

Sleek at the wheel

PACCAR Australia promotes its new DAF range as reaching "a new level of sophistication" in trucks. And when you have to remind yourself, when waiting at a busy intersection, that you're in a 30-tonne truck and not behind the wheel of a fairly plush car, the claim seems to have a lot of merit behind it.

Driving trucks used to be such a tough physical job that only powerful men in dirty blue singlets could cope with it, but the world has changed and the truck with it.

The new DAF model ranges – LF for metropolitan and regional distribution and the medium to heavy CF range – are in the front seat when it comes to the new standard of truck.

Sitting in the cab of a CF85, supplied for a trial run by Western Australian dealer Kenworth DAF, the roomy interior design, multi-function steering wheel, easily grouped controls, automatic (actually, automated manual) transmission, cruise control and general air of modern comfort make it feel very much like a premium passenger car.

There's even the quirky touch that is so commonly found in European vehicles that it sometimes seems they do it just to be different

– in this case, the hand brake control is a dashboard switch. Given the car-like surroundings, if you ignore the roomy sleeper cab, it takes a conscious effort to remember first time up not to plant the boot and spring into the first half gap in the oncoming traffic. This is a serious piece of transport equipment.

The flagship CF85 trucks come as 6x4 or 8x4 rigs and 4x2 or 6x4 prime movers with the capacity to handle heavy-duty distribution up to 30t gross vehicle mass and 70t combination mass.

The new 12.9-litre PACCAR MX engine is a compact six cylinder with four valves per cylinder, and comes in 360hp, 410hp and 460hp variants, delivering flat torque of 1775 Newton metres, 2000Nm and 2300Nm respectively. The standard 12-speed AS-Tronic transmission can be substituted with an Eaton Roadranger 18-speed manual.

The CF is also available in a wide selection of axle configurations, wheelbases and specifications, as well as day, sleeper and space cab variations. The multi-functional, flat-topped chassis is body-builder friendly, providing a solid foundation for every application.

While the DAF brand name is deservedly

growing in popularity as a highway hauler, the dealers see considerable potential also for the new models in the construction sector, as concrete agitator trucks and especially in local government.

In these sectors, the person who gets behind the wheel of the truck is not always a full-time driver. That's where the instantly familiar driving position and ease of operation make the DAF a safer and more productive workhorse.

There's one thing that does remind everyone that you're in a truck. Even with the AS-Tronic transmission, deceleration evokes the oh-so-familiar surge and fall of noise as the engine works down through the gears. It's so distinctive that, like the exhaust note of a Harley-Davidson, there's the suspicion it has been deliberately engineered to sound that way.

Contractor's chance to ride the CF85 was arranged by David Ashby, who has recently taken on the role of sales and marketing manager for Kenworth DAF WA after 27 years in leadership roles with Iveco and Mitsubishi dealer Skipper Trucks. John Corderoy, another doyen of the new truck industry, is now product manager for Kenworth trucks in WA and Tasmania. – **John Feary**

No singlet required: the DAF FAT CF85.

