

# Hornery family tragedy inspires generous scheme

**T**he story of the Hornery family unfolds as one of the great Australian examples of hard work, resilience, courage and inspired innovation in the face of adversity. Geoffrey Hornery, known only as Percy, was one of six children of Lock and Ruby Hornery. The family left Parkes, NSW, in 1960 as farmers taking up 810ha (2000ac) of share farming south of Emerald. In the off season Percy worked as a shearer and wool pressing in shearing sheds or any other job to 'make quid'

In 1970 he drew a brigalow block, part of the scheme to develop the vast areas of Brigalow scrub in Queensland. Percy and Sandra settled on their 5062ha block which they named "Derranloc" after their children, Derran, Randall and Lachlan. Que, the baby that came later, missed out on the naming ceremony.

In this first development stage they built a three bay, corrugated iron shed with no lining or insulation, no rural power and no phone. Sandra taught the children using correspondence with aid of a governess and Percy had to source employment with contractors etc, to put food on the table.

In 1990 after successfully developing the Hornery family grazing business Percy decided to introduce a new and "foreign" blood line still unproven in Australia. He committed to changing the entire cattle herd to Wagyu. This required importing the genetics to Australia from Japan. This was a risky business prospect. However, he was determined to become a price setter rather than a price taker, which he had been in the past.

For the first 12 years of the family's Wagyu breeding program, everything was bred by artificial insemination (AI), using the very best genetics imported from Japan. This led to the Hornerys becoming one of Australia's leading commercial Wagyu breeders, being able to demand premium prices for their steers and for heifers. Most export Wagyu's were, and still are, fed for a minimum of 300 days on grain. One highlight was a 2.5 year-old steer weighing 532kg carcass weight with a grading of 9 MBS selling for \$10.50/kg and returning \$5586.

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In 2001, Percy and Sandra were inspired by their eldest son, Derran, who had always been a truck enthusiast, to purchase their first water truck, an Acco twin steer body truck.

The company now has a combined fleet of over 30 water cartage and specialised water treatment, storage and liquid waste disposal vehicles.

With the growth of the mining industry in the Bowen Basin and the constant demand for local skills and a high level of service, saw the beginning of the Hornery Water and Transport business. Because of the family rural history, deep affinity with the land, and having established long standing relationships with the exiting landholders and communities, The Hornery have been able to provide a unique service to the mining companies operating in the region. The business while providing a commercial service is also very aware of the local issues, the special environmental concerns, the challenges of the geography and socio-economic aspect of each region. This is demonstrated by their

commitment to support community events and the local communities wherever possible.

In 2004, when Coal Seam Gas industry started to really expand exploration in the Moranbah region, the Hornery Water and Transport business was there to provide an essential link between the mining company, landholders and the community. The business has been working in partnership with the coal seam gas companies to develop this ever expanding sector.

The company's comprehensive Water Management Services include –

- Acquisition of Water Resources / Continuity of Supply;
- Manage and set up Water Storage facilities;
- Telemetry units for remote monitoring of storage levels;
- Water Cartage and Distribution services;
- Specialised units, such as Hydro-Evacuation vehicles (or 'Vac Truck');-
- Specific services such as Potable water distribution;
- Relocatable Waste Water Treatment service (using RO Technology);
- Water Disposal Service; and
- Internal OH&S staff providing expertise to ensure that the customer's specification for safe work practices are never compromised.



*'Giving just a small percentage of our profits to assist those less fortunate has no affect on our lifestyle or business success or outcome.'*

This extensive capacity and flexibility enables the Hornery Water and Transport business to offer a high standard of service that is dependable 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 100 percent of the time. It means the customers can protect against an economic loss from downtime due to a lack of water. These clients work closely with the Hornery's to find local solutions to their water problems.

The current fleet of prime movers and body trucks has been built over a number of years to meet the unique requirements of the industries in the region. Considering a large percentage of the daily travel is over unsealed roads and bush tracks the dependability of the service is paramount. The Moranbah workshop and maintenance crew services the fleet and monitors the vehicle performance with strict maintenance requirements, to ensure the fleets operational. The location of a second depot near Comet allows the business to comfortably extend the area it can reliably service clients into the southern Bowen Basin.

The Hornery Helicopter Services (HHS) has been added recently due to the increasing distance of travel required in remote regions and the greater geographical spread of clients. There was a need to better assist client servicing their more remote assets quickly and effectively. Thus, HHS ensures the dependability of the other Hornery services doesn't suffer. The helicopter allows a small crew or light load to be safely and quickly transported to remote locations. This is often the safe alternative when the level of risk and time pressure is much higher travelling by road. In particular, the drilling rig crews in remote locations can be serviced and work shifts exchanged economically.



ANY self sacrifice to assist a worthy cause deserves the highest praise, but when that effort is a positive response to a sad family tragedy, the act becomes infinitely greater in its nobility and courage of purpose.

So it was for Percy and Sandra Hornery, no strangers to the hard knocks that mother nature and misfortune can hand out. But all those setbacks pale in significance when faced with the crushing blow of losing a son to cancer in the prime of his young life.

"When you lose somebody very close to you, it makes us all realise that life is precious and just how greedy we have been by not donating to help people who are suffering from this disease," Percy Hornery said. "Giving just a percentage of our profits has no affect on our lifestyle or business success or outcome."

Channelling of grief for stricken families can take many pathways. For the Hornery's it forced them to review the way they did business and come up with an inbuilt system to raise money for cancer research.



The spectacular pink painted truck and eye catching slogans help to publicise and raise awareness. Percy felt great satisfaction in devoting a custom designed water truck to cancer awareness and fund raising, 'inspiring others to help make a difference.'

This Kenworth 104, twin steer, triaxle water truck, known as the "4 U LOC" Cancer Truck, goes out to service the mining, gas, and construction industries on a daily basis. The Hornery family donates \$20 for every working hour to the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, charity arm the RBWH Foundation. This donation is made with the awareness of the company that paid for the hire. The family also makes the "4 U LOU" Cancer Truck available to other fundraising committee and events, even if only to promote awareness.

Percy and Sandra now reside on their 8100ha (20,000ac) McKenzie River property River-lea, between Comet and Blackwater on the Capricorn Highway. The cattle enterprise is now managed by Que, their youngest son. The Hornery Water and Transport and Hornery Helicopter Services are based at Moranbah and managed by the eldest son Derran.

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