



More models and higher local content for Volvo

New assembly plant in Queensland begins producing truck and bus chassis

By A STAFF WRITER

The decision by Volvo Australia Pty. Ltd. to set up a \$2 million commercial vehicle assembly plant at Wacol, 14 miles from Brisbane, has several significant aspects:

- It is the second largest Volvo truck and bus assembly plant to be built outside Sweden.
- It will be a jumping-off point for exports to New Zealand, New Guinea and the Pacific Islands.
- It will nearly treble the number of Australian-adapted models which operators can choose from.

The new assembly plant is on an 18-acre site formerly occupied by British Leyland. The premises have been extended; the production facilities have been designed as a smaller version of the parent plant in Gothenburg, Sweden; and it has been fitted with equipment which can handle an initial production rate of 600 vehicles a year, stepping up later to 1000 units on a single-shift basis.

The establishment of the plant and the development of the new range is the work of many minds. Principal among them are Max Winkless, general manager of Volvo Australia, and Allan Denning, truck factory manager

and founder of the Brisbane body-building firm of A. B. Denning & Co. The truck engineering design centre, first of its kind outside Sweden, is headed by Les Carey, formerly of BMC's design and test department of Zetland, NSW.

More local content

One of the immediate results of Volvo's decision to set up production facilities in Australia has been an increase in the number of truck models from 5 to 14. The new models offer a variety of options such as spider wheels, pusher axles, twin steering, tri-axles, etc. There has been a considerable increase in local content—in some cases, it is as high as 50%—and some models have been made lighter while others have been 'beefed up' to cover a wide operational spectrum, ranging through bulk liquid cartage, line haul, etc., to road train and off-highway dump truck work. Some have been specifically designed to meet axle groupings and length requirements of various States to enable operators to take advantage of maximum allowances.

Under the 'Australianising' program, the Volvo cab which is noted for crash-resistance features in its design

will retain its Swedish standard. The cab is now being assembled here from imported pressings; as more local material is incorporated in it, the construction will not depart from the structural standards laid down by the parent design office.

There are now seven models available in the F86 series, and seven G88s, ranging from two-axle through three- and four-axle types.

Although the plant is not geared for one-off custom-built vehicles, it is possible for an operator or a particular industry requiring a particular type of vehicle in some volume (say, 20 units) to have it designed at Wacol and then put through as a 'run' on the assembly line.

In buses, the B57 and B58 will be the principal models produced for the time being, modified to meet Australian requirements. There is no indication at this stage as to when the B59 will go into production.

In addition to what is currently available, an extra-light G88 6 x 4 is being developed, with eyes on oil industry requirements. It will have aluminium rocker beams and numerous other aluminium components.

At the other end of the scale there is to be an off-highway G88 6 x 4 in the 57,300 lb. GVW/120,000 lb. GCW



FIRST twin-steer Volvo model in the world is the Queensland-produced F86 8 x 4 (left), of which 15 have been ordered by Brambles. Australian content is 50%; front wheels, chassis frame rails, rear bogie and suspension as well as the braking equipment, fuel tank, etc., come from local suppliers.

ROAD TRAIN make-up for a G88 6 x 4 (below) feature a Haulmark spread tandem 36 ft. semi plus an 8-wheel 36 ft. dog trailer. This prime mover, part of the display at the opening of Volvo's Wacol (Qld.) factory last month, had a heavy duty rear axle, Hendrickson suspension, 16-speed transmission.

category. Two prototypes are currently being evaluated in West Australia and another in New Guinea.

On display.

At the official opening of the Wacol plant last month, there was a representative display of current models.

Highlights were:

- An F86 twin-steer 8 x 4 with considerable Australian content, including chassis rails produced by Commonwealth Engineering, spider wheels cast by a Brisbane firm, Hendrickson suspension, Rockwell rear axles, Volvo front axles, Westinghouse brake control system serving Westinghouse equipment on the front and Stopmaster on the rear, with parking brakes fitted to both drive axles. This model is being produced in two wheelbases—20' 1" and 22' 1"—extremes—to meet the legal maxima in NSW and Victoria respectively. This unit weighs 6 tons 11 cwt. but design mods. now being studied may reduce this by up to 10 cwt.

- A G88-35 (the '35' refers to the 3500 mm. wheelbase) 6 x 4 with Rockwell SQHD bogie and Hendrickson RT340 suspension coupled to a Fruehauf 7000-gallon aluminium tanker. Approximately half a ton has been carved from the original weight of this model. It is also fitted with Brisbane-made spoke wheels.

- Standard and 'Australianised' versions of the G88 6 x 4 both of them featuring an optional 8- or 16-speed transmission but the imported model having Volvo heavy duty rear axles, power divider and lockout plus diff locks, and the local 'lightweight highway' concept with Hendrickson RT340 suspension and Rockwell SQHD axle and American-style spoke wheels.

- G88s in 6 x 2 configuration with choice of Volvo trailing axle (with optional air lift equipment) or with BPW pusher axle.

- A lightweight F86 6 x 4 for Sattell & Son, Currumbin, equipped with Hendrickson RT340 suspension, Rockwell SQHD bogie drive, and spoke wheels. At 5 tons 13 cwt. it is approximately half a ton lighter than earlier models. Of this, approximately 130 lb. has been saved by fitting locally-made spoke wheels.

The first two trucks to come off the assembly line on the opening day was one of six F86s for TNT Queensland, and a G88 for the Northern Rivers County Council, Grafton, NSW. ■



PRIOR to delivery to the well-known Grafton, NSW, hauliers Cromack Tranter, this G88 4 x 2 (above) went on display at Volvo's new assembly plant. BUS CHASSIS production at Wacol is confined to the B58 (below) and the B57 at the moment. The heavy duty B59 will come later. The model shown has 185 bhp normally-aspirated engine and electro-pneumatic transmission.

