



# THE URBAN JUNGLE

**Hino's 300 Series 4x4 gets to grips with traction for specific applications – words by Ed Higginson**

Hino Australia revealed the full specifications of its much-anticipated 300 Series 4x4 ahead of the AFAC conference in Sydney for fire and emergency service professionals back in September 2017.

Devised in response to the demands of Australian customers for a better light-duty 4x4 truck, and comprehensively tested in an Australian field test programme over a number of years, the Hino 300 Series 817 4x4 sets a new benchmark for light-duty 4x4 truck specifications and driving performance.

Devised specifically for Australian applications, and thoroughly tried, tested and proven for Australian conditions, the Hino 300 Series 4x4 has already undergone years of extensive testing and evaluation here with real-world customers.

Prototypes of the Hino 300 Series 4x4 have been used in day-to-day operations with a number of customers across Australia, with two customers taking part in long-term field testing: Cook Shire Council in Far North Queensland and Kennedy Drilling in remote Western Australia.

Hino test engineers have studied the vehicles in these operations, and, those experiences combined with the testing carried out at its durability facilities in Japan, produced a model purpose-built for Australian applications.

“We have been testing prototypes of the 4x4 here for over three years, with real-world customers whose feedback has enabled us to refine the specification of a truck built specifically for the Australian market,” Daniel Petrovski, Hino product strategy manager said.

“The 300 Series 4x4 is a specialised vehicle, and this sort of approach has genuinely benefited what we can now offer our customers”.

Among the myriad of information gained from this local testing was the importance of operational competency off-road, such as the incorporation of a high-mounted air intake to minimise dust intake on dirt roads.

Another feature that helps with its off-road ability over conventional 4x2 light-duty trucks is its high stance. This helps give the 4x4 model approach angles of 34 degrees with realistic departure angles of 30 degrees. The 3500 mm wheelbase also offers a rampover angle of 159 degrees with a road clearance of 205 mm.

Fellow *PowerTorque* and *Delivery* journalist, Brenton O'Connor, attended the launch of the Hino 300 series 817 4x4 and covered the full range in the December issue of *Delivery* magazine, where it definitely impressed with its off-road ability.

In order to add some further components to our evaluation of the Hino, the Christmas break provided the opportunity for me to climb behind the wheel to see how the 300 Series Crew Cab 4x4 would handle a full week-long test to move dirt around a small farm in Northern Melbourne.

Initial thoughts whilst driving the truck from Dandenong, through Melbourne and out on the highway past the airport, was that, as impressive as it is for 4x4 work, there are some compromises when trucks are specced for serious off-road work – particularly the high centre of gravity and firm ride.

During the launch event, the trucks waded through river crossings and climbed some serious muddy embankments, which could never be attempted by a standard 4x2 truck. So, for applications such as the fire and emergency service, or mining exploration, then this type of truck would be a great fit.

Where the off-road travel is of a more conservative nature, such as found in common terrain such as quarries, building sites, or driving over firm grass, traction can come down to the quality of the operator. An experienced driver using a diff lock on a 4x2 should be able to get pretty much where they choose to go, meaning that you need to

way up the pros and cons before ordering the all-wheel-drive alternative.

For the positives, the Hino 300 series is a great small truck with its proven reliability, great support through the Hino Australia network and with the Japanese fit and finish you would expect.

Operational safety is class leading with the standard inclusion of vehicle stability control (VSC), a first for a Japanese-built truck in this category, together with four-wheel disc brakes and a reversing camera that includes night vision and a microphone to assist the driver when manoeuvring. It also gets cruise control, dual SRS airbags and ABS.

In terms of power, the 4x4 gets the Hino N04C 4.0-litre diesel engine rated to 165 hp (121 kW) at 2500 rpm and 464 Nm of torque at 1400 rpm, both of which are more than its Japanese 4x4 competitors.

The Hino N04C engine is Euro 5 ADR 80/03 emission compliant and utilises the Hino Diesel Particulate Active Reduction filter (DPR), which has proven its reliability in Australian applications over the past 10 years. This is mated to a six-speed manual overdrive transmission and a dual-range 4x4 transfer case, providing an ideal combination of gears to suit any terrain. A 6.369:1 first gear transmission ratio and a low range gear ratio of 2.2:1 enables a crawling speed of just 2.3 km/h for the trickiest of off-road conditions.

It was easy to drive in traffic when loaded to a GVM of 6090 kg, slightly less than its rated maximum of 7500 kg, giving a quick response for getting up to speed when needed. But if you intend to run the truck with a trailer and load the combination to the maximum GCM of 11,000 kg, you may be better off looking at some of the larger Hino models as the 165 hp may struggle at this higher weight level.

The driveline combination offers exceptional flexibility and efficiency both on and off-road. Before venturing off the bitumen, the simple press of a dash-mounted button switched the box into low range, and another button locks it into 4x4 easily.





The Hino 300 Series 4x4 is available in single-cab for three people, and a crew-cab configuration as tested that can take up to seven. However, with the multi-leaf spring suspension the ride is noticeably stiffer than a standard 4x2.

For the driver, they get a magnetically dampened driver's suspension seat, which takes some of the bumps out of the ride, but at 100 km/hr on the freeway you still get bounced around a little. The bigger Hino truck range, the 500 Series and above, get the comfort of the ISRI fully air suspended seat that would make a big difference in the 4x4.

The rear bench seats are all fixed in position and non-adjustable, so when taking the family for a ride to the local shops to get their in-depth reviews, the feedback was always going to be somewhat unenthusiastic, due to the firmness of the suspension. There were also the expected complaints in terms of audio quality in the rear of the cabin due to the lack of speakers, which meant relying on those in the front cranked up to a higher volume to keep them happy.

Choosing an all-wheel-drive chassis comes down to the intended application of the vehicle. If you were to be venturing into some difficult areas regularly, the smart choice would be to opt for the 4x4 version. The property I used for my evaluation had recently seen some standard 6x4 tippers running across the paddocks encounter

some difficulties through lack of experience on the part of the drivers. Those that knew what they were doing, and maintained the vehicles momentum to keep rolling, didn't suffer to anywhere near the same extent.

Overall, Hino has produced a serious off-roader in the light-duty market to complement their already large range of 300 Series options on offer.

It is a competitive sector, up against the updated IVECO Daily 4x4, Isuzu's long-running NPS, plus the 4x4 FUSO Canter FG, but, with Hino's reliability and impressive list of specifications, it a worthy contender. **D**

**Verdict**

- + 4x4 ability
- + Safety devices as standard
- + Total cost of ownership with Hino Advantage
- Hard 4x4 ride when driving at road speeds
- Fixed seats for the passengers make for an uncomfortable ride

