

# AUSDRILL GOES FOR TATRA

After many years of consideration, the well-known Tatra truck manufacturer has entered the Australian market with their exceptional product.

Getting any new automotive product on to the Australian market is a long, slow and costly process – a difficult road to plough for any manufacturer. The West Australian company, OffRoad Trucks Australia, based in the Perth suburb of Maddington, has taken that road and has released the first of many, niche market 'off-road' Tatra trucks. OffRoad Trucks Australia is the Australian Distributor for Tatra. The man behind the company is Larry Gill. Larry has a broad background in various aspects of the industry. With his diverse experience he saw the need for the Tatra product in Australia and set about establishing a thorough product support system.

After considerable investment and the long process of Australian Design Rule compliance, he has released the forward control and bonneted off-road trucks to the market. He sees the product working well in mining and construction as fuel and service trucks, dump trucks and many other off-road roles. For the future, fire and other emergency service roles are quite likely. The product has been selling quietly for some time with recent sales success with Ausdrill, who have purchased three vehicles, two eight-wheel -drives and one six-wheel-drive. Vehicles in the line up for Australia are the 4X4, 6X6, 8X8, 10X8 and 12-wheel drive trucks. The four- and six-wheel drives have already shown their considerable ability in the Paris Dakar rally.



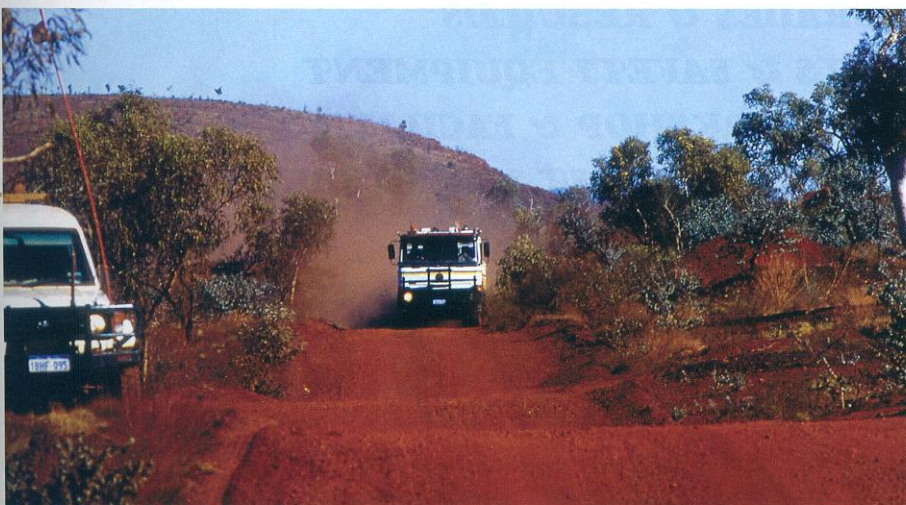
*Tatra support vehicle and drill rig making a name in the Pilbara*

Tatra is now a part of the Terex Corporation with the product still being built in the Czech Republic. The Tatra name goes back many years with associate companies producing fire engines and fire fighting equipment, aircraft, rail carriages and is the oldest car maker in central Europe. Tatra have produced trucks since 1898 and their patented and original concept of the Tatra 11, conceived in 1923, is still a world-leading design. Although the design has changed, the basic design concept is still utilised today and is currently known as the King Frame. This means the vehicle can run on a frameless chassis using a central support tube with rear swinging half axles and no joints. The frame you will see on Tatra vehicles is a mild steel frame that is there to support body and

associated equipment. It is not a chassis in the conventional sense. The suspension is a combination steel spring and air bag set up with hydraulic dampers.

When you see or drive the Tatra off road you will realise the frame (not chassis) sits flat and uniform to the terrain, not affecting the load, while the suspension takes all the work. From a drivers point of view this means there is less driver stress and makes the vehicle a lot easier to place under difficult track conditions. The handling, ride comfort and exceptional wheel travel for off-road work makes this vehicle stand out in a crowd of average off-road trucks. For those interested in environmental issues, the Tatra drive and suspension system will find the vehicles low ground pressure and long travel suspension will not do track or site damage, as some others do due to their inadequate suspension travel based on rigid axles. The long travel, supple suspension of the Tatra will also contribute to better haul times by means of superior traction. One of the many pleasing aspects of the Jamel is the front mudguards; they are in the style of the old pit type guards that allow ease of service and the quick clearing of mud and road grime build up. The wheel arch area allows clear access for service.

The models selling in Australia are the 815 forward control or cab over, and the Jamel 6X6 bonneted tipper. The Jamel cab is very neat with all instruments well laid out for the driver. It is a good



*All in a day's work. Tatra moves into the Australian market with high acceptance*



*Just another day in the bush for Tatra*

work atmosphere and for a bonneted cab provides remarkable forward vision. There is good cab space and driver ergonomics are well thought out. The steering lock too is exceptional and combined with the suspension travel makes for a fine off-road truck. The Tatra is totally an in-house product,

with its own Euro III engine, gearbox, suspension and frame. In Europe, as well as the Tatra engines line up, there are water-cooled Deutz and MTU engines, however, Australia will run the Tatra engines. While viewing the vehicles, a Tatra engine was on display that had over 27,000 hours on the clock.

Due to driver error, the engine had a valve problem and was in for a rebuild. The bearing journals, given their life, were in remarkable condition.

The Tatra gear box has ten forward speeds and two reverse and is synchromesh with manual pneumatic boosting for ease of shifting. Power take-off with multiple outlets is available with diff locks and inter axle diff locks as standard. Of significance is the Tatra air cooled V8 engine. The engine model is the T3C 928-81 with Euro III compliance. It is unusual to find air-cooled engines in today's world that can comply with Euro III, it speaks volumes for the engineering integrity of the Tatra engine to obtain such a high world standard of compliance from an air-cooled engine. The intercooled and turbocharged V8 produces a very respectable 270 kW @ 1800 rpm while the torque rating is a strong 1800 Nm @ 1000 rpm. Such a high torque, low revving engine, with the right driver, will be highly capable of good fuel economy and for off-road work, the low revs combined with the long travel suspension, will produce copious amounts of traction.



*Six-wheel-drive Tatra as support vehicle*

The low revs also make for a more comfortable cab in the sound department too.

As mentioned earlier, Ausdrill have recently purchased three Tatras, Peter Wright of Ausdrill told us; "The Tatra was a significant find at a time when other manufacturers could not deliver off-road trucks. Although early in their life, the Tatra's are already well accepted". Peter Wright has found the adaptive thinking at the factory has been able to build a truck to suit the application. He went on to say; "With competitive pricing and features for the long term, combined with the Tatra chassis design, the drill rig and mast will undergo minimal stress". He added further; "The service and support has

been impressive with off-the-shelf component support. All up, the factory and distributor support has been excellent". He sees a positive future for the product and at this stage another

three Tatra rigs are likely in the near future. Currently the three Tatras are working at the Nammuldi site near Brockman 2 out of Tom Price.

Anyone who takes the time to find out about the Tatra will not be disappointed. The back ground and overall world acceptance of the product is well known. It has proven itself in various world markets. In the extreme heat and dust of the Middle East and the freezing conditions of Europe, it is a vehicle that has a proven ability based on sound and advanced engineering principles.

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*Drilling for iron ore at Nammuldi, near Brockman 2 site out of Tom Price*