



24 JAN, 2020

Hino's Top-End truck ticks a lot of right boxes

Big Rigs, National

Page 1 of 5

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JOEL HELMES

THE Japanese brands might not be what comes immediately to mind when thinking heavy-duty trucks, however, that doesn't mean they should be ignored, particularly for some specific applications.

The biggest Hino, the 700 Series, offers a respectable 480hp and there's a silky smooth new AMT (Automated Manual Transmission) on offer that combines to make this one impressive offering.

This was the first time I had sampled the Hino 700 Series and wasn't too sure what to expect, though I had hoped that the truck would match the high standards set by the 500 Series Wide Cab, a vehicle I'm still raving about two years after first getting to know it.

As we all know, Japanese trucks (big and small) often have a bit of a "whitegoods on wheels" look about them, however here, in a rigid cattle truck set-up, things like the big chrome bar give the Hino a strong look balancing practicality with a bit of character.

After some negotiating of Sydney suburban roads, in-

cluding getting the big Hino safely in and out of my own rather narrow street, I hit the M5 motorway and then continued on down the Hume Highway to Goulburn.

The biggest thing that stands out from my drive of the Hino is the maneuverability of the truck.

You're sitting up real high and everything feels "big truck", however, the way this truck turns and steers is phenomenal. I particularly like the steering weight and feel – there's just the perfect amount of play in the wheel to keep you easily between the white lines, but it's not overly sensitive either.

The cab is quiet, the mirrors are in the right places (power adjustment on the mains) and the visibility is excellent all round.

I had just over 21 tonnes of hay loaded onto the back of the truck (Hino is donating the load to drought-affected farmers) and the 13-litre six made light work of it.

Ably assisted by the new ZF TraXon sixteen-speed AMT, the truck barely needed a change down to tackle any

hills along the route, even the big climb just before the Moss Vale turn-off required just a shift down two cogs to maintain 85km/h. That's impressive.

The transmission selector in the cab is also a winner ... especially the "manual" functionality that lets you easily shift up or down a gear, or two gears at a time, simply by how far you push or pull the lever.

The exhaust brake and engine brake combination provide better than adequate

stopping power when the nose is pointing downhill.

The Hino has three stages, one-click back on the left-hand stalk introduces the exhaust brake (which takes just a small amount of speed off), then the next two clicks bring in the In-tarder and this works brilliantly to knock the speed back as much, or little as you want.

I was a bit concerned that the lack of airbags on the front axle of the Hino might make for a bit of a jarring ride on the open roads, that wasn't the case though, with the leaf spring/shock absorber set-up, cab suspension and ISRI driv-

er's seat combining to deliver a comfortable-enough feel over poor surfaces.

There are, of course, Hendrickson airbags on the two rear drive axles of this particular 6x4 offering.

Inside the cab you get three seats, the middle seat is probably only comfortable enough for short to medium stints, while there's decent storage about the cabin and well-placed cupholders, albeit the one closest to the driver will fit only a small cup or bottle.

The bunk is wide and long and the mattress provided by Hino felt thick and comfortable. The seatback of the passenger seat folds down flat and

this gives you a spot to use as a table and enhances the access to the sleeping quarters.

Despite this, you still need to be fairly agile to access the bunk, let alone trying to get changed inside the cab.

Hino has fitted the 700 Series with the latest infotainment system that includes your sat-nav, Digital Radio, Bluetooth and telematics. Like all Hino trucks in 2020, there is a reverse camera fitted as stan-



24 JAN, 2020

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Page 2 of 5

dard.

Overall, yes, there is a lot to like about this truck, but what about things that could be better?

Probably my biggest complaint about the truck would be the cruise control functionality as there were two issues that didn't quite sit right with me.

Firstly, after you set your speed using the controls on the right-hand stalk a light comes up on the instrument panel, however the light is located right down the bottom of the panel and can be difficult to see from the driver's seat because of the angle on the panel under the light.

It means you have to shift your body up a touch to see if the cruise is on (for the record I'm average height, around 1.8 metres tall) and what's even more frustrating is that there is

a huge bank of lights on the upper section of the panel that would have been an ideal location for this often-used system notification.

Secondly, you cannot use the exhaust brake or retarder in conjunction with the system and this means each time you start heading down an incline you have to manually inter-

vene, meaning you have to reset or resume the cruise control.

All this meant that on the way home I didn't use the cruise control system.

In a truck that might regularly cover long distances I would think a driver's left-hand armrest would be a necessity, however, it's missing

here.

I would also prefer at least Bluetooth controls on the steering wheel, there are none.

You're also not going to find safety systems beyond a driver's airbag and ABS – this is in contrast to the systems such as Autonomous Emergency Braking (AEB) found in some of the smaller Hino offerings.

You'll also have to be satisfied with drum brakes on each wheel.

Summing it up; the big Hino ticks most of the boxes for applications like this cattle truck set-up.

The highlights are the sweet-sounding and willing engine, smooth and smart AMT and the overall maneuverability of the vehicle.

All that makes for a truck that is easy to drive and adaptable across both metro and regional applications.

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BIG RIGS CONTRIBUTOR JOEL HELMES

HINO FS 2848 SPECS

- **Engine:** Hino E13C VG producing 480hp (353kW) @1800rpm and 2157Nm @1100rpm, Euro 5 compliant
- **Transmission:** ZF TraXon with 16forward, 2 reverse ratio
- **Front Axle Weight:** 7500kg
- **Rear Axle Weight:** 21000kg
- **GVM:** 28,300kg
- **GCM:** 72,000kg
- **Fuel Tank:** 390 litres
- **AdBlue:** 28 litres



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The straightforward controls make this an easy truck to drive.



Good-sized steps make accessing the cab relatively easy.



24 JAN, 2020

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Page 4 of 5



Airbag suspension features on the two drive axles.



The chrome bullbar is standard on the Hino rigid offering.



24 JAN, 2020

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Big Rigs, National

Page 5 of 5



TICKS ALL THE RIGHT BOXES: Our contributor took the Hino 700 Series for a drive.