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Nothing Fishy about Freighter's First Fleetsaver Skel

In today's tough economic climate and increasing overseas competition, operators are constantly looking for every possible edge to help their bottom line. When Dillons Transport in Tasmania requested a special skel trailer to be built to help them transport live salmon, they knew Freighter would be able to deliver.

With depots in New Norfolk and Brighton, managing directors Nick and Lorraine Petrascu have operated Dillons Transport for more than 13 years and, using their six Kenworth trucks and various trailers, they transport bulk products and palletised goods on a daily basis across Tasmania.

But it is their work with Tassal Salmon and the cartage of live Atlantic salmon as smolt (baby salmon) that makes this logistics operation truly specialised and uniquely Australian.

With three 'fish' trailers already in operation, Dillons has, for the last three seasons, provided transport services for Tassal that include distributing salmon from Tassal's three hatcheries to six regional sea farms.

For those unfamiliar with the scale of Dillons Transport's work with Tassal, consider these statistics - Tassal requires approximately 6.1 million live fish to be transported per season and each of the Dillons fish trailers can carry a payload of 12,000 to 15,000 live fish per trailer per trip, a task that Dillons Transport shares with other local transport companies.

As such, the demand for Dillons' freight services is significant and both Nick and Lorraine appreciate the potential to grow their fish carting services.

With the partnership now "hooked", the brief from Nick to Freighter's Victorian Account Manager Gerry Casse was simple, *"We need a well priced skel that is no fuss, yet highly durable, versatile and sensitive enough to carry our unique tanks and cargo."*

Never one to shy away from a challenge, Gerry investigated Freighter's vast array of product options and by co-incidence, a new product bulletin issued by Freighter

detailed the release of the Fleetsaver Skel, a trailer of modular design and fixed specification that uses the highest quality components.

The Fleetsaver concept has been developed as a response to operators wanting an Australian-produced trailer that was highly price competitive when compared to imported skel trailers.

The Freighter Fleetsaver Skel concept seemed to fit the bill perfectly for Dillons Transport and their decision to go with the product was cemented when they learnt that the Skel's high quality paint and galvanised components would assist in withstanding rusting from the saltwater that Dillons trailers were subjected to when transporting fish.

With the purchase settled, the challenging task for both Nick and Gerry was to determine how the skel was going to be equipped with six 3,000 litre fibreglass tanks, because, as most involved in the transport industry are aware, skeletal trailers are commonly used for shipping containers only.

While the Fleetsaver Skel is a fixed specification, to help stabilise the tanks on the skel frame, Nick incorporated a customised rectangular base frame that attached to the bottom of the tanks and which sits perfectly in line with the twistlock bolsters. This allows the tanks to be locked into position, providing a safe journey for the salmon.

The trailer has also been equipped with 3 'air systems' to help maintain the quality of salmon during transportation. The first system involves supplying compressed air to help remove any CO² from the tanks, whilst an automatic oxygen supply is controlled through a wireless "in-cab" monitor. There is also a manual oxygen system that is used as a back-up to the automatic system.

The control station located at the rear of the trailer allows drivers to control the flow of the oxygen levels through the six tanks, ensuring there is plenty of oxygen for the salmon during transit between the sea farms and hatcheries.

During its initial months in operation, the Freighter Fleetsaver Skel has proven its worth on all major roads and through the often hilly terrain of Tasmania. It has even journeyed over the water on a barge, all in the name of providing the performance and versatility at a price Nick and his family operation desired.

"I can't speak more highly of the product so far. What may seem to be simply a price competitive product has in fact really added value to the business and its design and durability means we'll get a long life from it," Nick said.

The Fleetsaver Skel's modular construction will also make it easier and faster to maintain and repair if damaged, ensuring minimal downtime for Dillons Transport.

In addition, operators and fleets wanting to place urgent orders for the Fleetsaver Skel will be pleased to hear that because the model is a fixed specification, the delivery times will be much faster.

The lead and tag skels can carry 20ft, 40ft and heavy 20ft containers and of course, all manners of sea creatures.

Additionally, operators will benefit from the comprehensive two-year national warranty offered on the Fleetsaver Skel and can also rely on Freighter's extensive national parts and service dealer network should any needs arise.

Only a Freighter Fleetsaver Skel offers these exceptional benefits at a cost effective capital price.



ABOVE: All in a days work on the high seas delivering fresh salmon!



ABOVE: The Fleetsaver Skel needs to be cleaned with disinfectant to remove excess salt water!



ABOVE: The control station located at the rear of the trailer allows drivers to control the flow the oxygen levels through the six tanks from their cab, ensuring there is plenty of oxygen for the salmon during transit between the sea farms and hatcheries.



ABOVE: A view from above of the tanks.

Note: Images kindly taken and supplied by Sue Streit.

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