



A picture of a Bentley on his folder and a desire to beat his father into retirement spurs ambitious 22-year-old Brisbane entrepreneur Ben Hennock to clean up financially with his truck cleaning business, writes Chris Smith

Coming into the Cleanaway yard in the Brisbane suburb of Northgate it's difficult to see who is actually in charge of the Hennock and Sons' truck cleaning crew.

You don't expect to keep your shirt spotless when you're cleaning trucks all day, but the identical uniform each team member wears simply gleams with the fluorescent yellow safety vest blended with the company's bubble blue livery.

The uniformed men work as a tight unit; even the youngest in the crew is pulling his weight.

This in itself is a reflection of a good boss, blending in with the crew, willing to do anything he asks of his employees to do for him.

Unfortunately, you can't tell who you're meant to be interviewing.

I arrived after one in the afternoon and the crew is already packing up its

equipment and cleaning up the work area, ready for another job.

I asked for Ben Hennock. A young man comes up to me, smiling from ear to ear, saying, "I thought you would be here at 10:30," as he shakes my hand firmly.

On first appearances he's an unassuming young man. Hennock is barely 22 but he oozes the kind of confidence that betrays his age, or re-enforces it.

The drive and ambition suggests nothing is too hard and no dream is out of reach, complemented by the halo-type personality that draws people in.

Promptly I reply, "I thought you were going to be here till 2:30."

Hennock and his crew are finishing a job and heading over the Gateway Bridge to another job in Murarrie cleaning refrigerated vans.

Every weekend is like this, working



hard, and moving effortlessly from one contract to the next.

Two 16-hour days and an inventory of close to 300 trucks, and growing, keeps the crew busy — a crew that he is finding increasingly harder to organise because of the rapid expansion of the business and major contracts he is securing.

During the week the crew work odd hours, with some contracts starting late afternoon.

At the moment, there are two crews working simultaneously, and pretty soon there will be another added to keep up with growing demand.

Hennock's entry into the truck cleaning business was inspired by what he saw on a trip to the United States. He decided there was a definite market in Australia for his cleaning business.

By the response he has received, he's hit the nail right on the head.



"I prefer my dad's lifestyle, working hard when he was young and retiring at the age of 40."

Hennock has been helped out by the drought and the growing restrictions on water usage.

With Brisbane going to level-four restrictions, companies have been forced to implement Water Efficiency Management Plans (WEMP), including his own.

"We have cut down on the number of hoses used at each site and have put a WEMP in place," he says.

This meant he had to upgrade his equipment to meet the water conservation targets as well as taking the cleaning task off the companies as an outsourced venture.

"We have spent \$30,000 on upgrading our pressure cleaners so they use less water," he says.

Part of the equipment is a blue recycling mat, which allows up to 70 percent of the water to be recycled.

Another in his arsenal of water-saving devices is an EPA-approved water separator, which separates oil from water, so the grey water can be re-used and the oil can be disposed of properly.

"It is not compulsory to recycle water but we have the facilities to do so at request. It is new technology putting a recycle unit into mobile use. We do not use it on front of cabs due to streakiness on glass and we do not use it in the back of refrigerated vans," he explains.

His Iveco Daily has been modified and incorporates an assortment of generators, tanks and cleaning equipment, including high-powered hot water cleaners mounted on the back of the vehicle.

Hennock has a new cleaning device called a motorised fleet washer brought over from the US.

It's a 4.3-metre tall cleaning tool that can be run up and around the side of vehicles and trailers — and is easily transported to a site.

There has been no shortage of staff, says Hennock, but he is always looking to expand.

The business has grown rapidly since its inception 18 months ago. He employs seven full-timers and anywhere between 25 and 35 casual staff on the weekends.

Hennock spends the time training his crew and trying to get the best guys he can to work for him.

His plans include making the crews self reliant, so he can expand the business.

"That's a job in itself, lining them all up [staff] for the weekends. Friday afternoon I am on the phone for about four hours trying to organise the crews to go where and what time," he says.

"We rotate our permanent staff for the weekend work, so that we have an experienced crew working.

"We build up our time off in the week;

I make sure the full-time staff have at least two days off in the week if they are working on the weekend.

"Everyone is keen for the penalty rates on the weekend, they love it."

Staff working for his transport company clients have taken on the weekend work, and drivers are handy when you are cleaning a fleet of trucks at a time.

Often it is a father and son combination, bonding while they earn extra cash for the family coffers.

The family business promotes family ideals and Hennock's younger brother works alongside him in the summer holidays — earning enough money for the 14-year old to pay for his ticket from Airlie Beach in Queensland's far north and enough for pocket money for the next few months.

Inspired by his father Wayne, Hennock decided to follow his gut instinct.

"My mum works a regular nine to five job Monday to Friday," he explains.

"I got the best of both worlds when I was growing up but I prefer my dad's lifestyle, working hard when he was young and retiring at the age of 40."

I asked Hennock if he wanted to retire at the same age.

"No, I want to beat him, I want to retire when I am 35. I could probably



kick back now and be happy with what we've got, but that's not my aim. My aim is to be one of the largest truck cleaning companies, and then we'll see what goes on from there," he says.

His father helps out with the books, along with his partner, Penny Hewat, a former property manager, while Hennock does all the leg work, looking after the employees, the existing customers and growing the business and generating

new contracts with some of Australia's largest firms.

The picture of the Bentley on his folder is his carrot at the moment.

"I'm going to get that, I put it there every day on the way to work and tell myself that is what I am getting out of bed for," he tells *ATN*.

By the way the business is going, he may have his dream car sooner rather than later.



The list of companies already using the Hennock and Sons' service reads like a who's who of the transport world.

Many of the big players have chosen to take on the young businessman despite his age.

In addition to existing customers including Patrick, Cleanaway, BOC, Gregory's Transport and Australia Post, Hennock has recently secured QRX as a client and is seeking talks with one of the State's other key players, Linfox.

"My parents thought it was going to be pretty hard for me to get my name out there and get these big companies to give me a go," Hennock says.

He says his age was an unexpected advantage as a lot of the decision makers from the bigger transport operators were older with children about his age.

"We thought my age would be a downfall, but it has probably worked out to be the best thing working for me," he says.

"They all want to give me a go, or help me out, because their kids are normally out partying on the weekend and we're out here washing their trucks, so [I think] they love it that I'm having a go."

Hennock is a smart businessman, and he has acquired the accreditation to allow him to clean cold-storage carriers.

"We make sure the chemicals we use in the back of refrigerated vans comply with AQIS standards," he says.

He has also formed positive relationships with his cleaning product supplier Eazy Glean.

"We use Eazy Glean Trucking Gold truck wash with wax, which means it



The team from Hennock and Sons

“We make sure the chemicals we use in the back of refrigerated vans comply with AQIS standards.”

gets easier and easier to wash the trucks because the product puts on a layer of wax," Hennock says.

"So the more times you wash the vehicle the harder it is for the bugs and dirt to stick to it. The trucks retain a better shine."

The next step in his expansion plan is a move to Sydney. Already there is great interest from national carriers they clean for in Brisbane to open up shop in the southern states.

"A lot of the companies we are working for in Brisbane are based in Sydney; they have been asking us to move, so we'll get their contracts as soon as we move down there," Hennock says.

The question remains, however, how the company will fund its expansion.

At the moment the options are to franchise or keep it all in-house.

Either way Hennock is making a splash in the water-conscious truck cleaning business. ■