



# agriculture at heart

## OF MULTIFACETED TRANSPORT BUSINESS

**ANSPACH AGRICULTURAL CONTRACTING IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA HAS ITS ROOTS FIRMLY PLANTED IN AGRICULTURE. WHILE MOST OF ITS WORK TODAY INVOLVES TRANSPORT, THE COMPANY IS STILL STRONGLY FOCUSED ON SERVICING THE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY.**

Rob Anspach started contracting from his home in Victoria Plains as a sole trader in 1984, doing general farm contracting, labouring, fencing and machine operating. Rob worked hard from day one to build his business.

He and wife Angela married in 1992 and the couple formed a partnership. They started their contracting business with an eight-tonne International 1730 Acco truck and a JI Case 1660 harvester.

Today, some 20 years later, Anspach Ag continues to be a family-run business that offers a range of services including transport, contracting services, bulk goods supply, earthmoving and plant hire. "Our business is now about 70 percent transport but most of our clients and most of the products we cart are in the agricultural sector," Angela says.

Anspach Ag's agricultural services include silage, hay and straw baling, spraying, spreading, earthworks and landcare services.

The company runs a John Deere 8300 front-wheel assist tractor with GPS guidance, and a Krone HDP1290XC big square baler with a multi-chop function. It also owns a Bunning Lowlander Mk3 muck spreader for spreading compost and manure, as well as a Hardi 18m, 3400 litre boomspray.

**THE MANURE FROM THIS CATTLE YARD WILL BE SPREAD WITH ANSPACH AG'S BUNNING LOWLANDER MUCK SPREADER.**

"Rob started out doing a variety of agricultural contracting and we built up quite a contract harvesting and swathing run in the mid-1990s. We started with a little orange JI Case header doing down and tangled crops in ▶

**IN ADDITION TO THEIR CONTRACTING WORK, ROB AND ANGELA ANSPACH RUN THE WANNAMAL COMMUNITY POSTAL AGENCY.**





◀ the Victoria Plains area,” Angela says.

“Over time we expanded and we did the season from the Binu-Ajana in the northern wheat belt and then came back down around the Victorian Plains area, and then onto Nyabing in the Great Southern.”

Rob and Angela soon upgraded the header and added swathers to their fleet. By 1997-1998 they were operating two headers and three swathers and had a couple of subcontractors working with them.

“When we were contract harvesting and swathing, we were one of the first contractors in the state to install a yield monitor in the header, a Case IH 1660 axial flow. We were doing controlled traffic research for Dr Paul Blackwell with the Department of Agriculture WA. Plus we were one of the ‘field guinea pigs’ in the years 1993 to 1996 for a company called Rinex who were developing yield mapping software. We assisted with the development of the prototype soil sampling machine to do this work.” Angela says.

“We were also the third people in WA to purchase a self-propelled MacDon 9600 swather

in 1996. At our peak as harvest contractors we ran two self-propelled swathers, a MacDon and a Case IH, plus a PTO MacDon and two headers. We regularly upgraded machinery as demand required, with our final header was a Case IH 1688 Axial flow that we bought in 1998-1999.

“We were on the road for eight to 10 weeks travelling with six to eight staff, three caravans and a toddler. They were interesting times.

“With canola there was a honeymoon period for growers and then the price dropped and farmers reduced the area of canola sown. There were more competi-

tors for swathing contracting, and improved canola varieties that allowed farmers to direct harvest with their headers.

“Canola swathing has a short window of opportunity and is time critical. It’s a young person’s game because it can be long hours. We were working around the clock and dependent on having good staff. But attracting and retaining good staff can be an issue, especially with seasonal work.”

At this time Anspach Ag was relying on other transport operators to move its machinery.

“It got to the point where getting a truck to move our header

#### ANSPACH AG’S FLEET INCLUDES HIGH-VOLUME WALKING FLOOR TRAILERS FOR SHIFTING COMPOST, MULCH AND GREEN-WASTE.

when we needed it was holding us up, so we bought our first truck and low loader float in 1997. But once you’ve got a truck sitting in the yard you find other work for it and it’s grown from there,” Rob says.

It was during this period that Anspach Ag started carting big square bales of hay to export facilities like Gilmac (Mackie Hay) at New Norcia, and straw to Milne ▶



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**IN THE HEYDAY OF THEIR BALING OPERATION THE ANSPACHS MADE 30,000 BALES OF HAY AND STRAW PER SEASON.**

◀ Feeds and Wesfeeds in Perth. The addition of another prime mover and dropdeck trailers enabled them to cart 50,000 bales per year.

Once involved with the transport side of the hay and straw industry, Rob and Angela decided to move out of harvesting. They purchased a John Deere tractor in 1999 and then a Krone 128VFS baler, baling 30,000 bales of silage, hay and straw per season.

“We later updated to a Krone HDP1290XC baler, with which we still do about 3,000 bales per annum; 50 percent silage and 50 percent straw,” says Rob.

“Running the swathers and baler led us into the piggery and compost sectors as we were supplying straw for pig bedding and making compost. This then forged the relationship for us to supply and deliver the raw materials for the compost, plus the mixing then the transportation of the finished product. The final step was adding the Bunnings Muck Spreader to apply the compost onto farmer’s paddocks.”

Anspach Ag has diversified into other areas over the years, in order to keep its business growing. In the mid-1990s Anspach Ag was doing a lot of tree planting, starting with an International 1486 tractor, and then the John Deere 8300 tractor in 1999. They built their own three-tyne scalper, allowing the tractor to cover more land by doing three lines in a single pass.

They were involved in planting trees by hand and machine, and direct seeding for landcare projects, plantations and revegetation, for both government projects and private clients.

**TODAY ANSPACH AGRICULTURAL CONTRACTING PROVIDES TRANSPORT SERVICES TO A VARIETY OF CLIENTS BUT IT CONTINUES TO SERVE FARMERS BY MOVING BULK GRAIN, FERTILISER, COMPOST, HAY AND STRAW BALES, AND LIQUID FERTILISER.**



## ROB AND ANGELA ANSPACH TAKE PRIDE IN THE INNOVATIONS THEY HAVE MADE IN THEIR BUSINESS.

“We find that sometimes we’re a little bit ahead of the crowd, like with the yield mapping, and then when the rest of the market catches up we move off onto something else.

“We continue to seek new opportunities that maximise the potential of the equipment, skills and staff within our business. Alternatively, if we see an opportunity, and the numbers add up, then we will gear up and make it happen,” says Rob.

“Being an ag contractor can be challenging but as we tell our staff, it’s never boring.” **AC**

“We estimate we planted somewhere between 10 and 20 million trees during that period – that was over eight years from 1994,” says Angela.

‘The Decade of Landcare’ was a big thing for Australian agriculture, with government funding for farmers and landcare groups. We helped establish the Midlands Forestry Alliance, which was a co-op in the Dandaragan-Moora region to promote sustainable plantations of eucalyptus, pines and bush foods.”

Rob is a qualified Landcare technician and has surveyed a lot of conservation earthworks in paddocks throughout the mid-west. He is also a farm water assessor with the Water Corporation of WA.

In addition, Anspach Ag has always done earthmoving for the rural sector.

Today Anspach Ag runs six Volvo prime movers and 30 semi-trailers. The fleet includes

high-volume walking floor trailers, which are specialist trailers for shifting compost, mulch and green-waste.

They also have tankers for water and liquid fertiliser, side-tippers and end tippers for bulk transport, and dropdecks for hay and straw bales and moving over-size machinery.

“We moved out of the headers because, at best, we were able to run them for eight to 10 weeks a year and then they’re in the shed for the rest of the year. A truck can go to work every day of the year, and with a change of the trailer it can do a different job. We find the return on investment is much better for a truck. In the last 10 years we’ve transitioned into being mainly transport but still with an agricultural focus,” says Rob.

Anspach Ag carts goods and products throughout Western Australia, delivering mainly to the agricultural sector but also for

local and state government and the mining sector. This includes machinery, plant and equipment, rocks, sand and gravel, general freight, bulk grain and fertiliser, gravel, metal and road base, compost and soil conditioner, hay and straw bales, water and liquid fertiliser and controlled waste.

“We move a lot of compost, manures and mulch. Some goes to broadacre farms, some to horticulture and some is for industrial use. We move about 100,000 cubic metres of compost and about 80,000 cubic metres of manure and straw manure each year, which is mainly used by broadacre farmers to improve their soils. We also provide a spreading service with the Bunnings muck spreader. It holds 15 to 20 cubic metres per load,” Angela says.

“We do grain cartage for three or four local farmers and inter-bin transfers for the rest of the year, ▶







**IN THE 1990S ANSPACH AG DID A LOT OF TREE PLANTING AND EVEN BUILT THEIR OWN THREE-TYNE SCALPER.**



of the first to grow Hyola 42 canola at New Norcia in 1994 and our last crop was oaten hay in 2009,” says Rob.

“We’re still working in the agricultural industry. Our client base is 90 percent farmers but they only make up about 30 percent of our income,” says Angela.

“The balance of work is for corporate clients that provide services to farmers. We consider ourselves to be an agricultural contractor as we do deliveries on farm, even though the farmer might not be our direct client.”

“We both work fulltime in our business and currently employ six full-time staff, and three part-time casuals including a mechanic. We add casuals for seasonal work, plus have a number of quality subcontractors who work in with us.

“Over the years, our limiting factor has been finding and keeping good staff. Agricultural contracting is seasonal so to keep staff on fulltime, all year round, is a real struggle. A number of our truck drivers are plant operators as well and this has allowed us to create fulltime positions and maintain a

more constant work force.”

In addition to their transport and agricultural work, Rob and Angela run the Wannamal Community Postal Agency from their premises at Wannamal.

Angela says the post office is officially open 8:00 to 8:30 a.m. Monday to Friday but they offer postal services anytime that Anspach Ag’s main office is attended since both offices are in the one building.

“We also operate an Australia Post roadside delivery service three days a week. This is a 70km run that services about 40 farms and houses. In total there are about 60 postal customers, including PO boxes, at Wannamal but many delivery points cater for two or three households, so we service about 200 residents of Wannamal.

“We are also agents for Star-track and Toll Ipec couriers. We took over the postal contracts when we purchased the property in 2003, and celebrated 100 years of postal service at Wannamal in 2004,” Angela says. **AC**

**CHANGES IN THE INDUSTRY AND THE FACT THAT COMBINES ONLY WORK 10 WEEKS A YEAR LED THE ANSPACH’S TO SHIFT FROM HARVESTING TO TRANSPORT.**



◀ with one truck on that fulltime, carting around 100,000 tonne each year.”

The Anspach Ag team transports waste material for the mining industry and continues to look for new work opportunities that will maximise the use of existing fleet and equipment.

“We tender for government contracts, for example local government gravel cartage and truck and equipment hire to Main Roads WA. We are currently carting mulch on the Gateway WA road project around the Perth airport. And we’ve had trucks and earthmoving machinery working for Department of Defence building roads on their land in WA,” Angela says.

“We started transporting liquid

fertiliser to horticulture clients in 2013 and we’ve just bought a new 25,000-litre stainless steel tanker. We have a contract with the Dept of Fire and Emergency Services, which involves providing a water tanker and earthmoving machinery for fire-fighting. We’ve been pretty busy with that and have had six callouts this summer,” says Rob.

“If we have equipment we look at multiple ways to use it. For example the tankers, they can be used for water, liquid fertiliser or controlled waste. Plus the tanks are removable from the trailers, allowing the same trailers to be used for machinery or general freight.”

But despite the move into the transport industry, Rob and Angela still have the farming industry at heart.

“All through our years of doing contracting we have also done cropping and share farming as the opportunities arose. We were one

**TWO MACDON SELF-PROPELLED WINDROWERS WERE PART OF THE CANOLA HARVESTING BUSINESS.**



**THE TRAILERS INCLUDE DROPDECKS FOR MOVING OVERSIZED MACHINERY AND HAY AND STRAW BALES.**