We can load or unload, reposition equipment on our purpose built Freighter trailer and still maintain a maximum payload for delivering equipment," he added.

The Hiab crane was installed on a special load bearing ladder-style frame which was subsequently chassis mounted. The crane itself has the capacity to lift 24 tonne loads at a distance of one metre, moving out to 1200 kgs at a distance of 15 metres.

"That solved our PUD problems (Pick Up and Delivery), enabling us to move our all terrain cranes such as the Groves and Franna units we have in our fleet. We also carry elevated work platforms (EVP).

"We quote on jobs Australia-wide and can also offer other local businesses our versatility of equipment delivery," added Jeff.

The choice of the International Eagle 9900 combined the versatility of a regular prime mover with better unit utilisation than if the crane were fitted onto a rigid body truck.

"We can access really tight areas with the prime mover on its own. But with the wide spread of the support legs it has total stability, even when operating in very confined areas," said Jeff.

The Hiab XS crane model 244 EP 5 Hi Duo has a lift capacity of 4800 kgs at a working radius of 4.5 metres and a maximum reach of 15 metres lifting 1200 kgs

Ease of loading with added versatility of using the prime mover on its own as a mobile crane.

With its ability to move weights up to 24 tonnes and to operate out to 15 metres the versatility of the HIAB XS truck mounted crane model 244 EP 5 Hi Duo is further enhanced by its ability to slew through a full 360 degree arc. And when being operated, the control of the unit is totally through a remote system, enabling the equipment operator to stand away from the truck and trailer, gaining a clearer view of the work being completed but never being in any danger.

Assistance in the mounting of the Hiab crane was provided by Hiab Australia in Dandenong and it includes the Operator Protection System and Overload Protection.

"Work in the petro-chemical industry could require a delivery of up to 200 truck loads of scaffolding," said Jeff. "Having a crane that is certified under Crane-Safe with a sub-frame mounting for strength and stability is a major advantage of our company and we can see it assisting our future growth," he added.

The Freighter trailer is also purpose built for the type of work completed by Southern Rigging.

Featuring a Jost sliding fifth wheel which assists in keeping axle loadings within the correct limits, the standard design was substantially modified to accept high weight loads such as the all-terrain cranes. Being able to move the fifth wheel position enables us to maintain correct axle loadings, particularly on the front axle which has a standard 6.5 tonnes limit. The deck strength of the trailer is also strengthened to accommodate the crane mounting and sub frame and also the extendible stability legs.

Heath Menhennet of Freighter oversaw the design which called for extra height to accommodate the additional weight. This subsequently resulted in a step-deck design height some 90 mm higher than normal.

Additional strength was included in the coaming and floor and main rails were upgraded to 20mm bottom flange (normally 16mm) and extra floor cross members were added to the frame. With 12.5 mm flush coaming rails for extra strength for wide track centres, the 5mm steel lower deck floor was also reinforced with stiffeners over the wheel arches. The trailer design also features a new galvanized design of hydraulic rear ramps and a beavertail to suit machinery. Also included are extra floor tiedown points to restrain the excavator and other loads and tuck away ramps at front to gain access to top deck. Other additions included winches, two toolboxes, a watertank, tyre carrier, HT250U suspension and spider rims with Bridgestone tyres.

The industry is continuing to expand and Jeff can see further diversification occurring, especially with specialised equipment necessary to handle the growth of wind generators, telecom towers, satellite receivers and broadband internet towers.

Everything in our industry revolves around absolute safety," said Jeff. "The new Eagle and HIAB combination improves our versatility and our customer service," he said.

The International Eagle 9900 was supplied by Melbourne International Truck Centre of Dandenong. ●