

Dear House & Senate MP's,

**Regarding; Legislation currently or soon to be before Federal Parliament:**

**Road Vehicle Standards Bill 2018 - Vehicle Importation Laws and Conversion to RHD for vehicles built after 1989 and <30 years old;**

- 1. Purchasing a brand new LHD vehicle and abolish mandatory conversion to RHD,**
- 2. Luxury Car Tax (LCT) abolishment,**
- 3. Vehicle Import Approval – Proof of Ownership,**
- 4. Vehicle Import Approval – Treatment of Modified Vehicles,**
- 5. Recall and Warranty repair.**

The Department of Infrastructure Regional Development and Cities administers the Importation of Vehicles from Overseas Countries to Australia.

It is well known that the Australian Car Manufacturing Industry has been terminated although thankfully the Heavy Vehicle Manufacturing Industry is still strong.

My extended family and I have only owned Falcon and Commodore vehicles since the 1970's and up to the shutdown and wholeheartedly supported our local car manufacturing industry buying many new vehicles and rejecting vehicles built overseas.

It is already plain to see how much more enthusiast vehicles cost compared to the locally made equivalents and how much spare parts for these vehicles cost compared to the days of the Australian fleet having a majority of Commodore and Falcon cars.

Kevin Rudd's decision to allow government agencies to buy non locally made cars and more recently Abbott and Hockey's withdrawal of support of this vital tertiary industry made us wonder about the motives of those running this great country while other governments wilfully breach fair trade in support of their local automotive industries.

The logic we are fed has been that companies must compete without assistance in the free world market.

**1. Purchasing a brand new or near new LHD vehicle and abolish mandatory conversion to RHD:**

Why then, is the Australian State and Federal government imposing a disadvantage to Australian Companies and Consumers by making us pay \$50-60,000 for unnecessary conversions to RHD of LHD vehicles? Most of which are available from the most cost competitive market in the world in the USA. Conversions are in many cases no were near as good as the original vehicles and there are many conversion horror stories although some are well done. Converted vehicles always devalue more than the same original vehicle. What a waste of resources it is to convert a perfectly good vehicle especially if you don't have a car industry to protect.

I would like to ask your assistance in the latest round of new legislation before parliament regarding the importation of vehicles into Australia.

At the moment cars imported by individuals can be imported as LHD and operated on Australian roads if built before 1989 and at least 30 years old but must be converted to RHD if built after 1989.

The question is if it is safe for LHD vehicles built before 1989 to be allowed to be driven on Australian roads at all (and now there are plenty everywhere) then why can't newer vehicles built after 1989 be driven on the same roads. I am not saying other ADR's (eg; seatbelts, indicators, etc) should be ignored. They can still be applied to any vehicles built after 1989.

Also apparently they propose to allow rare ultra-expensive low volume cars like the Bugatti Veyron to be allowed to be imported as LHD but not cars the workers of this country may want to buy like a

Dodge Charger and Challenger or Chevrolet Camaro and Corvette. How can representatives of the people allow this discrimination for the rich.

Please note the table below for registering imported vehicles in NSW showing the exemptions from conversion to RHD below. The Pre-1989 vehicles older than 30 years and <4.5Tonnes GVM, Overseas Visitors, Status of Forces Agreement and Diplomatic vehicles are all allowed to remain LHD. The question posed is if people who drive a LHD vehicle on the right side of the road are allowed to drive the same vehicle on the left side of the road on Australian roads then why aren't locals allowed to drive any LHD vehicle on the left side of the road? The left side is the native side locals drive on.

## Vehicle Standards Information No. 4 Registering imported vehicles in NSW

**Table 2: Summary of NSW registration requirements**

Type of import	Import Approval	ADRs <sup>1</sup>	NSW registration	Identification plate or label	Right-hand drive	Compliance certificate
Personal import	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ <sub>2</sub>	✓ <sub>3</sub>
'Pre-1989' vehicle	✓ <sub>11</sub>	✓	✓	✗	✓ <sub>2</sub>	✓
Truck, bus	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ <sub>4</sub>
Trailer	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/A	✓ <sub>3</sub>
Overseas visitors' vehicle	✓ <sub>5</sub>	✗	✗ <sub>6</sub>	✗	✗	✗
Racing vehicle	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Rally vehicle	✓	✗	✗ <sub>7</sub>	✗	✗	✗
SOFA vehicle	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗
Diplomatic vehicle	✓	✗ <sub>8</sub>	✗ <sub>8</sub>	✗ <sub>8</sub>	✗ <sub>8</sub>	✗ <sub>8</sub>
Other, eg plant vehicle	✓	✗	✓ <sub>9</sub>	✗	✗	✓ <sub>10</sub>

**Key:** ✓ = Required, or ✗ = Not required, subject to the following notes:

1. As required – see relevant section in this VSI No. 4
2. May be left-hand drive if 30 years old or older and less than 4.5 tonnes GVM
3. If modified to the extent certification is required
4. If appropriate – refer to relevant section on page 7
5. Not required if a valid carnet is presented to Customs and Border Protection at port of entry
6. Not required if the vehicle is imported under a carnet; required if the vehicle is imported under a VIA and overseas registration expires during stay in NSW. See 'Overseas visitors' vehicles on page 8
7. Registration with conditions for permanent imports, or Unregistered Vehicle Permit for temporary imports
8. Required if vehicle is subsequently registered in NSW
9. Conditional registration
10. If modified to the extent certification is required. For more information regarding the particular vehicle contact Roads and Maritime Technical Enquiries

11. Not required if the applicant presents proof showing the vehicle was imported prior to 1 January 1989 – for more information see page 3.

At the very least an exemption to convert new vehicles to RHD should apply to vehicles imported that are on the Special Enthusiasts Vehicles Scheme (SEVS) register.

In light of the fact that local manufacturing is unlikely to rise again in the foreseeable future I request that you lobby on behalf of enthusiasts who don't want to buy the cars dumped on the Australian public from Asia and Europe. Our dream cars are available in the LHD markets of the world and we should be able to buy them if that model is not already sold in RHD in Australia.

The majority of the world drives on the right side of the road with LHD vehicles. Apparently Britain and Japan who are RHD allow new LHD vehicles to be driven on their roads.

There is no reason why Australian's cannot drive LHD vehicles on the Left side of the road. Some are already doing it in vehicles built before 1989. It doesn't matter what side the steering wheel is on. You need to drive according to the conditions and the side the steering wheel is on is one of those conditions. I am not saying that a LHD vehicle will never contribute to any accident but lets put that into context. The majority of accidents are caused by impaired drivers who are under the influence of alcohol, under the influence of drugs, fatigued and not paying attention. You see it on the news every night when they hit stationary objects. How many LHD vehicles have caused accidents by comparison? Enthusiasts respect their vehicles and should not be punished.

**Registered Automotive Workshop Scheme (RAWS)** business owners will make representations that they need to continue their RHD conversion businesses. They need certainty. This is a false economy both for them and most LHD car buyers. I have made enquires to import a Dodge Charger Hellcat which is on the Special Enthusiasts Vehicles Scheme (SEVS) register and eligible for import and conversion to RHD. However the waiting list is over 6 months. I am not allowed to import the vehicle myself as I am not a RAWS and if I accept the deal I have to purchase the vehicle now and don't get to see or use it until completed. What if the RAWS goes bankrupt before completion of the conversion. The car cannot be completed by another RAWS because nobody else has the compliance documentation to do the conversion. Stuck with a vehicle that cannot be converted it will need to be scrapped after paying in the order of \$100,000 for it. There would be more certainty for RAWS if you allowed the public to import the vehicles they wanted and then if they chose to have them converted they would approach a RAWS to do it for them.

## **2. Luxury Car Tax (LCT) abolishment:**

What is the purpose of the Luxury Car Tax (LCT) if there is no car industry to protect? The threshold needs to be increased substantially if not abolished. I am sure the Luxury Car Tax (LCT) was not designed to tax the buyers of old classic cars yet there is no escape. I recently purchased a 60 year old car from the USA and had to pay around \$10,000 in LCT. Why? The value of old cars is increasing substantially yet the LCT only moves a small amount. If I didn't give that little more money to buy it then someone else would have purchased it and I would have missed out. It's only a little more in US dollars but by the time you convert to AUD and count the taxes it ends up being a lot more. The government claims that taxes have been reduced including the 5% import duty that was just recently abolished but we had a free trade agreement with USA for past 14 years so why was it applied in the first place? So why do I have to pay GST and LCT? Isn't 10% GST enough tax on one transaction? Abolish the LCT now.

## **3. Vehicle Import Approval – Proof of Ownership:**

As it stands I can import a vehicle if older than 1989 without too much trouble as long as I get import approval from the Department of Infrastructure.

Problem is that I can only apply after I have a proof of purchase. I know the basic rules to comply particularly around modifications but they could still deny my application and so I could be stuck having paid for a vehicle I cannot import and use. Also, this order of operation is time inefficient allowing other buyers to sneak in and purchase first.

I don't know if I am missing some point but I don't see why I cannot apply for a Vehicle Import Approval before purchasing the vehicle while in the advertising phase identifying it by its Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) or registration or some other identifier if it is too old to have a VIN. This would mean that the timing of approval, negotiation could be done in parallel, there would be less chance of someone buying it ahead of me, I would not be up for storage costs waiting for approval after paying and I would not be stuck with a vehicle that was paid for, in storage and not able to import.

I request you look at modifying this clause allowing Vehicle Import Approval to start with interest in a vehicle as long as there is an identifier such as a VIN on the vehicle rather than after you own it.

#### **4. Vehicle Import Approval – Treatment of Modified Vehicles:**

There are many US vehicles that are modified with better suspension, brakes and wheels and tyres. Most are modification kits that are allowed on US roads. They should be allowed to be imported and checked for compliance at the registration stage locally. If deemed to be inadequate then new complying parts can be ordered and installed to gain certification.

#### **5. Recall and Warranty repair:**

Most enthusiasts don't care about warranty for a new car because they are for the most part reliable. Spare parts in the USA are so cheap and can be readily imported. A RHD converted car is more likely to have warranty issues than one delivered from the factory. Most people have internet and watch the news so any recalls can be attended to by the enthusiast. I wouldn't let anyone else repair my own car anyway. The arguments presented by the Repair Industry to this end are rubbish.

Do not listen to the Lobby groups. Their arguments are nonsense. If you break it all down there is no reason why the individual cannot import a brand new or used LHD car and drive it safely on our roads. The registration checks at initial registration and subsequent renewals will pick up any issues or noncompliance with basic standards especially if the vehicle is on a Special Enthusiasts Vehicles Scheme (SEVS) register or alike.