



SET IN CONCRETE

Raso Western Star 4700 is powered by 8.9 litre Cummins ISLe5 rated at 340 hp

Frank Raso knows a bit about concrete. His father Pal started working for Boral in Melbourne with an agitator in the early 1960s and Frank himself bought his first agitator nearly 30 years ago.

Today, Raso runs a fleet of agitators and tippers in Boral colours in metropolitan Melbourne, with Mack, Kenworth, Western Star and Iveco ACCO represented in his operation.

The latest additions to his agitator fleet are four 8x4 Western Star 4700s, the first of which was put into service over two years ago. All have 8.9-litre Cummins ISLe5 engines rated at 340 hp driving through six-speed Allison automatics. They are also equipped with Raso's preferred agitator barrels, 7.6 cubic metre units made by A & A Di Medio.

"I wasn't interested in Western Star to begin with," Frank Raso confides. "However, when we ordered another brand of truck and it arrived fitted with only half of what we wanted on it, we decided to look elsewhere."

Melbourne Western Star dealer Westar convinced Raso that the 4700 had the attributes he was looking for – at a competitive price – and the deal was done.

Excellent record for reliability.

The 4700 with its angular profile is a robust looking truck, an observation that has proved to be well founded in the Raso operation where the 8x4 Western Stars have notched up an excellent track record for reliability.

"Other than for normal servicing, they're a truck we just don't see in the workshop," says Raso. "The camber was wrong on our first 4700 but that was sorted out pretty quickly. I'd have to say that Westar's aftersales service is second to none."

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Driver feedback is also positive. “There’s a lot of space in the cab and very good visibility. The interior is purely functional without any bling but I’d rather spend money on safety items rather than bling,” he says, noting his trucks are fitted with kerb side and rear view cameras.

High regard for Cummins.

Frank Raso has developed a high regard for the Cummins brand over the years, describing the engines as “robust platforms”. “In all the years I’ve been associated with Cummins we haven’t had a major issue,” he says.

He regards engine oil change intervals as critical to reliability and long engine life. “We change our engine oil and filters every 350 to 400 hours,” he points out. Cummins’ recommended intervals for the ISLe5 are 500 hours.

He has also invested in Cummins Insite software for fault code and system diagnostics, trip and vehicle information, and parameter adjustment.

While the ISLe5 can be rated up to 400 hp with peak torque of 1255 lb ft, Frank Raso has selected the 340 hp/1105 lb ft rating and says there are no question marks over performance running at 28.5 tonnes gross weight. A Jake Brake is also fitted on the ISLe5, a feature welcomed by Raso and his drivers.

The ISLe5 uses SCR exhaust aftertreatment for Euro 5 emissions compliance, and the Raso units are consuming AdBlue at a rate that matches Cummins’ claims of lower AdBlue consumption than competitor products.

Frank Raso’s son Paul obviously has the concrete industry in his blood, too.

Paul runs his own company, Pro Barrel Services, that’s involved in de-dagging – the industry term describing the removal of accumulated dried concrete from the inside of an agitator barrel.

He points out he has removed up to four tonnes of dried concrete from barrels which obviously has a major impact on payload capacity.

Paul Raso’s operation has a strong focus on safety and is based at his father’s depot in Clayton South. ■