

## 150 in Territory's Cannonball Run

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Author: Bill Tuckey  
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THE inaugural Cannonball Run starts in Darwin on Sunday, amid fears that someone may need the services of the high-speed Honda Prelude-mounted paramedics.

The event, organised by former race driver Allan Moffat, will see around 150 cars (some dubious) of various ages and with potential top speeds of up to 330 kmh run down the Stuart Highway to Ayers Rock and back, with some stages over closed road sections, others with the road still open to the public.

Some concerns have been expressed that only a few of the competitors are of known reputation and skill like Sir Jack Brabham, who will be running the fastest car, the Jaguar XJ220; most appear not to have had any motor sport experience at all.

Moffat says that strict times and speed limits will be placed on some sections of road, with points deducted for early arrival and exceeding set limits. However, one can only think that many who have paid the \$7500 entry fee for the privilege of driving as fast as they like on a road they can use free at any time are there more to see just how fast their cars will go, rather than for the honor and glory.

The Prelude is a 230 kmh VTi-R supplied by Honda Australia to Mobile Medical Services, and will be staffed by Dr Joe Cordaro and clinic specialist Martin Toohey. It will run mid-field, but one hopes they don't have any work to do.

Export contracts.

A COUPLE of nice export contracts have come to light, which will help boost Australia's growing reputation as a vehicle and component supplier to the world. In the port of Brisbane this week five new Louisville L800 heavy-duty trucks drove on to a roll-on-roll-off ship bound for Jakarta.

The first Louisville export is the culmination of two years' work by Ford Australia's Graeme Sheahan, with 12 more units on firm order and possibly more to come.

European and Japanese trucks have always dominated the Indonesian market, but when the Government started re-developing the port facilities to international container-handling standards, there was an opening for the big trucks needed.

Ford linked up with Indonesian Republic Motor Company, which already assembles and distributes Telstar and Laser cars, to build trucks to meet the new specifications and the Government's tough test schedule.

As well, Melbourne-based VDO Instruments has started a 10-year contract manufacturing and shipping electronic speedometers to Porsche, Lamborghini and Aston Martin. The contract calls for around 100,000 units a year over the next decade, and comes on top of existing contracts with Mercedes-Benz and BMW in Germany.

VDO supplies more than 70 per cent of the locally built cars with instruments, and expects to add Volvo, Audi, Opel and German truck-maker MAN to its list of clients for the Australian speedometers.

Vietnam car deal.

TO emphasise the world's increasing focus on the Asia-Pacific region as the next major expansion for the motor industry, the Vietnamese Government has just approved a joint venture to set up the country's first vehicle manufacturing and sales operation. The agreement makes Mitsubishi the first Japanese car maker to penetrate the Vietnamese market.

The joint venture sees a 25 per cent share each for Mitsubishi Motors, Mitsubishi Corporation, the Malaysian maker Proton (which has technical manufacturing ties with Mitsubishi), and a local company called Vietranscimex. Initial equity capital will be \$US2 million (\$A2.75 million), rising to \$16 million, with a total investment of \$50 million.

The first vehicle assembled will be the Mitsubishi Delica minibus, starting next March at the rate of 5000 a year, rising to 12,000, but this will lead to assembly of the Malaysian Proton range - at present two models, the old Saga and the new Wira (the latter based on the Mitsubishi Lancer).

There's also a strong rumor that Mitsubishi Motors and an unnamed Malaysian financier are running a feasibility study on setting up in China, but Toyota and Volkswagen are already there.

V8 anniversary.

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WHILE we're in anniversary mode, it's 25th birthday time this month for Holden's amazing Aussie V8, now one of the most effective and efficient V8s in the world, despite its age and the fact it was almost killed off by management in 1984.

The remarkable engine, now in 5.7-litre as well as five-litre form, is the first and only Australian designed and built V8 produced in volume, starting with the launch of the 1969 HT model with either 4.2 litres or five litres.

More than 450,000 have been built since, and have gone into police pursuit cars and race cars alike, as well as open-wheeler race cars, power boat trucks and off-road vehicles. When word got out in 1984 that Holden was thinking of killing it off, around 15,000 letters hit the desk of the managing director Chuck Chapman, pleading for it to be saved.

This resulted in approval a year later to build a fuel-injected version, which appeared first in the 1988 VL Group A Commodore and in volume with the 1989 VN range. Holden's Engine Company has done continual refinement on it since, and there are now four versions, ranging from the standard 165 kilowatts up to 215. What was that about an old dog for a hard road? Driver-rider training.

THERE'S apparently a slight shift in police and Government attitudes towards better driver-rider training as an alternative to terrorising road users with increased penalties, and two new moves seem timely.

The Driver Education Centre of Australia (DECA) has bought a new site in North Altona to house all its training facilities, and Honda Australia has opened at Kilsyth its second Honda Australia Rider Training (HART) centre.

DECA grew out of the Shepparton-based and partly Education Department-funded operation into one of Australia's biggest, re-training drivers in everything up to heavy trucks and coaches.

It has bought a 1.6-hectare former primary school site in Miller's Road. When it opens in August, says DECA managing director Ian Busby, it will comprise nine refurbished classrooms, offices, parking for the training fleet and a reinforced-concrete handling area.

The original \$1.2 million HART centre opened in 1989 at Honda's national headquarters in Sharp's Road, Tullamarine. It has been an enormous success, so much in demand that it's booked three months ahead and runs seven days a week. It's a non-profit operation that trains beginners to advanced riders, with VicRoads accreditation to test for and issue learner permits.

The new centre is on 5000 square metres of track area in Colchester Road, Kilsyth, and runs Thursday to Monday at the moment, offering the same levels of training as Tullamarine.

Winton crowd-puller.

ORGANISERS are going to be flat out getting through a total of 44 races at the traditional Winton historic meeting next weekend, (28-29 May) Australia's most popular historic meeting, the 18th Winton will see more than 350 cars and bikes, and will probably pull its usual crowd of around 10,000.

It isn't just the racing, for which there's no prize money - just trophies or sponsors' products. It is what turns up in the car parks in the display areas for special-interest cars and bikes. There's some astonishing stuff there, the ground soaked with the tears of onlookers sobbing: "I had one of those when I was younger and I loved it dearly and my wife made me sell it when she got pregnant", or similar three-hanky tales.

The track is just 10 kilometres north of Benalla off the Hume Freeway, and racing starts at 1pm on Saturday and 9.15am on Sunday. Entry fees are \$ per head Saturday and \$10 Sunday, with another \$2 to get into the paddock area and children 14-and-under admitted free.

That's a bargain compared with "real" race meetings, where you'll be lucky to see six events in a day. Winton historic is traditionally a real family day out - just like motor sport used to be before the world went mad. I'll see you there - just don't start telling me about the cars you owned and how they don't make 'em like they used to.

Peugeot Club's 40th.

ON THE same weekend, the Victorian Peugeot Car Club will be celebrating its 40th birthday, with a big night on Saturday at Lou Molina's Anchor and Hope hotel in Church Street, Richmond, and on Sunday a touring assembly leaving Albert Park at 9am (for God's sake don't frighten the ducks if somebody will hit you with a placard) and driving to Arthur's Seat. Contact phone numbers are 4358557, 7620659 or 5925456.

