

Ram trucks sell out before Australian arrival

The first shipment is gone but there are more on their way

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The first shipment of heavy-duty Dodge Ram pick-ups from the US has sold out before the first vehicle has arrived in showrooms – and despite a \$140,000-plus price.

The new distributors of Dodge Ram pick-ups in Australia have announced pricing and details ahead of the launch of two models – the 2500 and 3500 – later this year.

The Ram 2500 starts at \$139,500 plus on-road costs while the flagship 3500 starts at \$146,500.

All vehicles will be covered by a three year/100,000km warranty and roadside assistance.

Ram pick-ups will initially be available through a national network of 20 dealers, four of which are part of the Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep group. Another 10 dealers will be added next year.

Unlike other imported pick-ups converted locally from left- to right-hand-drive, these Dodge Rams have the backing of the US factory and are shipped to Australia in a partially complete state.

Upon arrival, the conversion work and finishing touches are done in a facility adjacent to Holden Special Vehicles in Melbourne.

The new business is a joint venture between the parent company of HSV, the Walkinshaw Automotive Group, and Australia's largest independent distributor, Ateco Automotive.

The vehicles have full volume compliance and meet Australian Design Rules.

Many of the parts used in the conversion are made to the same standard as the left-hand-drive vehicle.

For example, the right-hand-drive steering system – long an Achilles heel of converted vehicles – is made by the same supplier that makes the original left-hand-drive units.

The right-hand-drive dashboard is made by the same company that makes the Toyota Camry dashboard; other converters use fiberglass moulds.

The first batch of 40 pick-ups has been sold and there are more shipments already on the water.

While that number seems small, traditionally only about 350 converted pick-ups are sold in Australia each year by the likes of Queensland-based Performax and other smaller operators.

But the new joint venture between Ateco and the Walkinshaw Group – called American Special Vehicles – hopes to grow the US pick-up business in Australia once customers know they can get converted vehicles that match factory quality.

“The response has been overwhelming,” said Peter McGeown, the joint CEO of American Special Vehicles.

“What’s clear is that the buyers of these types of vehicles do appreciate and understand the difference between a factory-backed right-hand-drive conversion and a grey market operation.”

The engineering changes were costly and extensive, but McGeown said he believes the US pick-up market in Australia has “now matured enough to demand a high quality product”.



The 2500 can tow a whopping 6989kg

The Walkinshaw Automotive Group can convert about 15 Ram pick-ups each week, once production ramps up, giving it an output of more than 700 a year.

The company has published technical details for the new Dodge Ram range – when measured against Australian Design Rules rather than US standards.

The 2500 can tow a whopping 6989kg – twice as much as the latest utes such as the Ford Ranger – and maintain a payload of 913kg.

The 3500 can ‘only’ tow 6170kg because of the stated Gross Combination Mass, but it can carry a 1713kg payload, almost double Australia’s most popular utes.

The Ram 3500 can only be driven by holders of a Light Rigid (small truck) licence because its GVM is greater than 4500kg, whereas the Ram 2500 can be driven on a car licence.

Both models are powered by a 6.7-litre Cummins turbo diesel in-line six-cylinder engine producing 276kW of power and a staggering 1084Nm of torque, matched to a six-speed automatic transmission.

Standard fare includes six airbags (including “curtain” airbags that cover the front and rear seats), electronic stability control, rear park assist and rear view camera and a tyre pressure monitoring system.

The first deliveries of the new Ram pick-up range are due in December.