



OCTOBER, 2019

## FIRST ON THE SCENE

Prime Mover, National

Page 1 of 4

# FIRS

## ON THE SCENE

JASON COOKE OPERATES A FLEET OF TOW TRUCKS IN THE BRISBANE METROPOLITAN AREA FROM HIS BASE IN MT GRAVATT. ALWAYS KEEN TO LEAD FROM THE FRONT, JASON AND HIS TEAM UTILISE A RANGE OF HINO TRUCKS TO EXPEDITE THE PICK-UP AND DELIVERY OF DAMAGED AND BROKEN DOWN VEHICLES.

**T**he tow truck industry is a niche category in road transport. While there are few barriers to entry, achieving long term success is another matter altogether according to Jason Cooke. "In any industry you'll have the occasional cowboy. People who buy a cheap truck and think they are going to set the world on fire," says Jason. "We tell people who have been involved in accidents to either make their own decision about who tows their vehicle or to ring their insurance company, which at the end of the day is usually paying the bills."

Jason is committed to presenting a good image of his business and the towing industry in general and goes beyond ensuring the trucks are immaculate and adorned with genuine hand pin-striping

and enough LED lights to rival Luna Park. The drivers are expected to present a professional image by wearing long trousers and clean high visibility polo shirts. Above all they are expected to be diplomatic in their dealings with people and to foster good customer relationships.

"You usually get people at their worst at an accident or a breakdown," says Jason. "With a breakdown they know the repair is going to cost them, plus they're frustrated because their trip has been interrupted. Often they've got their kids with them. A smash will cost money and inconvenience as well. So I always say to my drivers, no matter what's happened, if you go to a smash or a breakdown the first thing to ask is 'are you OK?'" Ultimately, the towing function is secondary and will be taken care of



Jason Cooke.



OCTOBER, 2019

## FIRST ON THE SCENE

Prime Mover, National





OCTOBER, 2019

## FIRST ON THE SCENE

Prime Mover, National

Page 3 of 4

either way whether it's by Jason's people or someone else.

"We just make sure the people are OK and ask if there is anyone they want us to call such as a wife, husband or even dad.," he says. "People have to understand we're not there to take their car and run and we make a point of assuring them we're there to make sure they are OK first. And that is usually very much appreciated."

Tow Trucks Brisbane has been contracted to Ready Towing for RACQ breakdown jobs for 22 years and has accredited relationships with the majority of motor vehicle insurers. Jason, through his Tow Trucks Brisbane business, is a respected operator who for many years has been

encouraged and mentored by Steve Economidis of Gabba Collision Centre. Tow Trucks Brisbane has a number of holding yards spread across the Brisbane area for the convenience of its clients. Jason was one of the first towing operators in Queensland to decide to use a Hino as the basis for a tilt tray tow truck and says he hasn't looked back since. To Jason, Hino and the local Sci-Fleet dealerships do more than just sell him new trucks.

"At the end of the day Hino's are a reliable vehicle. Availability for parts is second to none and they always try to help you," he says. "I've dealt with Hino and Sci-Fleet for 15 years and it's never just a matter of them selling

me the truck - it's always about their follow up. The salesmen are always there to answer any questions and the workshop manager is always ready to solve problems over the phone or get one of their mechanics to come out and help us. It's a good relationship and I wouldn't go away from the Hinos." The evidence of Jason's commitment to the Hino brand is the seven sparkling Hino's currently at work, ranging from three Hino Series 300 trucks through to FE1426 and FD1124 models of the latest Hino 500 series. Jason chooses automatic transmissions for the reliability and simplicity of their operation and for the way the engine and transmission technologies work



Average fuel consumption on the new Hinos is around 4.8 kilometres per litre.



OCTOBER, 2019

## FIRST ON THE SCENE

Prime Mover, National

Page 4 of 4

seamless together.

"An auto is always better for the driver because not all drivers can handle a manual and there's nothing worse than replacing clutches all the time," he explains.

There is one Hino remaining in the fleet fitted with a ProShift automated transmission which has covered approximately 400,000 kilometres during the past five or six years. Jason intends to replace it with a new fully automatic FD dual cab before the end of 2019.

The trend towards dual cabs has been influenced by the RACQ work where circumstances often involve transporting a family in addition to their broken down vehicle. For the same reason Jason considers the Hino dual cabs are more convenient for his own business involving non-auto club call outs to Tow Trucks Brisbane. The latest dual cab FE1424 has only been on the road a few months but Jason is delighted with its performance already.

"We can tow 6.2 tonnes on a dual cab with 7.1 metre tray length. This allows us to go out and pick up a recreational vehicle on the back which, as far as I know, no other dual cab in Queensland can do legally," he says. "They can only go 3.8 or 3.9 tonnes on their FDs so we can nearly double the weight on the Hino FE and carry the stranded family of up to five people."

Jason Cooke started his working life as a very young butcher's apprentice and had his own shop at just 17 years of age. He found his true calling more than 30 years ago when he and his father became involved in towing in the rural city of Wagga Wagga. Following some years involved with Royan's Truck Repairs, Jason commenced his own towing operation and has seen his dedication to his profession as much more than a just a job.

"When I started 30 years ago all you wanted to do was get the car onto the back of your truck and get it to the



"We can tow 6.2 tonnes on a dual cab with 7.1 metre tray length. This allows us to go out and pick up a recreational vehicle on the back which, as far as I know, no other dual cab in Queensland can do, legally,"

Jason Cooke  
Tow Trucks Brisbane

holding yard or the smash repairers. Now the first thing is to make sure people are OK and then we can worry about the rest," he said. "Their vehicle is not going anywhere and the damage has already been done."

In addition to accident damaged vehicles and breakdowns, Tow Trucks Brisbane also transports a lot of machinery including forklifts, compact bulldozers and excavators, and access equipment such as scissor lifts. Although the larger trucks are set up to transport 20 foot containers, Jason is not enthusiastic about this type of work as it can lead to damage of the trucks.

"I once had a driver forget to unlock the container pins, causing damage that cost \$2,000 to 3,000 to repair for a job worth just a few hundred," he recalls. The performance and the fuel economy of the latest four cylinder Hino engines in his trucks has impressed Jason. He acknowledges that any concerns in regard to Hino engines going from six cylinder to five and then to four cylinder configuration, have not been justified. He has no qualms about their abilities. "These latest engines are excellent. Like any business person I watch the fuel bill all the time. I only use Caltex diesel so I know I'm getting good fuel and we spend between \$11,000 and

\$15,000 every month," Jason says. "I noticed that the first of the latest Hino's was up to \$400 a month cheaper and now it's settled in to be constantly \$500 cheaper than the five cylinder ProShift that it replaced. That's \$6,000 a year and just about covers the cost of rego and insurance."

A recent return trip between Brisbane and Hervey Bay proved just how economical the Hino's can be. Carrying a well-equipped Nissan Patrol the tow truck was loaded up to full weight on the outward leg and travelled 660 kilometres for the return journey and consumed just 104 litres of diesel.

"I wanted to see what it could do on the highway and achieved better than six kilometres-per-litre which is never heard of," says Jason. The average fuel consumption around town for the FE and FD Hinos is consistently between 4.8 and 4.9 kilometres-per-litre which Jason regards as excellent. With all of its necessary equipment, a tow truck can weigh up to 7.4 tonnes before being loaded and with four wheel drives and dual cab utes now being Australia's most popular vehicles it is typical for Jason's trucks to be running at a gross weight of ten to 11 tonnes.

Jason and his drivers don't regard accidents or breakdowns as one-off events and this frequently results in follow up calls from previous clients or from other people who have been referred to them.

Social media forms another plank in the platform for the marketing of Tow Trucks Brisbane and online feedback is encouraged. Tow Trucks Brisbane is an enthusiastic supporter of several community charity initiatives and was awarded Best Tilt Tray and Best Company Display at the 2019 MS Queensland Lowwood Truck Show. "I love towing," Jason declares. "I tell my drivers if you don't love the job you won't last. No matter where you are or what time it is, one call and we'll be there for you." 