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**Optum CVT proves its worth for Victorian contracting business**

Victorian farmer John Allen’s career as a diesel mechanic and hay contractor has put him behind the wheel of a lot of tractors, but his latest purchase has impressed him like few others have.

John has run his own contracting business – spraying, cultivation, hay and silage – for the past four years at Cowwarr, 170km east of Melbourne, and also farms 100 acres of his own lucerne.

Last year, as his business continued to grow, he was in the market to add to his fleet of six tractors and went looking for a new machine with the power and versatility to tackle a range of jobs in the most efficient way possible.

His search ended with the Case IH Optum CVT, delivered last September and already a tractor John couldn’t imagine being without.

“It’s proven to be so versatile – you end up doing things with it you didn’t think you would,” John said. “It definitely doesn’t feel like you’re driving a 300 horsepower tractor.”

The Optum CVT was released by Case IH in February of last year, with a dynamic modern styling that introduced the future look for the company’s tractors, and was heralded as a machine that created its own category by combining the versatility and manoeuvrability of a Puma with the power of a Magnum.

One of the features highlighted in the new Optum at the time it was released was the front linkage with 5,821kg maximum lifting power at the ball ends, “perfect for triple mowers”, something John has proven 100 per cent correct.

This was one of his main considerations when shopping around for a new tractor, with mowing a big part of the Allen Agricultural Services business and the competitor-model tractor John was looking at replacing just not up to the job.

While John says he doesn’t necessarily need the horsepower of the Optum, he’s happy to have the power when it handles like a smaller tractor, particularly on the smaller acreages around Cowwarr, and when it runs his three mowers so easily and efficiently.

“The previous tractor, running just a front and side mower would burn about 35 to 40 litres (of fuel) an hour, but the Optum is averaging about 35 litres running the triple mowers,” he said.

With fuel savings John describes as “just ridiculous”, the ability to run a front and two side mowers allowing him to cover a lot more ground with each sweep, and only needing one, rather than two tractors, to finish a job, John estimates his business is a long way in front.

“Running that new mower set-up, with the Optum, I’m making substantial savings based on the work we’ve done to date,” he said.

“It’s unbelievable. When I first got it I thought it would be the equivalent of running three tractors with mowers out the side, but it’s every bit as quick as four tractors and mowers, using a fraction of the fuel and one wage.”

Along with fuel savings, John said the bigger fuel tank – 630 litres with 96-litre AdBlue tank -meant he no longer worried about running out of fuel halfway through a job, and the Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT) lived up to its reputation.

“Driveability with the CVT is fantastic, especially chasing these small squares with the accumulator, where you have to change your speed to keep it feeding at fast as you can,” John said. “I’ve got other CVT tractors, so I wasn’t new to it, but for the size of the tractor it’s very well set up, very controllable, and I found it really effective.”

He’s similarly impressed with the hydraulic capability, which he also credits with saving him money in the long run.

“I bought a Bale Baron for my side business of lucerne and hay sales, which needs a minimum of 170 litres of oil flow a minute, meaning most people who buy them have to buy an extra PTO-driven power pack to run it because their tractor hydraulics aren’t up to it,” John said.

“Basically, because I bought the Optum with a capability of 220 to 230 litres a minute hydraulics on it, I didn’t need to buy a power pack, saving some serious money.”

Seamus McCarthy, Case IH product manager mid-horsepower and compact tractors for Australia/New Zealand, said John’s comments were being echoed by other customers who were enjoying what the Optum offered.

“We were excited to introduce this tractor to the market early last year and it’s more than lived up to those high expectations. It was the result of comprehensive customer consultation in terms of what they wanted from a new tractor range and the overwhelming response was power within a compact and agile package. Customers like John are telling us we’ve hit the mark.”

Case IH’s AccuTurn automated headland-turning technology is making John’s life easier too, taking the guesswork out of turning on headlands, which improves accuracy and reduces operator fatigue.

“The headland management is absolutely fantastic. In bigger paddocks, you come to the end, hit one button, and the mowers lift up – there’s a time delay between the front and rear mowers – [the tractor] turns around and lines itself up, you hit one button and it’s ready to go again,” he said.

He even credits it with giving him more time to concentrate on the running of his business, aided too by the comfort of the Optum’s cab, complete with standard leather seat.

“Whenever the phone rang I’d have to stop and concentrate on the phone call, but because the machine’s doing it pretty much on its own, and with the quiet cab and blue tooth radio, I can actually concentrate on other things happening around me, taking a lot of pressure off – and the productivity’s through the roof because I’m not having to stop,” John said.

Working into the night, too, is easier and safer with the Optum’s standard lighting package providing John with the vision he needs “when you’ve got a lot happening around you”.

“I’d hate to know what the price difference would be to upgrade a light package [on other tractors] that even comes close to the Optum’s – it really covers all bases,” he said.

And this is the message John is keen to leave others with who may be in the market for a serious “all-rounder” tractor.

“I’d definitely recommend it – it just offers so much versatility for a big tractor. The visibility is really good and it’s so nimble despite its size. It’s saving me time and money, and I wouldn’t be without it.”

To find out more about the Optum CVT, see your local Case IH dealer or visit the Case IH website at [www.caseih.com](http://www.caseih.com)

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**Caption: John Allen’s Optum CVT fitted with the three-mower configuration.**

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