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O'Phee Based Standards

BASED IN THE TRANSPORT HUB OF ROCKLEA, BRISBANE BUSINESS O'PHEE TRAILERS IS KNOWN AS A PIONEERING FORCE IN BRINGING AUSTRALIA'S WORLD-RENOWNED PERFORMANCE-BASED STANDARDS SCHEME TO LIFE.

After a half-decade long struggle to gain traction in the marketplace, Performance-Based Standards (PBS) is now a household term in Australia's increasingly competitive transport equipment industry. However, only few know that much of the groundwork for the world-famous concept was laid well before the hype in the Queensland office and factory of O'Phee Trailers.

"We always knew that to survive in a fast-evolving business landscape, we had to out-innovate the competition and seek new avenues of growth, so we embraced the PBS idea wholeheartedly – not just for us, but because it was also important for our customers, who had to become more efficient and reduce costs in moving the product. Based on that understanding, we put PBS-approved equipment into service long before our competition even realised it existed," says Mick O'Phee – adding that the advent of high-productivity equipment by O'Phee Trailers was as a "game-changing" moment for Australian trailer building.

Quad revolution

Next to a fleet of A-doubles operating around the nation, Patrick Logistics is now running 12 O'Phee-built quad-axle skels in Melbourne/ Brisbane that each boast a payload of up to 34/35 tonnes. "That extra-tonnage will bring huge savings to us and our customers," says Patrick's National Fleet Manager, Greg Ubank.

"PBS has become vitally important for our economy and allows us as a country to continue to compete in the world trade arena. What's important to understand, though, is that moving to PBS wasn't just a question of adapting to a new engineering model; it was the beginning of a whole new business philosophy. As the scheme is inherently complex, we had to create a comprehensive infrastructure around it, from sales consulting through to approval management – effectively paving the way for the whole one-stop-shop idea that is now so prominent in the trailer market." According to Mick, O'Phee Trailers' PBS venture really took off after the company unveiled a new A-double design in 2009, years after his work with PBS started. Permitted to run at a 79-tonne GCM at the time, the new combination consisted of a single trailer capable of carrying one 20-foot container, which pulled a second trailer using a converter dolly. The second trailer was able to carry two more 20-foot containers or a single 20'/ 40' container. Mick says industry took up the concept

An O'Phee A-double in action at the Port of Brisbane.



“What we do goes way beyond designing and selling a simple trailer. We can actively help change the fate of both businesses and commodity pricing in general with our PBS range.”

very soon after the launch, prompting O'Phee to progress to a full fledged 40/40 A-double design and develop a whole range of additional PBS equipment at higher GCM – most often with a special focus on container handling and always working hand in hand with the leaders of Government regulatory bodies (see

breakout box) and O'Phee's loyal clientele. To date, O'Phee has manufactured A-double combinations in various configurations, from a simple container skel design through to flat top, curtain-sider and tipper variations. "It's fair to say we brought something new to the market back then," says Mick.

PBS History I

Well before PBS, Mick O'Phee cooperated with Queensland Transport & Main Roads, in particular with Les Bruzsa and his team, to design special configurations to suit particular freight tasks – resulting in the design of a whole range of high productivity vehicles that we see as standard today, such as road train and Super B-double combinations, as well as quad-axle designs. Since then, Mick is working closely with the NHVR and all relevant authorities in Australia.

"Think about it – with our new A-double design, we were able to halve the number of truck journeys to the port of Brisbane. Of course that achievement was the result of a lot of hard work that happened well before the A-double launch in 2009; but the result is just remarkable. In that sense, what we do goes way beyond designing and selling a simple commodity item. We can actively help change the fate of both businesses and commodity pricing in general with our PBS range." As containerised trade through Australian ports is forecast to rise consistently until

PBS-approved O'Phee A-double built for Qube Logistics.



2033*, with the largest annual growth rate expected in Brisbane, Mick says the company's expertise in PBS-supported container handling will be especially valuable.

"Shipping is the main mode of transport for Australia's exports and imports and will continue to play an important role for our country. The question is, how can we transport all those containers in the most efficient way to keep Australia cost-competitive, and that's where PBS equipment from O'Phee Trailers will come into play."

Going forward, Mick says that PBS-approved equipment will become even more prevalent in Australia. "I think we have only just scratched the surface," he says. "More and more customers are now asking us about PBS on the first enquiry. Although some say an A-double is just a combination of trailers, a dolly and a prime mover, I believe the PBS process behind it – the design, the build, the productivity gains and the safety aspect – makes it one of the best commercial vehicles available in the world market today."

One company that has embraced the whole concept long ago is container-handling expert Patrick Logistics. Only last month, the company's Brisbane operation

took delivery of two O'Phee A-doubles, with more Rocklea-built PBS equipment in operation in Melbourne. "PBS has given us a real productivity advantage," says Patrick's National Fleet Manager, Greg Ubank. "It's still a bit of a hassle to get approval for non-standard routes, but the savings in registration fees, fuel and tyre usage and driver time are just too big to ignore. Over time, PBS can really make a huge bottom line difference."

Greg says one main driver for the implementation of PBS in the Patrick fleet was the ability to pass those savings on to the end-user – making for a notable competitive advantage in the congested container market and helping Australia positively affect commodity prices.

"Going down the PBS path can be a great experience if you do it right and with the right partner backing you up," he says.

"Working with O'Phee has definitely helped us in that regard. Mick is very proactive and helpful as he has been at the forefront of the whole scheme for such a long time – yet he's always open to discussing new ideas too. With a supplier like that, PBS can in fact be a game changer."

**Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE)*

PBS History II

Since the early days of the PBS scheme, O'Phee Trailers has established a reputation for innovative engineering and personal back-up service that is unique in the Queensland PBS market. "We want to offer the transport industry a new level of productivity, yet underwritten by the tried and trusted O'Phee name," says Mick – adding that it's important to meet growing demand in the container game with the right equipment and to not take any shortcuts should freight traffic spike. "Anyone can build a standard trailer, but only few can design a high productivity vehicle that will last in the high duty cycle of PBS and the trying transport environment you find here in Australia. As a long-standing Australian business, we certainly have an advantage in that regard."

Contact

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The A-double produced for Patrick Logistics was the centrepiece of the O'Phee stand at the Brisbane Truck Show in May.