



Left to right Sam Pantou and Tony Van Keulen

# SAFE HOME RUN

*One of the many pleasing aspects of putting this industry magazine together is reporting on equipment innovations specifically engineered to make road transport easier, safer and more cost effective.*

**THE** new Metropolitan Express Transport Services, Fall Prevention Safety System (FPSS), which took 5 years in the development, is one such innovation that ticks all of the desired boxes, making it a win, win, for their customers, their drivers and all others involved in the freight handling process. The system provides a 'working-at-heights' safety tarping solution for flat-top, rigid and semi trailers, in this case a Vawdrey built unit, doing away with the need to provide expensive on-site safety platforms. Fully automatic, and operator foolproof, the FPSS employs double acting roof and side trailer tarps, which when activated fully exposes the load, in this case palletised and sheet steel, without physical intervention by the driver. The speed at which the tarped roof section effortlessly rolls to either side of the trailer, to allow for flexible cargo access, and the ease of which the side curtains are dropped, offers serious time and dollar

savings compared to the conventional tarping and untarping ways of the past. The trailer's side curtain arrangement has minimal impact on the tare weight of the vehicle and its in-built safety barrier eliminates the risk of falls when working on the trailer's decking. There are many other built-in safety features, and they include the trailer platform access ladder, it can only be activated once the load has been fully exposed, and the introduction of a forward clear side panel that allows the operator to view the load's security status, before engaging the FPSS. Directors of Metropolitan Express Transport Services, Sam Pantou and Tony Van Keulen, say the prototype of their FPSS is undergoing a trialing process for their client, Bluescope Steel Australia, at the Westall Road Melbourne site, and will no doubt be modified as the system is put through its paces. "We've already made changes to the initial FPSS design so that the air

activated hydraulics are now electrically powered, independent of the prime mover. Paul Ferbrache, from Tipper Tarps, helped us re-configure the workings of the system to allow power to be sourced through a separate battery pack enabling the trailer to operate as a standalone mobile platform," said Tony. Not happy with just the FPSS delivering an unprecedented level of operational safety, Metropolitan Express Transport Services equipped their trailer with almost every other conceivable on road safety feature to complete the 'peace of mind' experience for their client. "Some time back we decided to put health and safety at the forefront of our services, updating our vehicles every six years or so, so that we could access the very latest in technology, for both our truck and trailers. "This Bluescope Steel vehicle features the new BPW Airlight II soft ride airbag suspension and drum braked axles, all connected to the BPW 'roll stability feature' offered through their Trailer Electronic Braking System. "Add to that the BPW Soft Docking package, to help prevent rear trailer damage, or the possibility of hitting a bystander, our fully substantiated side 'under-run' protection, and the Vigia tyre inflation maintenance package, and we've covered all the bases in the OH&S stakes," said Sam. With services ranging from express courier and taxi truck, through to metro and regional deliveries, plus their construction and warehousing divisions, Metropolitan Express has built a solid reputation based on knowing their customers' needs, intimately.

"It's the concern for our customers that led to the idea of the FPSS in the first place and in this instance, Bluescope Steel has been fully supportive in assisting us to further develop the concept, as safety is a major Key Performance Indicator for this steel haulage contract. "We've also had the backing from authorities such as Victoria Police, Vic Roads, the Victorian Transport Association, our insurance company, Zurich and Safety Assist, as the road transport industry is continually searching for ways to reduce the incidence of workplace injuries. "You can either sit on your hands on issues such as safety or be the leader in your respective field. However, as our corporate motto states, 'Safety Is Our No.1 Priority' we choose the latter," said Sam. ■

