5 August, 2025

**FULL CIRCLE: HISTORIC RESTORATION MARKS NEW CHAPTER**

As part of a range of activities coinciding with the release of Isuzu’s all new model range, Isuzu Australia Limited (IAL) has paid tribute to its roots in undertaking a complete restoration of a heritage brand stalwart.

Unveiled for the first time and garnering plenty of attention at the recent Brisbane Truck Show alongside the 2025 NKR version of the same model, the battle-weary model year 1976, KS11 Elf 350 Tipper is enjoying a new lease on life thanks to the volunteer work of Isuzu staff in Melbourne.

**Back in the spotlight**

Retaining its distinctive baby blue paint job, the Elf Tipper was the unofficial star of the brand’s recent launch showcase in Brisbane; a proud moment for lead restorer and IAL’s Senior Product Development Technician, Darren Pottage.

“It’s been a long road to get this project completed and to see the old Elf Tipper up in lights again alongside its modern contemporary in Brisbane was just fantastic to see,” Mr Pottage said.

“These were one of the first Isuzu models to hit our shores back in the late sixties, early seventies, so this resto has been a fitting tribute to the longevity of the brand here in Australia.”

Rarely sighted on Australian roads these days, the Elf 350 was remarkably sourced from its original owner, a Sydney-based concrete and formwork business, still operating under a different name.

**Bullet proof**

Famous for their reliability and ‘bullet proof’ durability, the KS11 350 model has a notable history in the Australian market, where they gained significant popularity amongst a range of trade and construction applications throughout the 1970s and into the 80s.

“This model in particular really helped cement the Isuzu brand’s penchant for steadfast reliability, quality factory body build credentials and overall versatility,” Mr Pottage said.

**The process**

Beginning in 2023, the restoration project saw a number of IAL staff participate during a range of stages, from stripping and disassembling the vehicle, through to sourcing and installing like-for-like parts and components as original.

“From the very beginning, the vision was to return this truck to its original condition, which involved removing the cab and factory tipper body, stripping-out the interior trim and essentially winding-up with a rolling chassis.

“Whilst still operational, a range of engine componentry needed a lot of attention, including a transmission re-build as well as sourcing a number of replacement parts,” he said.

“Given the age of the truck, sourcing model correct componentry almost half a century later was always going to be a challenge, although with a little help of our parts department here in Melbourne, we were able to get our hands on everything required.”

**Passion project**

The next stage of the restoration involved some extensive panel work to both the cabin and the factory tipper body, as well the refurbishment of the cabin interior. Even the original glass manufacturer was identified and secured to re-supply and re-seal the cabin.

“We engaged some brilliant local suppliers here in Melbourne’s west that shared our passion for this project and really threw themselves into the work.

“From the interior trimmers to the panel beaters and painters, we couldn’t have asked for a better group to collaborate with on this and the results really do speak for themselves,” Mr Pottage remarked.

**Under lights again**

The concluding rite of passage for the Elf 350 Tipper was a striking new paint job in the original colour palette, before reassembling the iconic model in readiness for its final destination: the largest truck show in the southern hemisphere.

“It’s been a challenging, but also extremely rewarding process to be a part of, said Mr Pottage.

“This is a part of our heritage and as a companywide achievement, it’s a piece of motoring history we can all look back on for years to come and say, ‘that’s us, that’s Isuzu right there,’” he concluded.

**ends**

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