

THE MODERN PLAYER

WORDS, IMAGES, AND VIDEO BY LYNSAY WHITTLE

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The new-look chrome grille gives the truck a sharp edge

Smarter, safer, and with more power, the new Hino 500 Series promises—and delivers—a host of new features. Lyndsay Whittle takes it for a spin around Auckland.

Twenty years ago, if the design engineers at any self-respecting motor manufacturing company suggested to management that they intended to design and build a smaller engine in order to gain extra torque and horsepower, they'd probably have been pointed in the direction of the front door. But that's exactly what the team at Hino has managed to achieve.

When I arrived at Hino headquarters in Penrose, I was a little sceptical about the company's claims that the ground-up designed four-cylinder engine would out-perform the 2009 500 Series FD Hino I'd driven down to Taupo (#DOW 274) and back a couple of years ago.

The Hino I'd used on the Taupo excursion was fitted with a six-cylinder turbocharged powerplant, which poked out 240hp and was hooked up to a six-speed manual gearbox.

I was impressed with the truck's performance, especially given that it wasn't fitted with an air deflector and it was ploughing into a strong headwind on the return trip to Auckland.

One of the things I particularly remember about my nearly 700km day behind the wheel was that I had to keep a constant watch on the speedometer to make sure I wasn't going over the limit.

First impressions

With happy memories of driving the 2009 FD, great expectations were being placed on the 2019 FE model I was about to spend the better part of the day in, driving around Auckland city business districts and into the outer suburbs.

While it's fair to say that upon first glance, the 2019 version doesn't look a lot different from earlier models, save a chrome grille, larger electrically-operated rear vision mirrors, and a kerb view mirror. Although, upgrading to alloy wheels does give the new Hino a much sharper detail than that of its predecessors.

The latest incarnation is also packed with safety features that would have been the exclusive domain of luxury cars of just two or three years ago.

There are so many features fitted to the latest Hino 500 Series models that one should be given a short briefing before taking to the road.

For instance, with my only previous experience of driving a truck fitted with adaptive cruise control being restricted to a few laps of the Hampton Downs race track some months ago, I have to admit to harbouring a bit of doubt as to whether it was going to completely do its job should the car travelling in front of me on a busy inner-city roadway suddenly stop.



A smart-looking truck on and off the road



“ It sure had been a pleasurable experience driving around the city in a luxurious, air-conditioned cab ”



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Hino FE1426

GCM	21,000kg
Engine	Hino AO5C
Power	191kW(260hp) @2300rpm
Torque	882Nm
Emission	Euro6 equivalent DPR & SCR
Transmission	Hino MX07 7-speed (AMT available)

Maybe I'm a slow learner, but for me, I would've liked to have had another day or two on the road with the truck before I'd have been completely at ease with the system, in spite of the on-dash digital readout that counted down the distance in metres between the truck and the preceding vehicle.

Anyway, I'd promised Hino Distributors sales engineer, Aaron Thompson that I'd have the truck safely back to him later the same day, so time was of the essence and I certainly had a lot of features that needed to be checked out.

On the road

Wider footwells and extra-large grab handles are fitted to all-new 500 Series Hino trucks, making entry and exit to the cab particularly easy. Night-time use is also well catered for with courtesy lights fitted to the underside of the driver and passenger doors.

Out on the road, the AMT transmission fitted to the test truck changed up quickly through the complete range of the six speeds available. It actually gave the appearance of happening too quickly, however, I simply had to trust that the truck's computer knew more about the engine's rev range than I did.

However, for the benefit of those drivers like me who are 'of a certain age', there is a stalk fitted to the left-hand side of the steering column, which caters for the needs of those who want to change up and down or just want to hold it in a lower gear a bit longer than the computing package believes it should.

While on the subject of age-related driving habits, for the first 50km or so, I found it somewhat disconcerting that the truck's AMT transmission is selected by means of a dial, which is mounted on the dash as opposed to a lever in the centre console. This lack of somewhere to rest my left hand gave me no option but to place it on the steering wheel where it should have been in the first place; it appears that the people at Hino have thought

of everything. A short stint up a narrow road with low-hanging branches gave the lane departure warning system a bit of a workout, as I judiciously avoided hitting the greenery with the box body fitted to the truck, a stark reminder of just how narrow some Auckland roads are.

Safety features

Hino staff talk a lot about the "passive and active" standard safety features of the 2019 500 Series range.

These 'passive' features are the ones that are there for our protection, the ones we hope we'll never need.

The safety features I'm talking about are side-intrusion bars on both sides of the cab, airbags on the driver's side, an integrated driver's seatbelt, daytime driving lights, and FUPS (front underrun protection system).

One of the two final 'active' safety features not previously mentioned was stability control, which, of course, wasn't tested on the day, although, I had previously had the experience of trying it out under controlled conditions in a smaller 300 Series Hino on a wet skid pan. The other feature is avoidance control.

Transmission

All 2019 500 Series Hino trucks are available in six-speed manual or AMT



Smart-looking seats both sides with loads of adjustments on the driver's seat plus luxurious in-cab features make the truck a true pleasure to drive



gearboxes and can also be supplied with Allison automatic transmissions.

Suspension options are either steel leaf spring or air, offering a multitude of options to suit many different applications when combined with the three different transmissions available.

The 1426 FE engine

The 260hp four-cylinder turbocharged overhead camshaft engine is compliant to pPNLT standard, which is the equivalent of Euro 6 and is achieved by employing EGR and SCR. The AdBlue tank is located on the left-hand chassis rail and has a manual sight glass on the tank as well as a gauge in the dash cluster.

A power and torque chart, along with other specifications are available online for the benefit of the technically-minded who may as I did, doubt that a smaller four-cylinder engine could produce the goods.

If I had any complaint at all with the smaller engine, it was that it sounded a bit noisy when standing alongside the truck at idle, however, this wasn't a problem inside the cab.

A quick note: A 240hp engine is fitted to all 1424 FC and FD models (the last two digits of the designations signify the horsepower rating).

Verdict

Having delivered the truck back to the Hino base I wished that I could have had more time to acquaint myself better with the vehicle and its many safety and comfort features, as it sure had been a pleasurable experience driving around the city in a luxurious, air-conditioned cab on a hot and sticky summer's day.

But if don't want to take my word for it, do as the Hino brochure says—"Take it for a run". ■

For more information, call 0800 367 446 or visit hino.co.nz/new.



- A host of safety features previously only available on luxury cars
- Easy access in and out of the cab
- Well-laid-out dash
- Up-to-the-minute podium and trim
- AdBlue sight glass on tank as well as dash gauge



- Four-cylinder engine a little noisy at idle (outside of cab only)