



FIRST CLASS

Australia

The Canberra fires of 2002 had devastating consequences and the Australian public were bombarded with images of burning bush and helicopters in fire-fighting mode. Chris Dunphy was learning to fly helicopters at the time and took a keen interest in the logistics of moving helicopters to the fire zone.

Chris was amazed to learn of the huge distances and associated cost involved in mustering the air born helicopter support from around the country. Some machines for example were flown to the Australian Capital from as far north as Cairns.

As he is also involved in the freight industry, Chris struck upon the idea that moving helicopters around Australia by road to their required destination would have to be a better cost effective solution. So he flew to the USA to discuss his concept with some of the major helicopter manufacturers.

"We got all the reasons why trucking helicopters around the country would not be feasible due to the road shock to sensitive instrumentation, road dust intakes and unhinged blades being damaged. All the negatives you might say", said Chris.

Undeterred, Dunphy discussed his idea with O'Phee Trailers. He had read that O'Phee's in Queensland had developed a number of highly versatile trailer concepts based around the Netcap tarping system. A system that Chris believed could be just the answer to all of the protective issues needed to transport helicopters.

"I sat down with Mick & Sharon O'Phee and explained that for our venture to succeed we needed a trailer that could secure the load safely, allow the helicopters to be loaded and unloaded quickly and that the whole freight process must offer compelling cost savings compared to the current fly-in approach".



Chris added, "Our requirement was unique in so far as the trailer had to be totally designed around the cargo: it was like the tail wagging the dog, as road regulations or weight savings were not the usual relevant issues; the heaviest helicopter only weighs 3 tonnes."



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Needless to say, the outcome produced yet another 'world first' in road haulage systems, a 48' drop-deck flat top trailer with side walls that fold out to form a helipad for take-off's and landings and a hydraulically operated rear ramp with winching equipment to help load the larger flying machines. The manually operated Netcap tarping system, designed to fully enclose and protect the cargo whilst in-transit was a must!

Chris now employs three drivers to move helicopters of various sizes around Australia to outlying contract sites for either service and repair work or when a particular machine has to be moved once it is bought or sold.

His relatively new service, 'Fly By Road', is proving very successful. Chris says that clients are very satisfied with the safety, security, economics and highly professional point-to-point service, now on offer. As for the trailer itself, Chris is very pleased with the prototype and now has Mick O'Phee working on a design to cart one of the largest commercial helicopters - the Bell 214. "In my view, O'Phee's is one of the best producers of tailor-made trailers in the industry, not mass-produced, but rather superbly innovative engineering".

Chris, who is also the Managing Director of ABX Logistics, a company that offers global freight forwarding, has plans to extend the helicopter road haulage operation overseas, based on the acceptance of his very practical idea.

"You wouldn't drive an Indy car to the race track, or a bulldozer to the construction site, so we figured that the same simple principal should also be applied to helicopter relocation."

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The 14.6 metre long and 4.6 metre high O'Phee trailer is specced with a BPW tandem axle air suspension system, chosen for its smooth ride characteristics and Netcap Load Protection System.

Melbourne