



TREVOR DICKSON

My career of choice

into field representative positions where I was dealing directly with dealers and end users. This was a truly steep learning curve but the support I gained from everyone I dealt with was humbling. You often hear the term 'salt of the earth' and that is never truer than dealing with people in road transport. Even customers were more than ready to take me under their wings and show me what they were up to so I could better support their needs. They would think nothing of taking time out from their unbelievably busy days to show me around their operations, explaining along the way what they had done, and how they had gotten to their individual levels of success. And the opportunities kept coming.

I have started complete, new departments, led major projects and even been involved in introducing new legislation. I have had an amazing career. Now you might think this article is all about me, and some folk who know me would not be surprised at that. However, the real point is that my story is far from unique. If you look at the careers available in road transport and what people have achieved, often at quite young ages, this is an industry that offers opportunities like few others. But here is the truly sad part. I often interview graduates looking to join our graduate programs and one of the questions I ask is why they wanted to join the transport industry. So often the answer is either "because we have no car industry anymore", or sometimes, "I was told by my lecturer that you guys have a really good graduate program". It seems that we are a world's best kept secret. Instead of being a career of choice, we are hidden in the background and found almost by luck. At the same time, I look at the opportunities my employer has given young engineers. Where else would

a young person, only a few years out of university get the opportunity to lead a new model introduction? And does any other industry have a mentoring program for 'future leaders' as one of our competitors offers? And what about technology. How many industries have world leading programs like PBS? I am sure the sought-after positions in the car industry did not offer that kind of innovation. Let's not forget that trucks are like big Meccano® sets, frequently being upgraded as the task or legislation evolves. The everchanging dynamics of road transport mean that there is always a chance to do something new. This includes retrofit programs to upgrade existing vehicles to the latest safety technology. Keeping the fleet up to date is as much a part of innovation as building new trucks and trailers. Don't think I am only referring to the obvious jobs, like mechanics, drivers, engineers, and sales people. The road transport industry is one of Australia's biggest employers and amongst its members are some of Australia's biggest companies. Even the smaller ones can be multimillion dollar companies with huge assets on the books. This means fantastic opportunities for accountants, human resources, marketing, OHS, IT and other 'back office' professionals. Road transport companies are led by incredibly dynamic and passionate people who have grown their businesses to incredible levels by providing great service and innovative solutions and offer real opportunities to the best and brightest in ways that few other industries can. All we need to do is get the word out.

Having said all this, I will admit that, in the rural zone, truck companies do already stand out. It is mostly in the big smoke that we tend to get 'lost' in the general noise. In that environment,

young professionals are unlikely to thinking of jobs in transport. They have their eyes on 'more glamorous' roles in more 'mainstream' industries, never realising what they are missing out on. I don't know how we do it, but it is about time we made more noise. With the growth projected for goods to be transported, and the fact that you can't offshore transport to a low-cost country, we should be a prime choice. Come on guys, what about it? Let's hit the career expos, get right into the ears of career advisors and keep pushing the TAFEs to offer truck specific courses (especially Parts Interpreters – closest to my heart). And what about an alternate fuel truck project or trailer aerodynamics, instead

of Formula SAE or building rockets? After all trucks are not just big scary road hogs. They are actually pretty cool. And, finally, back to me.

In 2018, at the Australian Trucking Associations Technology and Maintenance Conference, the keynote speaker was Matt Hall, RAAF flying ace and genuine Top Gun. He walked us through his amazing career flying jets for the RAAF and also on loan to the USAF during Desert Storm. Eventually he moved on to civilian life with the Red Bull series winning the world championship. What an incredible achievement. He said he had the best job in the world. During his talk he encouraged us not to settle for

ordinary and, while I could see where he was coming from, he did have a pretty unique career, I also felt a little offended. I loved my job, still do, and even now, in my early 60s, I cannot even imagine retirement. And why would I? Every working day, I get to work in an incredible 'family' and still have opportunities to achieve and make my mark. I can't even remember the last time I was bored. And on that last point, I know I am not alone. It is time to share. We offer the 'Career of Choice!'

Trevor Dickson,
ARTSA Life Member



Road transport now offers massive opportunities to back office professionals.