



## WESTERN STAR TRUCKS CUSTOMER PROFILE #3

# Regional trucking on the move in Wagga Wagga

Medium size trucking companies in regional Australia are flourishing according to Geoff Crouch, Managing Director of Crouch Transport.

Geoff Crouch, who in 1999 took control of his parents Wagga Wagga based trucking firm is adamant that there will always be a place for medium size trucking firms in Australia.

"The road freight task is set to double in the next ten years and this will ensure that we along with most professional truck operators will enjoy good steady growth," said Crouch who is also the President of Wagga's Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"Our business turnover has doubled since 2000 and we are experiencing 15% growth per annum.

"Despite the ever changing economic and regulatory environment in which we have to operate, the future for the road transport sector is very exciting."

Crouch's introduction to the family business which was started by his father Ron and mother Bev Crouch in 1978 came after he returned to Wagga from Sydney in 1989.

"I spent a number of years in Sydney working first in retail and the latter four of those years working in the banking industry," explains Crouch.

"I returned to Wagga in 1989 to give my young family a better lifestyle and environment.

"Rather than come into the family business straight away without any experience in the transport sector I served an apprenticeship of sorts by starting my own taxi-truck business."

This successful service operated between Wagga and Canberra for more than five years. After selling the business in 1995 he approached his parents about joining the family concern.

"Given my proven success in the transport industry my parents agreed to take me on as the operations manager," said Crouch.

A succession plan for Geoff to take over the business was formerly commenced in 1999 and culminated with Ron's retirement in 2000. Ron and Bev still retain a shareholders interest in the business.

"To be a successful general carrier you have to be adequately geared up to handle all type of freight. We have made significant capital investment in plant, equipment, warehousing and depots around the country."



Geoff Crouch

**One of Crouch Transport's Western Star 4864FXC trucks and trailer that carries the free promotional advertisement for Child Flight**

"We operate a trailer fleet consisting of flat tops and tautliners, have 2,500 sq. metres of warehousing with an additional 500 sq. metres under construction. The company has depots in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane. The truck fleet consists of 19 prime movers and rigids and we will shortly be taking delivery of our tenth Western Star prime mover."

Crouch also subbies out up to 30% of the freight task to trusted local operators depending on seasonal peaks.

According to Crouch 90% of the freight carried is on the Wagga - Sydney and Wagga - Melbourne and return runs. The remainder is divided between the Wagga - Adelaide and Wagga - Brisbane and return runs.

In a competitive industry Crouch believes his company's advantage for his clients is that they are a family owned and operated business.

"The customer has direct access to me and that means any issues can be sorted and responded to quickly," he stated.

"I also believe in a philosophy of 'fairness'. In a practical sense this means that I deal fairly with our customers, my 32 staff and my range of suppliers. This 'fairness approach' has built an excellent relationship for all contributors to this business because all stakeholders operate in a cooperative manner.

"This cooperative approach works equally well with my suppliers.

"We have had an excellent relationship for many years with the local truck dealership, Hartwigs. Four years ago we were in the market for a change of brand in the prime movers that we were purchasing.

"We didn't want to move away from

Hartwigs as we have found their support and back up service to be first rate. Tim Hartwig suggested that the Western Star 4864FXC product would be an ideal prime mover for our operation."

The new Western Star 4864FXC is powered by a Detroit S-60 14 litre engine rated at 505 Hp and producing 1850 ft/lb torque. The vehicle features an 18-speed Eaton RTLO 20918B transmission, Eaton DS462P axles (rated to 46,000 lb) and rides on Airliner 46K air ride suspension.

"Given that we will be taking delivery of our tenth Western Star later this year, Tim's judgment on what we required has been spot on.

"For our drivers there is a high degree of acceptability of the Western Star product."

Craig, the company's Workshop Manager, has been very pleased with the build quality of the Western Star.

"The Western Star trucks have been performing well. The oldest truck in the fleet with some 470,000 kilometres traveled is in as good a condition as the newest truck we recently purchased," stated Craig.

Crouch is positive for the future of not only his company but also for Wagga because of the tremendous investment that he sees being poured into the region.

"With only 4 1/2 hours to Sydney and Melbourne, 12 hours to Adelaide and 14 hours to Brisbane, Wagga is the natural transport hub for the Eastern seaboard states - so why wouldn't it be the place of economic opportunity?" he concludes. ■



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