

 **HBS** PARTNERS  
IN PROGRESS



HBS recognised the need for a heavy-duty 6x6 tipper configuration for its operations in Papua New Guinea (PNG). Immediately after establishing HBS, the company became heavily engaged in the Harmony Goldfield Project at Hidden Valley in the Wau region.

Historically, PNG's primary source of trucking capacity has been reliant on traditional Japanese brands, with limited exposure to European and American brands. After extensive research and brand comparisons, HBS decided to travel to Italy to explore the Astra range of products and configuration options.

What quickly became evident was that the Astra range was designed from the ground up as a heavy-duty off-road prime mover. The chassis load capacity of Astra trucks is at least 8 tonnes heavier than all common European, American, and Japanese trucks. The model selected was the Astra HD8, equipped with a 440 hp Cursor engine and the Astronic automatic transmission.



Once HBS committed to the Astra brand and the conceived specifications, an immediate challenge arose: identifying someone to manage product support, technical support, and maintenance for the brand. After an extensive series of interviews, HBS appointed Steve Draper as the Product Support and Technical Manager for the Astra brand.

As the Hidden Valley mine rapidly advanced, the HBS fleet expanded significantly, and within two years, the company was operating a fleet of over 50 units. Due to a complex downhill conveyor system developed for the mine and continuous delays, it became necessary for the mine to engage HBS to supply over 38 tipper units operating 24/7 under very challenging conditions. This included a roughly 8km fully loaded downhill haul, with a maximum grade exceeding 20% at one point and two wet crossings.

The first 20 Astra trucks are hauling a 56-tonne payload in Hidden Valley, tackling a 25 percent gradient.



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# ASTRA



In 2016, HBS was given a similarly challenging downhaul at the Simberi operations. We then upgraded to a larger tipper, the HDD9, which featured an even larger payload capacity and an upgraded engine delivering 485 hp, now standard across all units in our fleet.

Due to the successful completion of the contract and a general reduction in work, Steve left HBS to join TWL in a similar role. To date, HBS has become the 10th largest customer of the Astra Group, with over 600 units in operation.

**Furthermore, we are proud to be the largest distributor in the Australia/New Zealand and Pacific markets.**

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Steve Draper was heavily involved in all aspects of this operation, including driver training and maintenance issues. A standout aspect of the training was that drivers learned to operate the trucks at full capacity while relying primarily on the exceptional engine braking capacity of the Cursor 13-litre engine, a market leader in performance, coupled with the 12-speed Astronic automatic gearbox, which allowed drivers to maintain safe travel speeds during the descent without exposure to brake overheating. During this period, Steve identified several issues and made numerous recommendations to the Astra technical team. Over the years, many of these minor adjustments have been fully adopted into the design of all future units produced at the factory, with no less than 15 recommendations incorporated into the Astra product line.



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# TRANSWONDERLAND

## Operational Challenges

TWL operates in some of the most challenging environments globally, facing not only severely testing road conditions but also significant social challenges, including law and order issues and safety concerns. These factors create unique challenges, particularly in managing a large shareholder base while ensuring operational efficiency.

In light of these hurdles, the TWL team has united to become a beacon of excellence in the road haulage industry, focusing on business development and a steadfast commitment to shareholder interests over personal agendas.



### Left to Right:

Angelo Andajja (GM TWL),  
Andrew Fury (Group COO TWL),  
Stephen Draper (National Workshop Manager TWL),  
with Aaron Smith, former HBS representative in Astra  
Factory, Italy

## First Chapter: Transition to the Astra Brand

As the PNG LNG projects progressed, major contracts were awarded to various overseas contractors, and TWL became heavily involved in the haulage sector. HBS was approached to evaluate how our trucks compared in the local market and how they could handle major off road conditions.

Initially, the specifications for the trucks requested by TWL excluded automatic transmissions and other key features of the Astra brand, which posed a challenge for the Astra brand. It became clear that

unless potential clients understood the true capabilities of the Astra brand, we would encounter significant difficulties in sales.

At this point, HBS was deeply engaged at the Hidden Valley mine, which was grappling with severe transportation issues. A major flooding event had drastically impacted road conditions at Mutzing, particularly affecting site access roads that were poorly constructed. Fully laden trucks were expected to navigate a particularly narrow section of road with a steep 25% grade.

Most trucks traversing this segment required towing assistance, and at various stages, the mine owner enlisted HVC (HBS Joint Venture with the landowner company) to provide machinery support. This included wheel loaders, graders, a log skidder, and eventually, a modified Astra Prime Mover to assist trucks through this challenging area.

Most trucks had a load restriction of 20 tons, but we arranged for an Astra Prime Mover to travel this road with a 30-tonne payload. A representative from TWL rode along in the prime mover, while another team member monitored the most difficult section from the ground.

During this test trip, the Astra was the only prime mover to successfully negotiate the challenging section without assistance. The ground crew observed that the Astra exhibited reduced wheel spinning due

# ND (TWL) and HBS



Few roads in the world test trucks like those in PNG. TWL and HBS knew this better than anyone. That's why, when Astra arrived, it had to prove itself where so many others had failed.

to its hub reduction, and the transmission was consistently in the optimal range. The performance also demonstrated that the truck could achieve maximum torque at one of the lowest engine speeds available on the market.

Upon returning to Lae, the team promptly concluded that manual transmissions were not a viable option for their operations and committed to ordering 20 units of the HD8 with Astronic Transmissions.

TWL's ingenuity is also showcased in its Toyota 6x6 adaptation HBS is dedicated to providing comprehensive assistance with spare parts consignments across various locations, and we are equally committed to supporting fleet management, especially after major accidents causing component failures. Our partnership with TWL has flourished for nearly 15 years, and we are eager to see it continue well into the future.

**We have great respect for TWL's achievements throughout the years, and the overall condition of their facilities, encompassing loading and operational areas, demonstrates a steadfast commitment to maintaining high standards that are often rare in PNG.**

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Over the years, TWL has operated a diverse fleet under challenging conditions but has consistently recognised Astra as the most successful unit when the going gets tough.

Steve Draper has made several trips to the factory to address performance issues directly with the manufacturer. During one of these visits, he finalised the specifications for an Astra-based recovery unit, which has since been put into service. With over 10 years of operation, the unit continues to perform strongly.

In 2023, Larry, Angelo, and Steve embarked on a trip to the factory in Italy to witness first-hand the production processes of the trucks.

Since placing their initial order, TWL has significantly increased its commitments for additional trucks. In fact, TWL's orders now surpass our own usage of the Astra product line.

Co-engineered by TWL and HBS, this fuel truck is designed for ultimate versatility. Built on the Astra HD9 66.48 (6x6) chassis, its modular design allows it to be taken apart like LEGO, seamlessly converting into a flatbed or a 20ft container carrier. This innovation makes it truly one-of-a-kind in PNG.



TWL Multipurpose Service Truck



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