

AT THE HART OF SUCCESS

Investing in the latest technology has enabled Queensland operator Grainhart Transport to up-scale from B-doubles to road trains right into Brisbane



A Volvo FH16 ready to go with a couple of Kenworth T409SARs in the background

They say you have to spend money to make money, and investing in technology is making money for Peter Hart.

We're not just talking about buying new trucks and trailers, although Hart has been doing a fair bit of that as well, building his fleet to a dozen sets.

The key has been telematics equipment to satisfy the Queensland road authorities that his almost 80-tonne PBS grain combinations aren't going to damage bridges between Toowoomba and the Port of Brisbane.

So being able to cart two 40-foot containers or four 20-footers on his shortened double road trains — or "A-doubles" — means he can carry a lot more grain than on a B-double.

He's grossing up to 79 tonnes with the A-doubles compared with 68 tonnes for the B-doubles; with payloads of 57 tonnes compared with 47 tonnes.

On three round trips a day between Hart's HQ at Oakey on the Darling Downs and the port 160km away — a total of almost 1,000km — that's an extra 30 tonnes per day per combination.

"The productivity and efficiency gains we are achieving benefit the entire supply chain, extending from the farm gate through to the end consumer," Hart says.

"Aside from productivity savings, we are also achieving substantial reductions in fuel costs in the order of 20 percent in the containerised side of this business."

AT THE LEADING EDGE

Hart is Managing Director and owner of Grainhart Transport, which, is a "forward-looking company".

"We've always been quick to progress with the times and embrace new technologies," Hart says.

"Transport is a highly competitive sector and we are constantly on the lookout for ways to operate smarter, safer and better."

Grainhart's operation is one of the case studies featured on the Transport Certification Australia website under 'IAP — What's In It For Me?'

The TCA is the state and federal government regulator in charge of certifying telematics and related services. Telematics is basically the sending, receiving and storage of on-board transport data, usually involving global positioning systems.

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In Grainhart's case, weights captured by electronic on-board scales are transmitted to the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) via an in-cab gismo supported by telematics service provider Transtech Driven.

Grainhart is one of the Queensland operators accredited by TMR to run its PBS trailers at Higher Mass Limits (HML) under interim on-board mass monitoring (OBM) and the Intelligent Access Program (IAP).

JARGON EXPLAINED

To explain all this confusing lingo, Grainhart is allowed the higher mass into Brisbane for several reasons.

First, its trucks and trailers have what's deemed to be "road-friendly suspension", which is nearly always air-bags these days, and which nearly all highway rigs have anyway.

Second, it can guarantee that these suspensions are being properly maintained via the independent audits that are part of the 'mass management' module of the

National Heavy Vehicle Accreditation Scheme.

Third, its Volvo and Kenworth prime movers and O'Phee trailers are accredited under Performance Based Standards (PBS) to form a double road train, but at a shorter-than-usual 30m; with a speed limit of 90 km/h; and with both truck and trailer electronic braking systems (EBSs).

Fourth, under Queensland's interim mass monitoring scheme, Grainhart's on-board scales are approved by TMR as providing accurate weights. (They are Chek-Way, by Tramanco, and use air-bag sensors to convert pressure to an electronic current to give a reading.)

Finally, and this is the clincher: because telematics service provider Transtech is officially accredited under the IAP, Grainhart can reassure the road authorities — in real time — that its trucks aren't overloaded or going off course — which, once in Brisbane, is the Ipswich, Logan, Gateway and Port of Brisbane motorways).

It can also assure them that drivers aren't speeding or breaking their driving hours.

THE GOVERNMENT VIEW

TCA General Manager for Strategic Development Gavin Hill says that if it wasn't for all this, the Queensland TMR simply wouldn't allow Grainhart and several other transport companies to operate their bigger combinations all the way to Brisbane.

"Between Toowoomba and the Port of Brisbane, you would never get that across the line with the road engineers without OBM monitoring, because they're so far into the upper limits of capacity with some of the bridges on that route that they're saying: 'We just can't trust operators to get it right'.

"So they said: 'As long as we have absolute



Grainhart's A-double grain tipper, with a K200 upfront

confidence in mass readings, that the trucks will go to that limit but not a kilo over, we can sleep at night.

"If they go over, there will be hell to pay; there will be revocation of access entitlements for that operator."

BENEFITS ALL ROUND

Hart says his company's decision to commit to the PBS trailers wasn't difficult, because he'd already been running PBS B-doubles

to the Port of Brisbane under HML and the IAP, using his current telematics provider and trailer builder.

"We already had a good relationship with Transtech Driven and O'Phee Trailers, which designed and constructed our purpose-built trailers and handled the PBS application process," Hart says.

"O'Phee Trailers took the time to understand our needs very clearly and were able to come up with a tailor-made,

innovative design for a light-weight skel trailer that maximised payload and efficiency.

"We were blown away by the OBM system, which allows us to ensure gross and axle group limits are not breached.

"The live OBM system has done away with all the headaches associated with conservatively under-loading or inadvertently overloading, because we



An FH16 being loaded: its correct weight is measured on board

know exactly what weight our vehicles are carrying at any given time.

"Our on-board equipment also assists with back office operations.

"We can communicate with our drivers, we know exactly where our trucks are all the time and we know whether there are any delays loading, unloading or on the road."

He's paid between \$10,000 and \$12,000 for each telematics and on-board scales package.

The shorter road train trailers are actually more expensive than conventional equipment because they have things such as EBS.

As far as Hart knows, he's the first operator in Queensland to have A-double

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Hart says speed monitoring has been a key part of compliance.

"Speeding trucks and overloading in grain transport have been long-standing concerns of both transport operators who want to do the right thing, as well as government," he says.

"OBM and the IAP are contributing to an industry and community-wide appreciation that transport operators are doing the right thing; that they are not breaching road access conditions and that operators are competing on a level and fair playing field."

A QUEENSLAND FIRST

As far as Hart's concerned, the extra costs involved in heaving eight A-double sets have been reasonable.

grain tippers. Grainhart has three of these sets, all built by O'Phee, for carting bulk grain to the Brisbane Port.

Their tare weight is considerably more than the five container skel combinations though, meaning payloads are about 52 tonnes, compared with 57 tonnes for the containerised grain.

The Grainhart prime mover fleet comprises four Volvo FH16s; three Kenworth K200s; two T409SARs; a T659; a 909 (which doesn't go to Brisbane) and an old International Transtar (which runs around locally).

Due to the seasonal nature of bulk grain movements, Grainhart's fleet is supplemented by up to 20 subbies, but most of these use conventional semi-trailers down to Brisbane. ■