

**/ SAFETY**

**SELLS**



**IN THE TRANSPORT GAME THESE DAYS THERE'S A NEW RULE THAT SAYS 'SAFETY SELLS'.**

STORY: JONATHAN REVITT



It is not just that transport companies are becoming more safety conscious about their own operations, it's that clients are demanding that safety comes first as well.

Sam Pantou, 43, is a man dedicated to one thing above all else: safety. He's also one of two directors at Metropolitan Express Transport Services, a fast growing transport company based in Dandenong.

"Four years ago we saw there was a segment of the market crying out for a solid local company which understood the 'Chain of Responsibility' Legislation and provided a safe distribution service with highly professional drivers," Sam said.

"This legislation has really stopped people cutting corners when dealing with safe work practices. A lot of the companies we now work for decided they wanted to go further and wanted to explore new equipment, their procedures, personnel, and training."

The company has gone so far as to create their own specialised forms of load restraint.

"This total commitment to safety has opened a lot of doors but of course we have to perform to a very high standard as well."

Quite rightly, Sam sees the driver as a key part of the safety chain.

"We need and expect our drivers to adopt a total



Safety first - The firm's Todd Aitken keeping an eye on things.

commitment to safe work practices as they are a critical element in delivering a quality service.

"Every driver commits to do everything right, avoid accidents, look after the vehicle, complete all the paper work etc. They are then suitably rewarded.

"It's a simple and clear reward system which really works and helps us retain good drivers."

Another basic strategy is to provide "modern and specifically calibrated vehicles for the task at hand" which are inherently safer and are better for the drivers.

Photography: Gavin Blue  
Delivered by: Whitehorse Truck Centre



“There are a lot of old trucks out there with disgruntled drivers and that’s not good for safety, performance, customer service – anything.”

Trading since 1986, but undergoing a major management change in 1995, Metropolitan Express has more than 150 vehicles working across four main areas - couriers, taxi trucks, construction and warehousing.

**“...THERE ARE NO MORE CUTTING CORNERS AND GIVING THE KEYS TO JUST ANYONE TO DRIVE, THERE IS A SAFETY REQUIREMENT FROM CUSTOMERS AND LEGISLATION FOR A CERTAIN DUTY OF CARE AND THAT’S WHAT WE GIVE THEM.”**

The vehicles range from small courier vans to rigid crane trucks and semi trailer tautliners.

“That’s another safety aspect. We give the client exactly the right vehicle for the job.

“It might be easier to send a five tonne truck to a job but

if it’s only a small load we’ll organise a van. There’s no risk of falling and less risk the load will move.”

A new major contract with Iplex Pipelines Australia has seen the company invest in five new Mercedes-Benz Actros 2644s which are now carrying pipes from Iplex’s manufacturing plant in Albury down to Melbourne and up into NSW.

Buying Benz was a considerable change for Metropolitan which has a history of buying Japanese.

“We certainly did our sums before we purchased the Actros,” said Sam.

“They have better fuel economy, the cabs are more comfortable and of course



Checking and double checking.





safety had a lot to do with it. "When it came to safety features we really couldn't compare because the Mercedes-Benz were so far ahead."

The Actros' come optimised for safety with the Telligent® brake system, ABS, ASR and hill holder as standard, along with a combined drive and braking cruise control, a crash-optimised cab, and flame-retardant materials inside.

Actros options include the Active Brake Assist feature for emergency braking, Telligent® Proximity Control for autonomous cruise control and the lane departure warning system called Telligent® Lane Assistant.

And those all-important

drivers like them as well.

"All the feedback has been exceptional, nothing but really good comments."

So with their presence firmly established in Melbourne, Metropolitan Express is ready to expand into Sydney and Brisbane.

Understandably, Sam can't go into the details of what he describes as "aggressive" expansion, only to say that careful research has identified a number of opportunities.

"We're very proud of what we have been able to do over the past four years, establishing something that's really worthwhile.

"At Metropolitan Express it's the owners who do the deals so we know exactly what is



going on and exactly what has to happen."

Which means if you've got freight in Sydney and Brisbane you might be hearing from Sam pretty soon.

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