



Robert Nicholson.

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WORLD-FIRST CONVERTIBLE

ROBERT Nicholson, who hails from Ballarat in Victoria, has worked in the road transport business for most of his life. In 1992 he started his own business – Robert Nicholson Transport Services and up until recently spent the last 20 years carting his goods on the back of an old convertible flat top trailer. Now, Robert is the proud owner/driver of a brand new O’Phee Convertible flat-top tipping trailer, that features the new Netcap – Load Protection System.

Clocking around 4,000 kms a week, Robert carts steel and general products out of Melbourne, to other distribution companies in Adelaide. On the return trip he loads bulk soda-ash for Titan Bulk Transport in Port Adelaide, which he transports direct to Pilkington’s Glass.

Some factory environments have banned convertibles because new working height regulations prevent operators standing on top of their trailer to remove the tarps.

It was a press article on the new Netcap Load Protection System (LPS) that caught Robert’s attention, so he made contact with his existing trailer manufacturer, O’Phee Trailers Pty Ltd in Brisbane. “I rang Mick O’Phee and said ‘hey Mick, I’d like a convertible tipper with one of these Load Protection Systems’. Mick said ‘That was going to be our next step in the ‘LPS’ progression, in fact we had already done basic layouts, and Robert’s order now brought it to life much quicker’.”

The LPS is a European tarping system that consists of an aluminium concertina frame covered with PVC tarp material that slides backwards and forwards on nylon rollers and it’s all operated from ground level. The roof and sides slide back out of the way so the trailer can be loaded from either the side or from above.

One of the many design changes that took place between Robert and Mick was the development of a folding head board, so when unloading bulk products in a confined tipping area the head board can be altered at right angles. By collapsing the head board, Robert can tip the trailer at full height to ensure the bulk load tips cleanly, Mick O’Phee told us.

“When we first introduced the LPS on flat-top trailers at the end of 2002 with its ability to side load and overhead load a flat-top trailer (two pallets wide with side gates), the next thing to do was to engineer a convertible trailer with the LPS so that we could have the ultimate Convertible trailer.

“We have had a lot of success with our Convertible trailers over the years and we believe it’s the first of its type in the world”, Mick O’Phee told us. Robert also told us that it’s quicker with the LPS to cover the load than tarping so he can get out onto the road a lot faster.

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“I’ve found my health and fitness better than ever using the O’Phee Convertible as I don’t have to use as much energy untying and rolling tarps out. And lets face it, I’m not getting any younger”, smiled Robert.

