

# FEATURE RIG OF THE MONTH

# IN MEMORIAM

WORDS & PICS // BRAD HAYES

Loss of a family member hits families hard and deep. We all find ways of dealing with loss of loved ones. It is particularly hard when a lost one is only 17 years old. A Victorian trucking family rebuilt and dedicated a truck to Rowan Membrey, a moving story of this month's Rig of the Month winner from *Truckin' Life's* Brad Hayes



Craig Membrey standing in front of the truck he has rebuilt in memory of his son Rowan

built the company into a diverse range of specialist equipment that focuses on moving loads that are far from ordinary.

Craig has a fondness for naming his trucks after family members, and after a search for a suitable vehicle, he purchased a Kenworth T904 on the 15th of March 2011 to be named after his wife. Sadly, two days later, his plans were upset in a most tragic way. Craig and Nicole's son Rowan took his own life.

Rowan John was born in Dandenong in November, 1993. He grew up in the Narre Warren/Berwick area, attended St Margaret's Primary School, and Beaconsfield College until the end of Year 9, when he left to start an apprenticeship with a fabricator. Rowan caught the family bug for trucks, understandable given his environment while growing up. The boy was ecstatic when Craig put the registration plates ROWAN 1 on one of his trucks. But trucks weren't his only love – Rowan loved basketball and music, and was a very talented extreme BMX rider.

Then on the 17th of March, 2011 – two days after Craig bought the 904, Rowan Membrey took his own life.

"Rowan was always smiling," says Craig. "He was a really polite kid, a popular kid with a heart of gold. He had many, many friends."

Craig believes Rowan grew up too quickly. "He started going out to nightclubs and mixing with the young crowd. He started abusing drugs and

**T**he family has been in the trucking game since the sixties, well into the second generation. Membrey's Transport and Crane Hire is well known in over-dimensional transport, and their distinctive white and green trucks, specialist trailers, cranes and pilot vehicles have travelled the length and width of our great country. But over the past several months, Membreys have been the focal point for a different reason – a truck called ROWAN.

Craig Membrey is the Managing Director of the company. His father started J&N Membrey & Son in 1962, and Craig took over the company in 1989 and has



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Over 600 hours of airbrushing and an image is created depicting Rowan as he grew up and all that he enjoyed

alcohol, and was silently dealing with depression and suicidal thoughts."

Unaware of Rowan's pain, Craig was making plans to refurbish the 904, but those plans changed after Rowan's passing. Craig decided to rebuild the truck in Rowan's honour.

A 2006 model, the T904 was used as a road train by Toll before being purchased by Craig. Powered by a 600hp Cummins Signature, the truck had travelled 1.4 million kilometres in its previous life. The truck would be rebuilt to become a permanent reminder of Rowan.

Membrey's head mechanic Darren Voros was in charge of the truck's total strip down and was eagerly helped by anyone that happened to be in the yard at the time. Rob from Victorian Truck Painting, then laid the paint on the chassis and body panels, before the truck was taken to the Trucker's Toy Store in Sunshine where TTS kindly allowed the

use of their workshop for five months while Darren started putting the truck back together, adding a huge array of customised stainless products and accessories provided by TTS.

While Darren was hard at it, Craig Rodgers was equally busy. The talented artist spent 600 hours on the massive airbrush mural on the rear of the sleeper, a real highlight of the truck. Showing Rowan in three stages of growing up, it also pays tribute to Rowan's skills at BMX riding.

Blazoned across the top of the sleeper on each side, are the Beyond Blue logos, with the words 'Proudly supporting Beyond Blue the national depression initiative'. Craig thought the truck might help get the word out there about depression, so he contacted Beyond Blue, and they were just as enthusiastic as Craig to have their name connected to Rowan. While meeting Craig and viewing the truck for the first time early in December



Rig of the Day Castlemaine

2011, former Victorian Premier and Beyond Blue chairman Jeff Kennett gave an outstanding endorsement of the truck. "He was absolutely delighted with our efforts in getting the Beyond Blue message out there," Craig said.

What does the future hold for Rowan? "I want to show the truck," says Craig. "I want it to make appearances at events of all types to create awareness of depression, and to get the word out there that there is help available."

"Rowan was a fantastic kid. I miss him each and every day. It's not easy with him not being here, but you have to adjust your life. I think of him and I get a tear in my eye. You wouldn't realise just how hard it is until you lose a child. Family and friends have been fantastic with the truck - all have been very supportive, and they love the truck."

On its show debut at the 2011 Castlemaine Truck Show, the Membrey Team were elated when Rowan won Rig

of the Day on Saturday. It was a very emotional time for all when Craig was presented with the trophy.

If you get the chance to see the truck, make sure you check out every detail, and have a chat to Craig - a very approachable man who takes great pride in both the truck and talking about his son.

Truly a remarkable effort by all involved, and a sensational tribute by a loving father for a son gone far too soon.

Depression is a life-threatening condition that can affect any of us. Anyone needing immediate assistance can call Lifeline on 131 114.

For information about depression, call Beyond Blue on 1300 224 636 or visit [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au) ■

