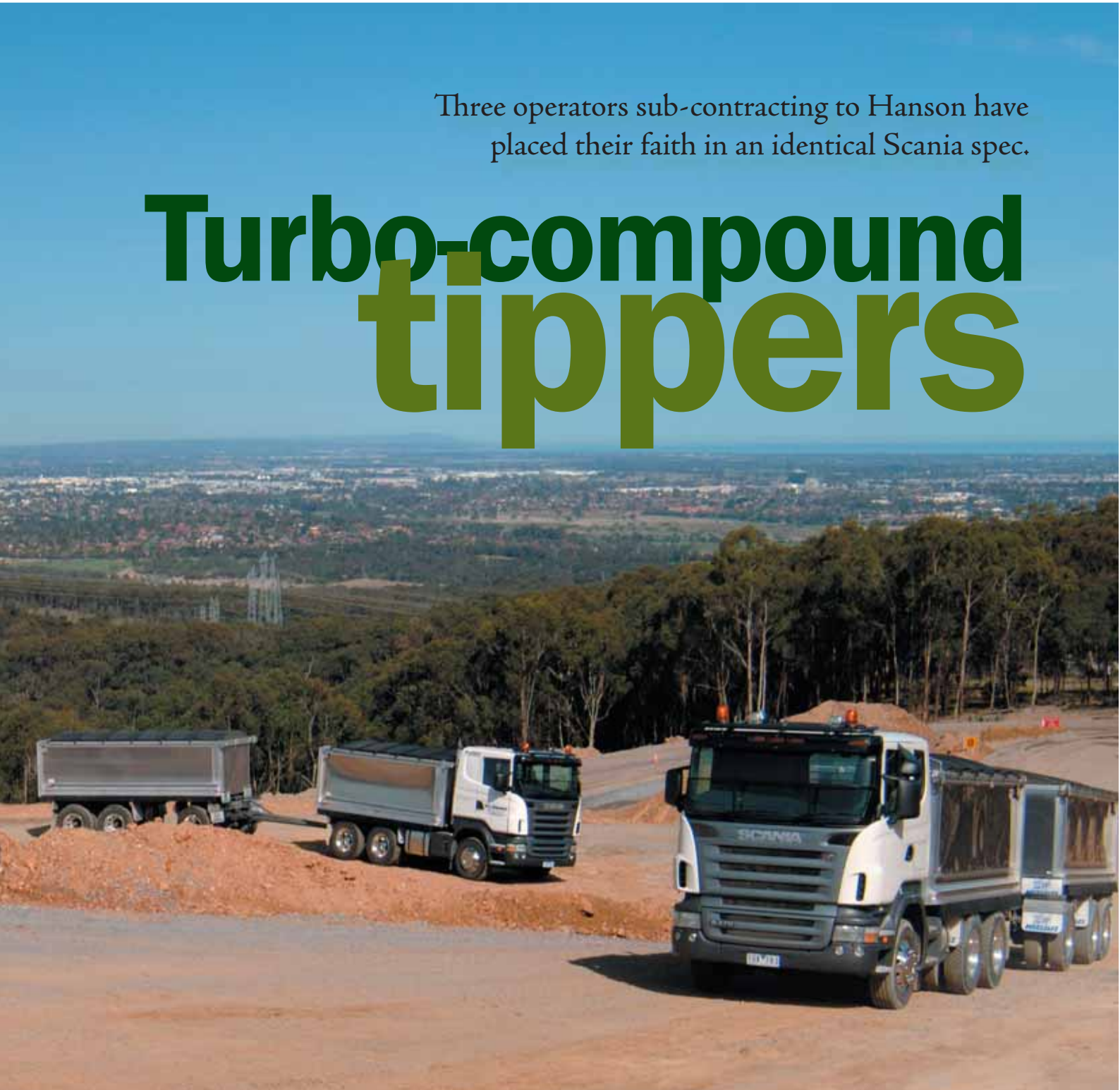

SCANIA
R470
HERCULES
HERCULES

Three operators sub-contracting to Hanson have placed their faith in an identical Scania spec.

Turbo-compound tippers



There's no shortage of experience packed away in the three old friends who are part of a collection of operators known as Harkaway Haulage.

With a combined total of nearly a century of driving between them, Tom Belias, Pat Morabito and Tony Marcic have carted millions of tonnes out of quarries around Melbourne and covered just as many kilometres.

The trio have been sub-contractors for most of their adult lives, working for Hanson and its predecessors.

And because they do the same job, they talk to each other about their choice of equipment – everything from cab comfort to running costs to tare weights.

Tom and Pat have been confirmed Scania operators for years, but it was only when it came for Tony to replace his ageing Mercedes-Benz that he, too, decided to join the Scania club.

After sampling the new range at the launch of the P- and R-series on the Gold Coast two years ago, the trio opted to buy identically specified Scania R 470s.

Part of Scania's R-series introduced to Australia in 2004, the R 470 is powered by Scania's 12-litre turbo-compound engine, producing 470hp (345kW) and 1623lb ft (2200 Nm) of torque.

The three Harkaway Haulage trucks are fitted with Scania GRS900R 14-speed range change transmissions and Scania Retarders.

The trucks are also fitted with road-friendly steel suspension, which provides better off-road articulation than air suspension while allowing the same payload.

The 6x4 configured trucks are equipped with Scania R660 19,000kg axles, electronically operated disc brakes, CANBUS electrical system and four-point cab air suspension.

The three friends might have ended up with an identical spec, but their histories vary widely.

Tom is one of Hanson's longest-serving sub-contractors and a die-hard Scania man. The most experienced of the trio, he owned his first truck in 1967, sub-contracting for construction material supplier Fregon.

Fregon went on to become Consolidated Quarries, then Pioneer, and today, Hanson.

Tom bought his first Scania in 1974, just two years after Scania established a presence in Australia. A 204hp LB80 with a 5-speed transmission with splitter, it was a single-drive prime mover pulling a single-axle trailer out of quarries in Epping and Bulla in Melbourne's north, and Clarinda in Melbourne's south-east.

He owned the truck for 13 years until 1987 and replaced it with a second-hand T112, which he used as a prime mover before conversion to a truck and dog.

"That had low kilometres on it when I bought it and it was a very good truck," he says.

With a 335hp 11-litre engine and 10-speed transmission, it took him 1.4 million trouble-free kilometres before he replaced it with the new R470 just 12 months ago.

Trading the T112 for the new R470 left him with mixed feelings. The T112 had educated his children, paid his mortgage and provided him a holiday in Greece, so it was with mixed feelings that he swapped keys for a new one.

But it didn't take long for him to see the benefits of the new truck.

"It's very nice – a limousine" he says.

"It's a very, very comfortable truck. Very powerful and very quiet."

He puts in an eight to 10-hour day carting out of Hanson's quarries in Lysterfield, Harkaway and Nyora in Melbourne's outer south-east, getting a 30-tonne payload from the truck and three-axle dog, with 31 tonnes under Mass Management.

> **"I BOUGHT MY FIRST ONE BACK IN 1974, THEY'VE ALWAYS HAD THE PARTS I'VE NEEDED. THE WORKSHOPS ARE GOOD. THEY ALWAYS DO A GOOD JOB."**
>
> TOM BELIAS

Like the T112, the R470 is fitted with a sleeper cab, which he enjoys for the sense of roominess it provides, even though it rarely gets used for its intended purpose.

One aspect he is enjoying is the move from a bonnet to a cab-over.

"It's much easier for this sort of work," he says.

So if his previous Scanias educated his children, paid his mortgage and provided him a holiday in Greece, will the R470 pay for his retirement?

He laughs. Retirement is still a long way off.

"The R470 will bring better work and better life," he says. "I'm getting a little bit older," he says.

He is in remarkably good shape given his 38 years behind the wheel. His back, often the first indicator of age for any trucky, is in excellent working order.

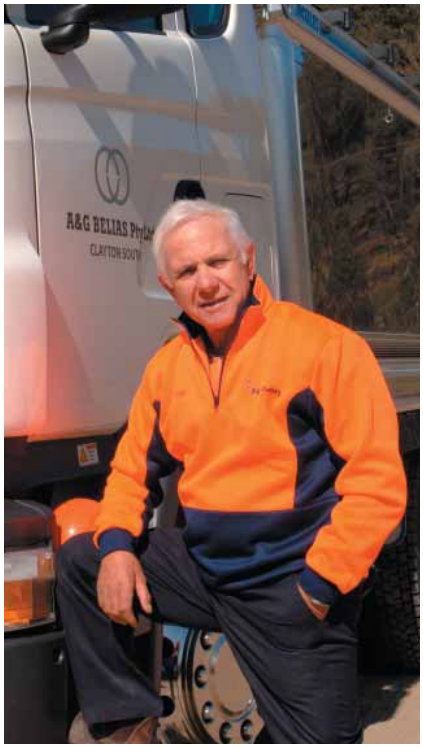
"Scanias are a comfortable truck," he says. "So you don't get those sorts of things."

And he says cab comfort has been



We approve: Hanson Lysterfield aggregates transport manager Roger Skipsey with R 470 owners Tony Marcic, Pat Morabito and Tom Belias.


SCANIA
R470
TQK 788



Tom Belias

matched by service backup.

"Scania has never let me down. Ever since I bought my first one back in 1974, they've always had the parts I've needed.

"The workshops are good. They always do a good job and I have never had to take the truck back.

"Spare parts is one of the most important things," he says.

His old mate Pat Morabito might consider himself the "inexperienced" one of the three, but he too is onto his third Scania.

Pat's first truck was a Ford Louisville before his conversion to Scania.

"I've had a really good run out of all of them – all my vehicles have been brilliant.

"I look at them as my superannuation - I don't trade them in, I sell them privately. What I get out of that truck is mine, and apart from the GST, it goes into the bank. And I've done that with each truck. Each one I buy I have to live on, it has to pay my bills, and at the end of the day when I sell it, what I get for it is superannuation."

His first Scania was a P112 with a 305hp 11-litre engine he bought in 1985. He followed that with a P113 in 1993 with the same 11-litre engine but with 360hp and a 14-speed transmission.

He sold it at 805,000km after fitting a set of injectors at 600,000 and wearing out two clutches. He reckons this is not unusual for tipper work.

The new R470 is a big step up in comfort. Not only has the smaller P-cab made way for the R-cab's flat floor, but four-point air suspension provides unmatched ride.

"It's like travelling in a jumbo," he says. "You feel nothing."

"I get out of it at the end of the day feeling as good as when I got into it."

He says when the decision came to replace the P113, he didn't look at any other trucks.

"If you've found a good product, why go and look at anything else? There's a lot of good products out there today, but I felt that the Scania just had the edge. A little bit more expensive but a better finish."

"WE CAN PUT THE RETARDER ON AND WE CAN CONTROL OUR DESCENT. YOU CAN'T DO THAT WHEN YOU'RE JUST TRYING TO RELY ON NORMAL BRAKES."
PAT MORABITO


Tony Marcic


Pat Morabito

He reckons he could have bought a much cheaper truck with similar power, but wanted the best.

"The others don't have the quality, they don't have the comfort, and they don't have the finish," he says.

He anticipates construction of Melbourne's new Eastlink tollway will keep him busy for then next four years for about 12 hours each day six days per week, so he plans to introduce his son to the business to help out.

"The plan is that he will work three days a week and I will work three days a week, but if he wants to work longer, that's up to him. He needs the work more than I do."

The most recent convert of the three to Scania, Tony Marcic, still speaks fondly of his 1987 V10-powered Mercedes Benz 2636.

But with hub-reduction diffs and a steel body, it wasn't giving him the payload he needed. With just 26.5 tonnes in the back, he was about two tonnes shy of



what was needed to make a dollar.

When the time came to upgrade, he listened to Tom and Pat. But still with Benz blood running through his veins, he is unwilling to commit totally to the new Scania.

"If you have no problems with it you say it's a good truck. But so far it's very nice, very comfortable and there's a lot of new technology, which is what everyone is looking for."

Compared to the Benz, he likes the fact that the R470 is new, comfortable, and boasts plenty of power.

"It's very quiet inside and that's what I like."

He said he was particularly looking forward to the R470's combination of disc brakes and Scania Retarder and the increased uptime this would bring.

"On the old truck, you'd spend the weekend doing the brakes, one wheel at a time, and by the time you'd finished every wheel, it was time to do them again."

" . . . SO FAR IT'S VERY NICE, VERY COMFORTABLE AND THERE'S A LOT OF NEW TECHNOLOGY, WHICH IS WHAT EVERYONE IS LOOKING FOR."

TONY MARCIC

He was encouraged by another Scania operator in the Quarry – and the fourth member that makes up Harkaway Haulage - Carsten Jenson, who said he had adjusted his brakes once in four years.

Tony also likes the extra stopping power the discs provide.

"You can stop anywhere you want," he says.

However, he is quick to point out that Scania is not the only truck brand that boasts disc brakes. He is still protective of his previous brand.

"I'm sure the new Mercedes would be exactly the same," he says.

"I can't say I wasn't happy with the Mercedes but it had hub-reduction axles and a steel body. I can take four tonne more in this truck, and that goes straight into my repayments.

"And it uses a bit less fuel than my previous truck," he adds.

But if the three friends see different things in their trucks, they all agree strongly on one point: the Scania Retarder. Pat sums it up best when he points out one of the grades in the Lysterfield quarry that is off-limits to other trucks in the wet.

"We can put the Retarder on and we can control our descent," he says.

"You can't do that when you're just trying to rely on normal brakes." ■

Photography: Charlie Suriano Words: Lloyd Browne