

“WE BELIEVE THAT THERE IS NO USE BUILDING A SUPERIOR PRODUCT IF YOU DON’T GO THE NEXT FINAL STEP AND FINISH IT OFF PROPERLY.”

management is excellent, our sales guys are unique, all of our technicians and skilled staff give their absolute best at all times, and to us that is what it is all about.”

The O’Phees are sticklers for high standards of design and manufacturing, in line with their philosophy of building strong, simple trailers. Although as Mick O’Phee points out, the one invariably leads to the other.

Clients may pay more for an O’Phee trailer, but Mick says there are reasons for that: the high quality design and build, the incredibly low number of warranty issues, as well as a solid retained value when it comes to selling a second-hand unit.

“It is things like the paint finish. We believe that there is no use building a superior product if you don’t go the next final step and finish it off properly. Our trailers have to perform and stay looking good years after they leave the factory,” he says.

“We believe we have some of the best products available in the marketplace today, in short you pay for what you get!”

There is a trap trailer manufacturers can fall in once they have established a solid reputation of trying to do much for too many clients, and it is something the O’Phees want to avoid.

“We made a conscious decision to not be all things to everyone,” Mick says.

Historically, O’Phee Trailers had strong ties to the rural sector, but he says they moved away from that sector because of the seasonality of the workload.

“We studied the marketplace and now are one of the biggest suppliers to operators working around ports and shifting containers, as well as supplying for the general, special freight and machinery sectors for local and interstate markets in all single and B-double configurations,” he says.

It was, after all, O’Phee Trailers who built the first quad-axle trailers, and worked closely with Queensland Transport to develop this under performance-based standards (PBS).

“In particular we have a very proactive customer, Chalmers Industries, who we are building quad axle trailers and Super B combinations, both heavy and light, for their particular freight tasks,” Mick explains.

“We have built lightweight Super Bs for empty containers, which can reduce to a 25m combination for work outside the ports, while other new developments for customers include light-weight Walk-it Out trailers and widening drop decks.

“We only build these to order, which gives us the flexibility of being able to complete a high build hour job alongside some short build hours jobs, such as a widening trailer compared to a skel.”

DEVELOPING TALENT

Like everyone in the industry, the O’Phees acknowledge recruiting and retaining good staff is a “constant battle”, which only reinforces their belief in training and developing locals.

“We believe in training and developing, you have got to maintain a local skill base, so we look at a range of options, including school-based trainees,” Mick says.

This is influenced by Sharon’s background. With her strong expertise in training, the company practices what it preaches.

“We have a defined training path to ensure there is a good understanding of the whole business; multi-skilling is an important focus, we believe it underpins the success of the whole company,” she says.

This approach is evident when you watch a new trailer take shape in the factory out of the boardroom office window. Each new job is assigned a team, comprising a number of technicians, who will work on the one job from start to finish, rather than only concentrating on one section and then passing it onto someone else for the next stage of the build.

As well as keeping the level of interest high for staff, O’Phee acknowledges it is a good way to get around those times when the factory is under-staffed, such as sick days or holidays.

“It means you do not have a trailer sitting waiting for something to be done,” says Mick. “If everyone on the build team is able to do the job then it covers for those unforeseen emergencies.”

Another of O’Phee’s beliefs is that everything should be available for the team, again to help prevent hold-ups once production is under way.

