

PICKING UP

For Membrey Transport and Crane Hire there's nothing better than a challenge.

We live in interesting times as far as industry is concerned, and in the crane business it seems almost impossible to predict the ups-and-downs (no pun intended) of what may-or-may-not be required either on a month-to-month or even weekly basis.

Just when you might think you have your fleet movements worked out in advance a sudden accident on the highway or a building collapse in the city can result in literally everybody calling for help and assistance. But, if you've got the right equipment you become the first point of contact when others need someone else to get them out of a predicament.

This was almost exactly the case recently when a transport of propellers used by massive wind generators went wrong on the Hume Highway near the twin Shell service stations at Sutton Forest, 90-minutes south of Sydney.

Two propellers had been loaded within a gantry-style carrier fabricated from steel and which formed the basis of the support for the blades, which were then fitted with a bogie front and back, and then towed down the highway.

For whatever reason the structure of the gantry was insufficient to support the propeller blades while in transit and with a distinct bend happening in the centre of the gantry, the crew transporting the blades sought rapid shelter in a lay-by before the bend increased and the load decided to settle on the main southbound carriageway.

It's one thing to avoid an unfortunate incident but it's another thing entirely when you need to find a rapid solution that can restore the load back to a fully perfect horizontal position and complete its transportation safely to its destination.

Specialising in heavy haulage and exceptional loads means having the right equipment for any eventuality. Crane hire is a major part of the Membrey service (on right). The truck wash on site at Dandenong is available for allcomers (on right).



It's at times such as these that Craig Membrey of Membrey's Transport and Crane Hire gets a phone call.

Based in Dandenong, Craig Membrey has invested heavily in having the right equipment to do almost any job. And solving the problem of how to restore the status quo for two turbine blades was just a typical challenge.

There's nothing under-length about two turbine blades and although they look to be a fair size when mounted on the tower they appear a lot longer when lying on the ground.

Fortunately for the authorities trying to find a solution to their immediate problem, Craig Membrey was able to dispatch an extendible trailer that easily could match the length requirements of even the longest turbine blade. On location within a matter of hours, the next day involved a mobile crane lifting the blades out of the now bent cradle that had been their home and relocating them onto the purpose-built extendible trailer.

And with the right equipment in place, solving the problem and delivering the blades to their destination was only a matter of time.

"A lot of our jobs are unusual," said Craig Membrey. "The trick is to have the right gear and that simplifies everything. Unfortunately there may not be a call for its use each week or each month but by having that ability to specialise you find

that customers come to you first. It's a lot easier to do the job right from the outset rather than have someone cut corners and then find you've got to fix a problem that develops along the way," he added.

In and around the Membrey yard at Dandenong, on the outskirts of Melbourne, you'll find cranes and trailers of a wide variety of designs. Mini cranes, Frannas, mobile cranes rated for lifts that range between 500 kgs and 300 tonnes, fork-lifts that can cope with anything from a single pallet to a 50-tonne container and of course a full array of trays, skeletal container trailers, sideloaders and semi-trailers.



"I've always loved cranes, ever since I was a boy and my dad was into trucks. The business just gets more interesting every year and with new designs of trailers that extend or are modular and can be built up or decreased in length or width the solutions become more inventive," he said.

"The requirement for an extendible trailer to solve the problem of the wind generator blades is a good case in point. You can't just go out and buy a trailer off the shelf that will do the job. You have to plan, design and work with the trailer builders to find the right solution. Then you have to be prepared to keep that investment sitting still in your yard until it's needed," he added.



The Membrey display at the recent Tooradin truck show and tractor pull (above).
Pride of the fleet is the latest Drake 10-line platform trailer (below).



"There is a degree of versatility built in to the latest designs that previous operators could never have achieved with the older designs," said Craig.

"We have a selection of 18 prime movers and can supply trailers that range from a standard semi-trailer to an extendible float or a ten-line platform. Drake Trailers supply most of our equipment at the heavy end of the spectrum and it's our belief they make the finest trailers in the world," he added.

"We started back in 1962 and recently moved into our new premises here Dandenong. This was originally a Linfox facility and we have continued to upgrade the premises and equipment to give us a state-of-the-art service and maintenance facility."

"We have also created a modern two-line truck wash which is available for use by any truck operator. This is now operating full-time and is a great advantage to our own operation when it comes to keeping our own equipment presented in top condition.

"The future of our business lies in being able to solve other people's problems. It's something we do very well," he added. 

