



Caption for driver and opening photo

Boyhood dreams

BY HOWARD SHANKS

Many ideas and schemes that start out as boyhood dreams tend to stay there, never seeing the light of day, but in the case of Keith Cini, his small business has made the transition from a simple boyhood dream to become one of Australia's largest pork distributors.

Now based in the Sydney suburb of Badgersy Creek and holding contracts with major leading Sydney restaurants it is a far different operation from a single truck owner-driver that began over four decades ago with a "screaming Jimmy" powered Diamond Reo. Now with dedicated staff, a fully equipped workshop facility and a fleet of seven Western Stars and trailers, the company has a stranglehold on the niche metropolitan Sydney fine pork distribution market.

Keith and his fleet of Western Stars provide a total transport solution their customer base along with their own piggery located in Central Western NSW not far from Coonabarabran. Crucial in meeting the company's high quality standards is prompt and reliable delivery,

which requires a well-run and maintained fleet.

"There is quite a mix of vehicles in our fleet and, some of the older Western Stars have been around the clock a few times," Keith Cini, smiled.

Cini's fleet is entirely made up of Western Stars spanning from Keith's original 1974 White 7000 (predecessor to the Western Star brand) to the latest 2009 models. The two most recent purchases are Western Star's top selling 4800 FXB B-Double spec'd units fitted with Cummins ISX 550hp engines.

According to Keith the decision to go for the 4800 FXB B-Double spec was to add productivity and maintain the high level of driver comfort his drivers have enjoyed with their older Western Stars.

"The cabin environment of Western Star trucks have always minimised driver fatigue," Keith explained. "Just have a look at the old White 7000 and compare that to what was around in 1974 and you can see they [Western Star] have



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always been ahead in that area. There is not much on the market that provides the level of room and comfort that you get in a Western Star cabin. Our drivers are pretty busy so we specify a truck that will be as comfortable as possible and these new models really cut down on driver fatigue and stress," he added.

Over the years Keith has trialed a variety of engines, and he openly admits that while the two-stroke Detroit's in the early days were probably the preferred option then, largely due to their high performance 330-350 horsepower output. Later the big inline six-cylinder Cummins engines came into vogue delivering both performance and fuel economy gains.

"Now, it's back to the drawing board in terms of engines with these new emissions," Keith mused. "We've had some Cat's over the years too, but we've had the best run out of the Cummins and Detroit engines with most getting over one million kilometres before we need to touch them. We were sceptical at first as to what sort of performance and economy we'd get from



these new engines, but so far they're proving to be very good," Keith added.

"I suppose when you're on a good thing you stick with it," Keith mused when asked why he's specified Western Star trucks for over 40 years. I've always had good service from Western Star and the dealers, mind you we've had a few blews over the years too, Keith smiled cheekily. But we've always been able to work out a solution to the problems."

There is little doubt that Keith has a soft spot for the 1994 long bonneted Heritage that he drives himself to his piggery near Coonabarabran each week where he collects up to 300 pigs depending on the orders. "This has been a great truck," Keith admitted as he pats the steering wheel. "The reliability of this Heritage model has been faultless."



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The lightweight rugged construction of the new Constellation models with their Stratosphere sleepers is another area Keith acknowledges is an added Western Star advantage. "These new sleepers don't have fasteners like nuts and bolts or welds and that's what helps make them so light," explains Keith, pointing out that glue is used to attach the pieces providing a seamless finish and stronger uniform surface stability. He is quick to add the durability has not been compromised either, but enhanced.

They use honeycomb sandwich panels that are also used in the floors of the Western

Star cabins and the rear walls on the day-cab models to protect against outside temperatures and noise. "The honeycomb composite within the panel, provides better soundproofing and the insulation factor is also higher so these new models are far quieter inside," Keith said.

"Over the years I've found that the Western Stars are a perfect fit for what we do, they have a comfortable cabin, are well specified and most importantly reliable with excellent after sales service. Having been a driver myself, I knew I had to choose a truck that my drivers would be happy operating, after all that's how I spec'd my first trucks that I drove myself. The new Constellation, in my opinion, is a real driver's truck and the fact that it looks extremely stylish is an added bonus."

Keith, like many other operators, concern in having the best equipment for the driver is driven by the fact it is becoming increasingly difficult to retain highly skilled drivers. "One of the first things a new applicant will ask me when applying for a position as a driver is what type of truck will they be driving," Keith informed.

"There is no question that the shortage of skilled drivers means that we as employers have to offer the very best in equipment and, over the years, the Western Star trucks have clearly been at the forefront. Any fleet operator who wants to attract the best drivers needs to ensure that the gear they are running is the best available. Anything less and you won't secure the better drivers," he said.

Keith Cini acknowledges that some of the original contracts he still holds today were sealed with merely a handshake in a time when men stood by their word. "It works both ways too," Keith said. "I have to be able to deliver what I say I when I say I'm going too and the only way I can do that was with reliable equipment. Our equipment is really only as reliable as the people behind it and in my mind that's why Western Star trucks have been so reliable over the years because of the people behind the product." Keith concluded. □

