



Four Wheel Drive NSW & ACT, INC

GPO Box 1371, Parramatta, NSW, 2124
Phone: 1800 646 630, Fax: 1800 650 664
secretary@4wdnsw-act.asn.au

26 July, 2009

The Hon. Michael Daley MP, Dip Law
Governor Macquarie Tower
1 Farrer Place,
Sydney, NSW, 2000

Dear Minister Daley,

Re: Press Release “Tough New Rules for Car Hoons”; 16 July, 2009

We represent over 90 Four Wheel Drive Clubs across NSW and ACT and approximately 10,000 members and their families. The response from our membership to the above Press Release has been unanimous both in its condemnation of the description calling 4WD owners “hoons” and in the concerns about the future impact the new regulations VSI 50 will have on the routine changes made to 4WD vehicles relevant to the wide variety of applications for which they are purchased.

For your information, the 90 plus clubs in NSW are scattered over the state, and whilst many are in Sydney, many are also in country towns. Our membership ranges from office workers, trade people, farmers, essential services, and both public and private sector employers. The age range is equally broad but concentrates in the 40 to 60 range and there are a very high percentage of families including young children. It is about as far from the “hoon” category as you can get and the Clubs themselves all adhere to a strict code of conduct.

The label of “hoon” ignores the demographics of who buys 4WDs and why people modify them. “Lifting” a vehicle is undertaken for certain reasons:

- a) It improves ride and handling on rough roads and especially when a vehicle is fully loaded and when properly designed. Many today are used by grey nomads or caravaners to take the higher loads and provide clearance.
- b) It provides additional ground clearance which improves the vehicles ability to move over difficult off road terrain (but on formed tracks) without damaging the undercarriage.
- c) Lifted vehicles have a legitimate role for many users such as for work in outback or in difficult terrain. Many 4WD Clubs participate in community work with NPWS, Forests, and Dept. of Lands, on terrain difficult for standard 4WD vehicles.

We are aware that the main reason for this restrictive regulation is safety and clearly organisations like ours support measures which will make a difference. We are aware the RTA is concerned about differing vehicle trim heights and about the presence of super modified vehicles. However, we doubt these measures will achieve much when you consider the very wide range of vehicles in the market place of varying road heights, size and shape. The latter category could have been dealt with by more specific regulation. We also doubt these regulations will be effective against the real hoons in our society who don't care what regulations exist and use illegal or backyard methods to make their modifications. All you will achieve is create cost for those who legitimately need to modify their vehicle.

The introduction of these measures has been hasty and ill considered and there has been no real consultation with organisation like the 4WD Association or the Australian Automotive Aftermarket Association (AAAA) who each can bring specialist skills and experience to the issues we all confront on the roads. Our organisation is a registered training organisation and safety is a major part of the training courses delivered to 4WD Clubs. The AAAA has also recently conducted swerve and brake tests in cooperation with Queensland Transport which clearly indicated “lifted or modified” vehicles to 75mm performed as well or better than



Four Wheel Drive NSW & ACT, INC

GPO Box 1371, Parramatta, NSW, 2124
Phone: 1800 646 630, Fax: 1800 650 664
secretary@4wdnsw-act.asn.au

standard vehicles. Vehicles lifted 75mm we believe represent a majority of modifications i.e. they consist of 50mm suspension lift and net 25mm in tyre size and have now been unnecessarily affected by these changes.

We strongly urge you to delay the implementation of these measures to allow adequate consultation and to ensure that what changes are introduced are well understood, and fully communicated. Already there is uncertainty existing for those who have modifications in progress. There are many people whose lives, businesses, and income will be very quickly impacted by these new regulations. The fact that all modifications must now be approved will put enormous pressures with the RTA and on the limited numbers of qualified engineers. This alone suggests a system of self certification that modifications have been fitted in accordance with the manufacturers specifications or instructions, must be quickly implemented.

We would like to meet and discuss these matters as a matter of urgency because of the unnecessary impact on our members and the community at large. In the meantime we are urging our members to write to their own MP, to you, and to the Premier making their views clear. We likewise will pursue this matter at all levels as an unnecessary impost on members. We have also written to the Federal Government as this appears to be yet another example of this state acting independently and creating yet more differences between state regulations.

Four Wheel Drive NSW & ACT strongly urge you to delay implementation and allow full consultation with relevant Associations to begin.

Yours sincerely

Greg Redfern, President
Contact: (M) 0408202524
President@4wdnsw-act.asn.au