

Coal cartage chronicles

In just a little over 20 years, the Daracon Group has developed into a very diverse transport company. In order to carry out heavy duty – and uniquely challenging – coal haulage operations within the Hunter Valley mines, Hamelex White was approached for a custom-built solution.

Formed in 1983, the Daracon Group, which is headed by David Mingay as Managing Director, and his son, Jon, as General Manager, has developed into a truly multi-faceted business. The company is involved in civil engineering, contract crushing, screening and quarrying, heavy haulage, landscaping, plant hire, rail infrastructure, and mining.

It is this last business activity that sees Daracon Coal Services involved in some serious coal haulage in the Hunter Valley where the company hauls coal from the floor of the open-cut pits to the wash plants, and then on-road from the mines to various railheads, where it is railed in bulk to the ship coal loaders at Newcastle.

Mark Lewis from Daracon explains that both the on-road and pit operations call for very different types of equipment.

“For our on-road haulage we operate a fleet of B-Double, tri-tri, side tipping trailers, of which 17 sets are Hamelex White,” says Mark Lewis at Daracon.

Mark says the trailers unload the coal into dump stations, where it is transferred to rail wagons. He adds the decision to go with side tippers was motivated by efficiency and safety, as he believes that they tip faster and are more stable when tipping.

But it is deep down in the open-cut mine pits that a very different transport operation takes place.

Daracon is contracted by a number of coal mines in the Hunter to cart raw coal from the pit floor to washing plants, where it is cleaned for shipping.

This type of haulage calls for very heavy-duty equipment operating in very difficult conditions – the likes of which were encountered when the recent heavy rains throughout the Hunter Valley turned the pits into quagmires.

To shift this coal, Daracon runs a fleet of 13 custom-built trailers all sourced from Hamelex White. Mark explains that the trailers are the result of an extensive co-operative effort involving Daracon and Hamelex White.

“We looked around for the best trailer units and we actually started with 50 tonne end tippers,” Mark says. “They were too small, so we went larger – initially a lot larger – until finally ending up with a custom-designed 70 tonne trailer. Because we were limited to an end tipper design, and required a stable tipping platform, we increased the track dimensions for added safety.”

Another key safety feature is a custom-built electronic device that cuts out the trailer’s PTO if the cross-grade exceeds three degrees.

Mark stresses that Daracon is very safety conscious and that in this regard the company’s tipper fleet boasts some of the best safety innovations going around.

Not only is Mark happy with the finished trailers – “they work a treat, they’re perfect for our open-cut mine operations” – he is very impressed with the collaborative effort from Hamelex White.

“We are a very diverse company and we seek companies like Hamelex White to work with for solutions. Hamelex White has an excellent engineering team and it is people like Noel Bevis who help us with our specific requirements. This has created a strong bond between our companies.”



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