

## **Submission to Change The Current Classic Car Import Scheme.**

### **Introduction:**

My name is Patrick Goodall. I am a 53 year old male, who has been involved in classic cars and clubs since I was 15 years old. I have been the foundation member of two Hot Rod clubs and am currently in an ASRF affiliated Hot Rod club. I currently own a classic Buick, basically stock, a Chevy Nova , (American) project and a 1933 Chevrolet Tourer Hot Rod project. As this is my field of interest and experience, This submission relates only to this area, that is **Section 17** of the Act.

While I have not been directly involved with importing classic cars and hot rods from the United States, many of my friends have done so and I am familiar with the current legislation that the Department is operating under.

### **Background:**

As stated by others, I believe that the current legislation, with its 1989 cut-off date for modifications, was bought in under the Button Plan, in order to protect the Australian Automobile Manufacturing Industry. This was an admirable aim at the time, as it was obvious that the industry was ultimately not self-supporting and independently sustainable. Hence, the merging of many manufacturers and subsequent model sharing. Fast forward 25 years and it has become obvious that the industry can still not continue in its current form, even with extensive Government support and may ultimately not exist at all in the near future.

The reason for the existence of this legislation is therefore no longer valid. While Australia has a relatively small aftermarket and low volume construction industry, (compared to other countries), I don't believe that this area will be adversely affected by the removal of the 1989 "manufacture" date. In fact they may well benefit from this action, as imported vehicles may need alteration to comply with local and federal safety laws, hence creating more business in this field.

### **The Issue:**

In my view, there is no rationale for the existing pre 1989 date to continue. Many US cars imported today by enthusiasts are stock, as the factory built them, or have modifications to make them safer, cleaner running, more economical and easier to drive.

Today in the USA, there are thousands of aftermarket companies supplying quality parts in order to accomplish these aims. Disc brake conversions, fuel injection systems, anti-lock brakes, safer steering columns, safer seating, quality accessories, (Mirrors, wipers, air conditioning for examples), all make these classic cars and hot rods safer and more comfortable to drive.

It appears nonsensical to ban cars fitted with these items, just because they were not fitted before an arbitrary date. In fact, If we turn the situation around, its acceptable to import a 1964 Ford Mustang with small drum brakes on the front, fuel greedy 4 barrel carburettors, inefficient ignition systems with contact points, no anti sway bars, and manual steering, yet a similar model with disc brakes, (not available in 1964), HEI ignition, sway bars and power steering would be unlikely to gain Import Approval. An impartial onlooker would shake their head in amazement at this situation.

Another example would be a 1965 Chevrolet Nova, fitted with drum brakes all round being legal to import, however a 1963 Chevrolet Nova fitted with aftermarket "Wilwood" 4 spot disc brakes and a booster, being illegal to import because the brakes were updated later than 1989.

All vehicles imported under the current scheme have to comply with State and Federal safety regulations, and these modifications, (i.e. Australian Compliance Seat belts, headlights etc.) are always done when the vehicle arrives in Australia, thereby creating work for compliance services and others offering this work. Safety is therefore not compromised by the opening up of the current strict interpretation of the Import regulations.

**Safety:**

I accept the overriding intention of this Act is the safety of vehicles on Australian Roads. As a long time Hot Rod and Classic car enthusiast, I only know of very few injury accidents involving these types of vehicle. As this community is relatively small, but well covered by the special interest media, any such incident rapidly becomes widely known. As to the percentage of injury accidents resulting from non-compliance of these vehicles, this would be an extremely small number. The latest available statistics involving non-imported "everyday cars", as reported in the Traffic Crash Statistics in Queensland (2009), report only three road fatalities out of 331, attributable to Vehicle Defects (less than 1%). Overall there were 246 crashes out of over 12,014 attributed to Vehicle Defects (less than 2%). Qld Transport does not appear to publish statistics relating to crashes involving vehicles imported under Section 17 of the Act. Consequently, as all imported classic American cars must be fully roadworthy prior to registration, I do not believe that overall road safety would be compromised by this Act being changed to allow a larger range of enthusiast cars to be imported.

**Conclusion:**

There is a very large Classic and Enthusiast car community in this country. This can be verified by merely looking at the number of enthusiast magazines sold every month, without even looking into other areas, such as car shows that are on continuously every weekend throughout Australia, and the various forums and clubs on the Internet.

Classic Cars are also a solid investment base, especially for the high-dollar Show and Semi- Show cars, which currently cannot be imported legally. Examples of Dodge Chargers, Cadillacs and other similar vehicles fetching 6 figure sums at auction are not uncommon.

Opening up the regulations would not cost the Government anything, conversely they would actually benefit by an increase in vehicle values relating to GST and Import Duty.

Removing the archaic legislation currently in force would eventuate in safer, more usable enthusiast vehicles on our roads.

Yours Sincerely

Patrick Goodall