



Hino on high

Toyota truck division launches light model billed as most powerful in segment

By DANIEL GARDNER

HINO has shoehorned a 5.1-litre four-cylinder turbo-diesel engine from its medium-duty range into its smaller 300 Series, resulting in what is billed as Australia's most powerful light truck.

But despite the significant power boost, the Japanese truck-maker is aiming the 300 Series High Horsepower at less experienced drivers.

As Australia's only true torque-converter automatic light truck with a host of safety features including range-wide electronic stability control (ESC), Hino says its easy-to-use vehicle is the safest option for car licence holders, and ideal for companies employing drivers with little or no truck experience.

Starting at \$62,840, the 300 Series is Australia's only light truck with ESC as standard, and coupled with the power upgrade Hino has segment leader Isuzu firmly in its sights.

By 2017 the truck-maker wants a 22 per cent stake of the light truck segment, and if it hits the target, Hino could be in the running for the number-one spot currently occupied by Isuzu Trucks Australia.

The power-booster 300 Series goes head-to-head with Isuzu's N Series NQR, but with 151kW and 600Nm of torque the new Hino 300 Series High Horsepower (921) beats its closest rival by 12kW and 90Nm.

Isuzu is yet to introduce range-wide ESC as standard and Hino is planning to attract more sales as a result.

Attracted by aftersales training



packages for less experienced drivers, Hino has already secured sizable orders with major supermarket chains, which frequently employ drivers with car licences.

The new High Horsepower flagship has a maximum gross vehicle mass of 8500kg, but by registering the light truck at a de-rated GVM of 4495kg it can be driven by anyone holding a normal car licence.

With combinations of three different wheelbases, crew-cab or three-seater and automatic or manual, the 300 Series High Horsepower adds 10 new variants to the already extensive (more than 150 variants) 300 Series range but with only the 4x4 expected later this year, the line-up is almost complete.

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Hino tackles market hard

High-output models just part of strategy to hit 22 per cent light truck share

By DANIEL GARDNER

HINO is launching an assault on market leader Isuzu Trucks that it hopes will see its share of Australia's "pretty flat" light truck segment grow from 14 per cent to 22 per cent inside three years.

The aggressive expansion will be spearheaded by the 300 Series range, headlined by the new market-leading 151kW/600Nm 5.0-litre High Horsepower variant launched last week that is projected to account for up to 15 per cent of sales.

Furthermore, the Toyota subsidiary's local arm is greatly increasing its advertising spend – including an overdue move into social media – expanding its range of aftersales services and growing its 41-strong dealer network, with at least two new sites on the way.

Speaking at last week's High Horsepower 300 Series launch in New South Wales, Hino Motor Sales Australia chairman and CEO Steve Lotter said a stronger product arsenal and the imminent federal road-funding boost would stand it in good stead.

"We've got new product, we've got new people and we will have some new dealers and that's putting us in a good position to maximise our volume



potential in what still is a pretty flat market," he said.

"The segments where we compete are still down 30 per cent from the GFC.



Steve Lotter

Within that market we've got to make sure the range is available and the only way we can grow our volume now is to take it from the competition and that's what we are trying to do.

"The above 500 horsepower market is re-booming but in the light, medium and lower end of heavy we are still waiting for that, but six years on from the GFC it's got to kick in.

"The government is saying road transport is the way it's going to be and that's good for us and building roads and building airports has got to be good for trucks generally."

Hino finished 2013 with 1732

registrations in 2013, a 12.5 per cent share of the light truck segment, and by the end of April 2014 that figure had risen to just over 14 per cent from 562 registrations.

If it reaches its target of 22 per cent, Hino will be snapping at the heels of its biggest competitor Isuzu, which rounded out 2013 with just over 23 per cent of the segment – a stake it has retained (YTD April 2014).

Newly appointed brand and franchise development manager Bill Gillespie (formerly Sime Darby's managing director for its Australian Peugeot cars franchise) explained that having a strong product was only half the battle in winning business from competitors.

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'They just need the will'

Hino calls for mandatory electronic stability control on trucks sold in Australia

By DANIEL GARDNER

ONE of Australia's most popular commercial vehicle brands Hino says that fatalities involving light trucks could be slashed by a third if the government made electronic stability control (ESC) mandatory on all new commercial vehicles.

The Japanese truck-builder is the first in Australia to introduce the potentially life-saving technology across its light truck range as standard, and wants to see rivals follow suit at the expense of its present unique status.

Since November 2013, all new passenger cars sold in Australia have been legally required to have the safety-enhancing active stability system fitted, but commercial vehicles have been spared any similar regulation.

Research in the US by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

(NHTSA) found that up to 33 per cent of deaths involving light trucks would be avoidable if mandatory ESC was implemented, and Hino is confident similar cuts in the road toll could be seen here.

Speaking at the launch of its new high-powered 300 Series model last week, Hino Australia brand and franchise development manager Bill Gillespie



told GoAuto that, until manufacturers are obliged to fit ESC to trucks, they could continue to put cost before safety.

"It is all about product philosophy. I think that they could do it but they don't because of cost or they don't think it's necessary, and they are not being pushed by the government," he said.



Bill Gillespie

"If it's good enough for cars why shouldn't trucks have it? There's really no reason apart from people not wanting to spend the money.

"It's amazing once it becomes mandatory and regulated – people find the resources. My experience is that they could do it but they just need the will.

"The NHTSA in the States are saying 33 per cent of fatalities could be prevented by VSC (Hino's term for ESC) being made mandatory. In Australia, that could be another third.

"It's a lot of lives and also the people and families that are affected.

"It's also a big knock-on effect to the economy so we just can't understand why it's not required."

Introducing the 300 Series range with ESC as an option would have cut the cost of a new vehicle, but Hino decided to offer the more expensive system as standard, making its vehicles more attractive to safety-conscious customers.

"Right now we have a competitive advantage. When everyone does have VSC we lose that advantage, but it's better for the industry," Mr Gillespie said.

The safety benefits of ESC in largely constant-mass passenger vehicles are indisputable, but in load-carrying commercial vehicles, the stability software may be even more beneficial.

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