



Matt Whitnall

# On the move

**Truck Moves  
Australia has carved  
a successful niche  
in the trucking  
industry — and its  
drivers couldn't  
be happier, writes  
Jason Whittaker**

**T**his is a story about a trucking company with no trucks.

Its capital expenditure is naturally low. Drivers are relaxed, paid what they're worth and can't imagine driving for anyone else.

This mirage of the industry, Sydney-based Truck Moves Australia, does just that — it moves trucks. It's an operation of pure logistics, putting drivers behind the wheel to get the big and not so big rigs to where they're supposed to be.

Manufacturers, dealers and private owners all use the company to move

trucks from point A to point B, whether it be wharf clearing, local or interstate movement.

"There's not a truck manufacturer that we don't deal with, there's not a dealership network we don't deal with at some stage during the year," says Matt Whitnall, the company's Director.

Their impressive client list includes truck manufacturers like DaimlerChrysler (who they've just signed to a new three-year contract), dealers like Brown and Hurley, transport companies like Linfox, and private firms like Telstra and CSR.



“The most profitable and most successful dealerships are the ones that outsource the whole function to us.”

Then there's auction houses, leasing companies and demonstration vehicles.

The reason, he says, is because Truck Moves gets the job done more efficiently than they could do themselves.

“The most profitable and most successful dealerships are the ones that outsource the whole function to us,” he says.

“They're the ones you see their sales climb because the sales manager, the manager, the mechanics, who if you worked out their hourly rates ... it's going to be 10 times what we charge.

“Pay us and we'll move the truck for them. And that's all-inclusive, everything. They don't have to think about it.”

With a flexible roster of drivers in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide, Truck Moves provide express, one-way, last-minute deliveries.

Drivers, armed with a trade plate, make the delivery and, on the interstate trips, fly home afterwards.

“If you've got nothing coming back you've got to charge the customer so much to go one way that it's almost not worth it,” Whitnall explains. “We mostly do one-way deliveries because we aggregate the costs to the customer. They only pay for what they use.”

“The guy that's driven his truck and trailer to Brisbane [from Melbourne] has got another 24 hours of driving back plus breaks. Whereas our guy can maximise his income by flying back to base and we can provide a really efficient service because the guy's jetting back.”

“It's cheaper than what the majors can do it for. A lot of the work is last-minute stuff, which only we can respond to because we're not carrying the equipment with all the overheads.”

Whitnall says Truck Moves has about 25 competitors in the market, but is the oldest and probably the biggest.

“We've just been at it the longest,” he

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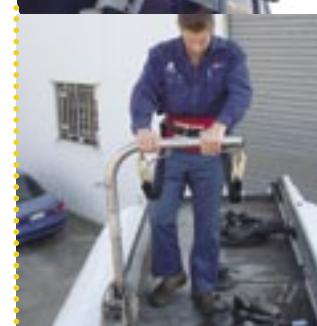


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## TRUCKIES' RETIREMENT HOME

An empty truck, often straight off the production line. No customer pressuring the boss. No boss setting unreasonable deadlines. You take the jobs you want when you want them.

If it all sounds too good to be true, Dave Goodman is living the dream.

After starting with Truck Moves part time, the 51-year-old Sydney-based driver now criss-crosses the country in the latest machinery.

"The calluses have nearly gone from the dogs and chains which is even better," he says of a former life spent handling freight.

Now there's nothing on the back, and after "the missus shot through" he hit the road full time.

"I predominantly do a lot of long distance work," he says. "[There's] two main reasons for that: one, I don't have a family where I need to interrupt the lifestyle with, and two I tend to get them there without putting dents in them."

"It's no hassle, I go where they need me to go."

"Touching wood I'm 52 this year and I haven't had an accident yet."

The income supplements an Army pension, and he relishes the chance to drive the latest trucks on the market.

"The objective of the game is move the truck to the person in pristine condition," he says. "That's my job and I tend to do it."

Ivan Hamilton is 66 and works on local Sydney runs and the occasional interstate trip for Truck Moves. He also started in the Army before moving into the commercial realm.

"I was with [a major fleet] for a while and started carting steel and [I had] a few moving loads and I thought this was no good and got out of it completely," he says.

"When loads move it's a bit close, especially steel."

The income also supplements his Defence pension — he takes the jobs when he wants them. And he gets to indulge a life-long love of trucks.

"They're more modern now naturally and they're brand new and they're things that you can never afford to own but you've got the opportunity to drive," he says.

"It's the ultimate, you select what you do and when you do it." n



says. "But we're not a big business, still a small business. Family owned and operated since the beginning.

"We've got a really efficient business model."

### Driver shortage?

Whitnall's desk is often piled high with resumes of drivers wanting work. With hundreds on the books, and just 50 casually employed on and off, he's unashamedly picky about who he hires.

"I don't even talk to the young guys," he says of a staff ranging in age from 40 to 70-plus.

"The drivers that we hire are generally over the age of 50. So the guys that have worked for the Tolls and the Linfoxes ... and they've been spat out of the industry because they're too old or had a workers' comp claim."

"They're exactly the sort of guys that we hire. The guys that have got plenty of experience, they're not cowboys anymore, they've got all that out of their system, they're happy to have a job and it keeps them active, it keeps their hand in because they're learning new trucks and new gearboxes and all this sort of thing."

He says most of his drivers are semi-

retired, supplementing pensions with casual work.

After a lifetime spent handling freight — and the pressure that comes with it — they relish the chance to cruise up the highway in the latest and greatest rigs (see box item).

"They'll leave a freight job to come and work for us because there's no freight," Whitnall says. "Because of the pressure and they're pushed ... to do things they don't want to do. They're not going to earn as much money as running freight with us, but pretty close to it."

"They take so much pride in their work. It's something rare that you don't hear about. They're happy to be in a uniform that we provide, they're polite with the customers, they're not in a rush with the gear, there's no freight pressure, so they cruise along."

Customers also appreciate the drivers' experience. By running in trucks straight off the production line, the drivers are often sounded out for their thoughts on the trucks, on top of the standard condition reports provided with every delivery.

"They're always driving new trucks so they know straight away if there's a problem," Whitnall says. n