



Mick O'Phee of O'Phee Trailers

## Behind the scenes

THE STORY OF PERFORMANCE BASED STANDARDS HAS BEEN ONE OF MISPERCEPTION AND SLOW PROGRESS, BUT QUEENSLAND-BASED **O'PHEE TRAILERS** HAS MET THE CHALLENGE SINCE DAY ONE. IN NOVEMBER 2010, THE COMPANY UNVEILED AN A-DOUBLE COMBINATION PROVIDING A GMC OF 79 TONNES.

"It's the result of a lot of hard work," says Mick O'Phee. "But at the end of the day, the people who were prepared to think outside the box were able to redraw the boundaries."

The O'Phee A-doubles, permitted to run at 79 tonnes GCM, are all equipped with on-board weighing equipment and Intelligent Access Program tracking equipment to ensure route and weight compliance. In an exclusive interview with Trailer Magazine, Mick O'Phee recalls the diversified history of PBS.

**Q: How long have you been involved with PBS?**

**A:** I have been involved with PBS for many years. In the early days I cooperated with Queensland Transport & Main Roads - in particular with Les Bruzsa - to design special configurations to suit particular freight tasks. As a result, our company was the first to introduce quad-axle skel trailers. Today, we still work very closely with QTMR, but also directly with the NTC.

**Q: What sort of potential does the scheme have in your eyes?**

**A:** It has huge potential. PBS is the perfect fit to produce high productivity vehicles for special freight tasks. But whoever is interested in PBS must be prepared to comply with special operating conditions.

**Q: How do the involved authorities perform?**

**A:** We often criticise the 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 design innovative products.

**Q: Is O'Phee Trailers interested in becoming an assessor and signing off designs in house?**

**A:** I believe it is important to still have independent assessors for PBS designed vehicles, just as it is now. The ability of PBS to assess the safety of a vehicle before it is built is a very important thing. But I think it would be more important for the manufacturer to

become a PBS certifier, capable of certifying and signing off the completed unit after it's been built according to plan.

**Q: Does PBS have a future in the long term?**

**A:** Yes, just look at the new A-double combination we introduced last year. Although people might say it's just a couple of skels, a dolly and a Kenworth truck, I believe the PBS process, the design, the build, the productivity gains and the safety aspects make it one of the best commercial vehicles available in the world market today.

**Q: So what's the next step?**

**A:** 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 that industry leaders such as ourselves take advantage of PBS and show others how it is all done.