



# The good oil isn't a given without proof

**James McCall**

OIL is the lifeblood of an engine and performs many functions apart from lubricating internal moving parts. It is critical to use the correct oil and to change it regularly to ensure engine longevity and optimal running.

Most people are conscientious about servicing their cars and have the oil changed regularly, but recent inquiries on the type of oil being used have put a question mark over its quality.

Exacerbating the problem is the lack of industry or government checks to ensure quality. The Motor Traders' Association uses the American Petroleum Institute standard, which has a stringent certification program for engine oil but is not verified in Australia for products sold here.

The API rating is essentially a world standard and is recognised by manufacturers around the world.

Australia has no independent API-like certification system in place so it is left up



to oil companies to ensure that what is written on oil container labels is true and correct. Very few industries rely on self-certification to ensure quality.

API certification gives consumers and vehicle manufacturers an assurance that what they are pouring into their vehicles' engines is the right specification for that engine.

For an oil company to claim an API rating means that their products undergo extensive and regular testing for compliance by the American Petroleum Institute. In Australia such an API certification is rare because of the lack of a testing system.

Some of the biggest oil

brands sold in Australia self-test and do not bother with certification, opening the door to inferior oils and unscrupulous trade practices, potentially making Australia a perfect dumping ground for inferior oil.

Using poor or the wrong quality oil can result in non-compliance with a manufacturer's specification and more insidious problems such as engine damage, premature engine wear and engine failure.

The MTA wants to educate consumers and service centre proprietors about the importance of following manufacturer's specifications and asking for properly certified oils as part of the regular service process.

Many vehicle handbooks refer to the use of certified products so prudent consumers should look for the API or equivalent certification badge on the oil being used to service their motor vehicle.

James McCall is chief executive of the Motor Traders' Association of NSW.