



O'Phee 'A Double Future' – Real progress for PBS

O'PHEE TRAILERS IS BREAKING NEW GROUND IN QUEENSLAND WITH INNOVATIVE NEW A-DOUBLE TRAILER COMBINATIONS THAT ARE MEETING STRICT PBS RULES AND GETTING EXCELLENT PRODUCTIVITY GAINS.

The story of Performance Based Standards (PBS) has been one of patchy performance and slow progress but a number of developments in Queensland suggest some interesting trucks and trailers will start to appear on the roads giving significant productivity gains. Three new sets of trailers were unveiled at a ceremony at the O'Phee Trailers headquarters in Rocklea recently. The new vehicles consist of a day cab prime mover pulling a single trailer capable of carrying one 20 foot container, while this pulls a second trailer using a converter dolly. This second trailer is able to carry two 20 foot containers or a single. The O'Phee A-doubles, permitted to run at 79 tonnes GCM, are all fitted with on-board weighing equipment and Intelligent Access Program tracking equipment to ensure route and weight compliance.

They have been approved for use on a route from the west of Toowoomba, down the range and through Brisbane to the port. This is an important freight route in Queensland for agricultural products, often in heavy 20 foot containers, heading for export markets via the Port of Brisbane. It has been identified by Queensland's Department of Transport and Main Roads as an important route to develop improvements in productivity and reduce truck traffic. Currently, each 28 tonne 20 foot container is brought down the last leg of the journey on a single trailer. Now, with the new O'Phee PBS approved A-double configurations available, the number of truck journeys will be halved, making the new PBS route one of the most important

routes to be approved since the innovative truck approval system came into being over five years ago. "These achievements have been the result of a lot of hard work over a very long period of time," said Sharon O'Phee of O'Phee Trailers at the launch of the new PBS approved vehicles. "It's been a lot of work, but at the end of the day, those people who were prepared to think outside the box have produced the results we can see out in the yard today." Woods Transport is part of the Woods Group, based in Goondiwindi in Southern Queensland, it handles the transport side of a large agricultural and exporting business dealing with grain, seed, stock feed, milling and transport. The family owned company operates in south-east Queensland and



Mick O'Phee of O'Phee Trailers

throughout western Queensland and has done so for the past 39 years. Last year, Woods was exporting 1100 20ft containers of grain each month. Even now at this particular time, the company is still exporting at least 500 each month, but that will change next month upwards again as harvest progresses forward. Originally, transport had been handled by rail and the company had found it difficult and inefficient going over to road-based transport. But last year, Woods introduced AB Triples to bring containers from

Goondiwindi to a staging point in the west of Toowoomba. "To see those larger combinations bring three containers into the yard and then be transhipped to three small trucks to bring them down the Toowoomba Range was a bit disheartening," says Andrew Woods. "Mick O'Phee, being the thinker he is, was saying that we've got to be able to do this a bit better. The B-double concept didn't work with the weight of our containers. We need to be able to be competitive with the bulk tipper.



Andrew Woods of Woods Transport

"Two to three years later, here we are with these O'Phee A-double trailer combinations. They have been the result of a lot of hard work by the O'Phees who came up with the technical solutions. The PBS authorities, the NTC, Queensland Transport Main Road authorities, the Port of Brisbane and others have worked hard together and helped to bring this to fruition. They have provided support, building frameworks to help us get here. "We often criticise our local authorities or bodies we have to answer to, but it is



really encouraging to know that there are individuals within these organisations who are thinking progressively. They have been vital to help us facilitate this outcome."

Working on the basis of 500 containers each month, the current trucks cover 160,000km. With the new O'Phee A-doubles on the road this will be cut to 80,000km. The fleet is currently using 72,000L of fuel each month to do the work. This will be cut to 44,000L once these new A-double units are working. 3000 driver hours are reduced to just 1500. The trucks also have to contend with 14,000 traffic light stops each month, again these will be halved. The work is currently handled by many trucks but will be handled by just five in the future. Not only is this a productivity gain but it is also a safety gain. Less trucks on the road means less risk.

"The opening of a PBS class 2B network from Toowoomba to Brisbane is the first of its kind," says José Arredondo, a Senior Policy Analyst for Productivity at the National Transport Commission (NTC). "Basically, on these routes, trucks are allowed to go to 30 metres long. I think this is a very big step for us. This is another step towards the maturity of the PBS scheme. I would also like to thank Mick O'Phee for putting his money where his mouth is and getting these vehicles on the road. The ability of PBS to assess the safety of a vehicle before it is built is a very important thing. We have the ability to look at a planned vehicle and change the design to suit our requirements."

The new PBS route is the result of a great deal of co-operation between the relevant authorities, O'Phee Trailers and Woods



Transport, according to Bruce Ollason, General Manager of Road Safety & System Management at Queensland's Department of Transport and Main Roads at the unveiling.

"After talking to Mick O'Phee it became clear to me that this is what it is all about: working together, understanding each other's needs and bringing them solutions," said Bruce. "This project is a real case study, it shows us what can be achieved. This is a great advertisement for what can be done." At the launch, Mick O'Phee asserted the new trailers and route were a result of the transport industry and the authorities working smarter together.

"People might say it's just a couple of skels, a dolly and a Kenworth truck, but I believe

the PBS process, the design, the build, the productivity gains and the safety aspects are the best available in the world market today," said Mick. "We decided to take this initiative to develop more productive transport equipment through PBS and we know that this policy has great potential to improve road transport in Queensland and Australia. Despite some institutional barriers we still need to overcome, it is essential industry leaders such as ourselves take advantage of PBS and show others how it is all done."

Contact
 O'Phee Trailers P/L
 Rocklea QLD 4106
 Phone: 07 3277 1855
 Fax: 07 3277 9376
 Web: www.opheetrailers.com.au

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O'Phee Trailers

CNR IPSWICH & COLLINSVALE ROADS ROCKLEA BRISBANE QLD
 PO BOX 251 BRISBANE MARKETS QLD AUSTRALIA 4106
 TELEPHONE: (07) 3277 1855 FACSIMILE: (07) 3277 9376 MOBILE: 0418 788 723
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