

The best or nothing

THE IDEA OF ADDING AN 8X8 MODEL TO THE **TUFF** PORTFOLIO HAS BEEN TOSSED AROUND INTERNALLY FOR QUITE SOME TIME, BUT IT WASN'T UNTIL EARLY 2013 THAT DENIS DI PASQUALE AND THE TEAM SET OUT TO REALISE IT. THE RESULT IS A HIGH-TECH PLATFORM UNLIKE ANYTHING ELSE THAT HAS HIT AUSTRALIAN ROADS BEFORE.

Denis Di Pasquale and the engineering team behind the Tuff Trailer brand like a challenge. Having grown the business by a solid 50 per cent since 2012, they are known for boasting an unswerving can-do attitude and a healthy dose of intractability. "If it doesn't exist, we need to invent it,"

says Denis Di Pasquale. "We don't accept no for an answer." According to Denis, it was that "positive persistence" which has led Tuff to building what is one of the most innovative and complex deck widening platforms the country has seen to date. The steerable

8x8 can widen from 3450mm to 4950mm at the push of a button and reach a maximum site rating of 30t per line at five kph.

Flashback: In early 2013, Jeff Hart of Hart's Transport in Mackay asked Denis to quote a 7x8 platform – knowing the request

would force the engineering team to move into unknown territory. Yet Jeff had become a faithful Tuff customer since he discovered the make in 2009 and wouldn't settle for a different brand, so he appealed to Denis to give it a try.

Behind the scenes, Denis had already been working on a large-scale platform concept for a while, so he suggested going 'all in' and giving an 8x8 layout a go instead. Jeff agreed, and Denis began travelling the world to find the components needed to make the new passion project a reality. "Once we agreed to the project, we knew instantly we wanted to create the best 8x8 ever built in Australia; so I began looking at every single comparable design I could find, trying to learn more about what is actually needed when the unit is out in the field," says Denis, who interviewed many a driver along the way to collect first-hand feedback.

"There are some inherent weaknesses of

the common 8x8 design we wanted to address – such as wheel alignment, for example – but we soon realised it was also about eradicating those easy-to-overlook flaws that are inconvenient and cost the transport company hard cash over the long haul."

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After a solid eight months' worth of traveling and design work, Tuff began building the vehicle in late 2013. Knowing that manoeuvrability is a key issue on the road as well as on site, the final design settled for a 55-degree maximum steering angle and a running height of 1080mm. The key to the new 8x8 model is a Tridec suspension system built in Germany, which had to be customised to allow for the deck widening function. Supplied by BPW Transpec and developed in close

cooperation with Tuff, it can boast a suspension axle travel of 550mm, using double-acting hydraulic cylinders to simplify the lifting process.

To ensure maximum traction and reduce tyre wear, Tuff also developed a 'live gooseneck' that can compensate surface

irregularities if needed. When climbing a hill, the system can apply more weight on the drive at the push of a button inside the cab. "Everything on the 8x8 is custom-made and refined over a long period of time," says Denis, revealing that the result is the first widening platform in the world to be equipped with EBS and ABS.

The spineless chassis is completely made from SSAB's Weldox and Domex 700 steel to ensure premium quality throughout and






has a central catwalk designed for low height user access, as now often requested in the mining industry. Equally important for safe on-site operation is the patented 'Ezy Lift' tyre carrier at the front. Now capable of carrying up to 12 tyres, it will waive the need to climb the gooseneck and reduce the associated OH&S risk. In addition, all tie downs and load restraints are RUD-certified.

Smart features like an additional 800-litre fuel tank with integrated bowser and pump, a 3-in-1 compressor, generator and welding unit as well as a slide adjustable skid plate complete the complex design, which is now operating in the Mackay region carrying oversized mining machinery. Coupled to a 2x8 dolly specially designed for the new 8x8 combination, it is pulled by a brand-new Kenworth 909.

"Our drivers love the new float," says Jeff Hart. "It's a premium build every way you look at it, but it's also an investment in the business as it will help us save time and money. Who would have thought a simple



8x8 design could be so innovative?" If driver Danny Watts had a say, the next 8x8 would be a Tuff again. "The fact that it's all remote-controlled has made my job that much easier; I can simply push a button to lift or widen the trailer and have more time to walk around the rig and ensure everything is done correctly – not to mention the OH&S advantage," he says. "Having approved tie-down points is a real help at the mine sites too, and the

lockable tool boxes give you peace of mind everything is in the right place once you're on the road. And it just looks really flash, which makes the job more fun." 

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