

# All aboard the O'Phee 'A-Double'

AS A 24-HOUR, SIX-DAY-A-WEEK OPERATION, PUSHING PRODUCTIVITY TO THE LIMIT IS PARAMOUNT FOR **CONTAINER SWINGLIFT'S FLEET**. BUT WHEN **MICK O'PHEE** LOBBIED THE IDEA OF ADDING PBS-APPROVED EQUIPMENT TO THE QUEENSLAND-BASED OPERATION, THAT PRODUCTIVITY OUTPUT JUMPED TO A WHOLE NEW LEVEL.

A stone's throw away from Brisbane's vibrant CBD, Hemmant is a small town that has a rich agricultural tradition. But, it's also an industrial suburb that is home to warehouse and logistics expert Container Swinglift, who specialise in the transportation of containerized freight to metropolitan Brisbane and to regional destinations throughout Queensland. Founded by Roger and Maria Tapper in 1986, the family-owned company has always seen itself as an 'innovator' within the commercial transport industry and was one of the first fleets to implement side-loaders on a full-time basis to its port operation.

"My parents were originally from New Zealand, where the 40-foot side-loader is a popular vehicle used to haul maritime containers. So when they started Container Swinglift in 1986, they introduced the side-loader design to the Australian market," says Stephen Tapper, who is heading the family business in the second generation. Today, Container Swinglift can boast a fleet of 35 prime movers and 75 trailers, predominantly made up of side-loaders, but also including classic skel trailers, curtain-siders – and the much talked-about A-double combinations. The latter in particular is becoming more prevalent

in the Container Swinglift fleet now that Performance Based Standards (PBS) are gaining momentum around the country. To Stephen, PBS is exactly the kind of scheme that will help cement Container Swinglift's identity as an innovative force in the industry. That's why it was no surprise when Stephen deferred to long time industry colleague Mick O'Phee to gauge the effectiveness of PBS. "We've known Mick for a long time, in fact, my father has been in business with O'Phee since the 90s," he says. "In 2010, we were interested in bringing in PBS-approved vehicles because we wanted to boost the productivity of our container transport division. However, our initial concerns were the time constraints behind its production because we didn't want to wait through a month-to-month process of getting permits to use them, so we gave



Mick a call to get further clarification. "Because Mick had already conducted trials and validated his A-double design with Queensland's Department of Transport and Main Roads for use between Toowoomba and the Port of Brisbane, it made sense to source from O'Phee. He assured us that the 40'/40' set-up on the A-double was already pre-approved and that it was simply a matter of manufacturing the actual unit. To us, there isn't a more knowledgeable person in

"It's all about productivity gain when you invest in a PBS-approved A-double combination. We know it's a versatile setup, we know it can boost efficiency levels considerably, and we know it can reduce the number of vehicles on the road; and that to us puts O'Phee way ahead in the PBS game," Stephen explains – pointing to PBS' inherent competitive advantage. "Instead of leaving the port with a prime mover pulling a 20-foot lead and a 40-foot

were freighting before – that is a colossal difference, especially in our industry. "Even if we decide not to use the trailers in those combinations, we have the luxury of hauling them as single 40-foot trailers, and still have the flexibility to put two 20-foot containers on that single." According to Stephen, O'Phee's PBS-approved A-Double is the vehicle combination of the future. All 40'/40' combinations so far have been low-maintenance, much safer to operate on the roads, particularly since all are full EBS-equipped with roll-over stability function. "That's another aspect our drivers really appreciate so far, because with a standard road train combination the trailers tend to shift a little," Stephen adds. "With EBS installed, the system can immediately sense when the trailer is off its line and will correct it straight away. It just makes for a safer vehicle to run and easier to handle."

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the transport industry who can bring you up to speed on the benefits of PBS." More than two years later, Container Swinglift can now draw on four A-double combinations built by O'Phee shuttling between the south of Queensland and Brisbane. In fact, the company recently took delivery of a fifth set and has three more in O'Phee's production line.

B-trailer, we are now able to haul either a combination of two 20-foot containers on the lead and two 20-footers on the B-trailer; or a 40-foot container on the lead trailer followed by a 40-foot one on the rear. "When you put all those combinations into context we are now able to transport a maximum combination mass of 79.5 tonnes in one set, as opposed to 62.5 tonnes we

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