

# ENGINEERING EXCELLENCE

**The new Wombat ATM980 4WD, Japanese-built and modified for Australian conditions, is one of only three slope mower/ride-on brushcutters I have used and I have to say is the most impressive.**



**W**ith new workplace regulations in relation to safe work methods and acceptable slope angles for operation of zero-turn mowers and brushcutters, this type of equipment is becoming more popular in Australia.

A solid looking, well-engineered piece of equipment, the Wombat is powered by a commercial Briggs & Stratton Vanguard engine of 23hp. This Japanese-built Briggs & Stratton engine has a larger external air filter, is more compact and lighter, has an oil cooler as standard, is 50 per cent more expensive and has an extra two-year commercial warranty than its US built cousin, giving what I would consider an industry best three-year commercial engine warranty.

Our harsh dusty environment can be a challenge to many engines, so to improve performance, longevity and reliability the Wombat uses a Cowl Induction Cooling. The shape and design of the engine cowl and attached rubber skirts greatly reduces the amount of dirty and hot air reaching the fan chamber, therefore supplying cool clean air to the intake system.



The whole idea of this type of machine is to access areas which previously either could not be accessed safely or not accessed at all, while being able to cut neatly anything from short grass to smashing saplings and overgrown weed areas. The Wombat is designed with a very low centre of gravity and wide footprint. All this is combined with careful placement of the engine, fuel tank, battery and operator's position to create a well-balanced, safe machine capable of climbing up and down 40 degree slopes. Drive is via a Hydro drive 4WD system with diff lock for really tough situations.

Cutting of large diameter woody weeds and saplings requires a solid robust system and – unlike bolt-on spindles with re-enforced areas welded to the deck – the Wombat has a unique blade carrying set-up. A huge 38mm spindle drive blade shaft locates with top and bottom maintenance free bearings inside a solid steel tube which is constructed as part of the deck. This tube is re-enforced with large steel laminations top and bottom, creating a triple re-enforced solid structure to hold the carrier and swing back double sided blades, ensuring that the large impacts that inevitably will occur rarely result in any downtime.

Safety is paramount with any machinery and the importer of this machine, JSB Equipment, takes this very seriously, making modifications to the already good safety features of the Wombat. Steel deflectors on the front and rear corners of the deck have been modified to ensure any bystander approaching the machine cannot fit their foot between the deck and wheels, thus making contact with the blades impossible. Safety features include also blades automatically disengaged, if the deck is lifted, as well as an across slope angle gauge in easy view to let the operator know when the machines limits are being approached. This inexpensive slope gauge could and should easily be fitted to all ride-on mowers as I'm sure many operators would have no idea of their machines limits.

Access for maintenance is excellent with the engine cowl hinging back as well as the front cowl which simply can be removed (Sine locks) to reveal the battery and fuel tank. The operator's seat hinges forward for ample access to the top of the deck and the side cowls also remove for

unobstructed access to all maintenance and adjustment points. A drop-in debris filter in the fuel tank also traps water for a short while, so it should be monitored at the time of re-fueling.

The Wombat ATM980 4WD is certainly a versatile machine. I was very impressed with the terrain it was able to cope with as well as the size of the material it could cut neatly in one pass. It is comfortable to operate with one of the best seats I have seen on this type of machine. After attacking two-metre high grass, weeds and saplings, the Wombat was just as comfortable mowing couch grass, leaving a neat, even finish. I think it is worth adding that our test site was at a ski park on the Hawkesbury River. We had the owner of the park with us going through the specs and the machine before I started operations and testing. He was a tough critic and I am sure he did not believe the Wombats capabilities. After observing our testing for about ten minutes he insisted that the Wombat was staying and has since purchased the machine. **OED**

## SPECIFICATIONS

<b>ENGINE</b>	Briggs & Stratton Vanguard Commercial
<b>OUTPUT</b>	23hp
<b>CUTTING WIDTH</b>	980mm
<b>CUTTING HEIGHT</b>	50-120mm / 18 positions
<b>FUEL CAPACITY</b>	14 litres

