



# A new VIEW

Three weeks into the job as Hino's new GM, *Deals on Wheels* catches up with Michael Doeg to see how things are progressing.

WORDS BY EDITOR • IMAGES BY EDITOR & SUPPLIED



Michael Doeg

It certainly came as a shock to a lot of those in the transport industry when it was heard that Michael Doeg had made the move across from his role of sales and marketing manager at Isuzu NZ, to the general manager position at Hino NZ.

My first inkling that something was up started when an email bounced back, followed by a generic message when I tried his cellphone. As I had a social beer booked with Doeg for the following week, the hope was high that he hadn't been run over by a Queen St tractor; or on impulse had decided to throw on some sandals and join an ashram in India.

Upon contacting his boss though, I quickly found out that he had made a major career move and, as they do these days, was immediately placed on 'gardening leave' once Isuzu was informed that he was moving on. Respecting both companies though, my 'breaking news' story was left until an official announcement was made.

The previous general manager Ray Roberts, who was well-respected both within the industry and the business, moved on in late February 2016. Since then Chris Brown, general manager of Sime Darby Commercial (Hino's parent company), was caretaking the role until Doeg took up residence.

Once he'd had some time to get his feet under the desk, I caught up with Doeg to see how things were faring. It appeared however that he hadn't been spending all that much time in one place, just yet.

"This is week three; and it's been a bit of a whirlwind around the country, but I thought it was important from my perspective to get in front of everybody in the business and understand where their headspace was at; so that's pretty much been 95 percent of the last two weeks," says Doeg.

Being part of the whole process from beginning to end was one of the deciding factors for Doeg to join forces with the Hino brand.

"It's obviously a big thing to jump from one top brand to another in the same industry, and it's important to me that I don't come here with people expecting me to want to recreate Isuzu," he says.

So while the Hino business may feel it has scored something of a coup by enticing Doeg away from his previous employer, both companies operate in quite different ways; this being something that the new general manager will no doubt quickly come to grips with.

"Obviously, the end user plays in the same market, but we had a different methodology at Isuzu than we have at Hino," says Doeg.

"Isuzu was the distributor and it had a dealer network, which in some cases can bring an insulation layer between the distributor and the customer, but at Isuzu they work very well with the dealer network to provide service to the customer.

"The main difference with Hino is that we are the distributor, we are the retailer, and we are the service provider via our Truck Stops organisation.

"So as a business everybody is very close to the customer – not only the salespeople, but everyone from me, right along the whole line."

Doeg is the first to admit that getting his head around the scope of the business will be the most interesting challenge as he brings a different skill set to the business from his predecessor.

"Most of my past experience over the last 20 years has been in passenger vehicles, and I've only been in heavy trucks for the past two years, so interactions with our customers is very important to me as it increases my knowledge of what they want and what the transport industry in general requires," says Doeg.

With a high degree of experience and competency already well established within the business in those areas, Doeg sees his job as supporting the structures that are already in place.

Some of the key drivers for the business as it moves forward appear to be selling as many trucks as possible and getting the product range closer to what customers want in an effort to increase Hino's marketshare.

"It's no secret that we can improve our performance in the heavy 700 Series, and over the past couple of months we've seen some really good results for the smaller 300 Series," says Doeg.

"I think our industry is realising that there are buyers out there that aren't traditional truck buyers, so there is also a move to capture those customers in the light truck market."

The most obvious gap for Hino at this stage appears to be a 4x4 truck, which puts it on the back foot with competing brands. Doeg is a little cagey at what Hino's views around this are, however one would say that there is an expectation for this space to be seriously looked at by the business.

"It's probably fair to say that there are some areas in the market where we don't have an offering and we're continually working with Japan to see if there's something we can provide to our customers here," he says.

The utilisation of local manufacturing is also high on Doeg's list of priorities.

"One of the big strengths I see with Hino is our local engineering capability within the business, such as our Mod Centre, which is run out of Palmerston North."

Doeg says that the business has a strong technical ability and quality skilled tradespeople to provide in-depth engineering solutions to meet customer requirements.

As I see it, the learning curve will be steep, but something that a number of transport industry commentators I regularly speak to see as easily within the new general manager's capabilities.

"It's great being back in a showroom," says Doeg as we stroll across Hino Auckland's spacious premises. A lot of responsibility sits on the shoulders of Hino's new GM, but I have a feeling it's going to work out just fine. ■

