

# ***SPORTS SEDAN NEWS***

Members Newsletter No. 20105



**Chris Jackson 2009 NSW SPORTS SEDAN STATE CHAMPION**



**Simon Copping 2009 ASSA NSW CLUB CHAMPION**

## In This Newsletter

- Your Committee Page 2
- President's Report Page 3
- Vice President's Report Page 4
- ASSA Calendar of Events for 2010 Page 6
- NSW Sports Sedans Static Display Page 7
- Entries for Round 3 Eastern Creek Page 11
- Can I Help? Page 11
- Sports Sedans DVDs For Sale Page 11
- Point Scores Page 12
- Round 4 Wakefield Park Page 13
- Round Sponsorship Page 14
- Club Meetings for 2010 Page 14
- New Website Page 15
- Newsletter Submissions Page 15
- Have Your Entry Fees Paid For Page 15
- ASSA Membership 2010 Page 16
- 2010 Best Presented Award Page 16
- Used Tyre Register Page 17
- Classifieds Page 17
- The Final Word Page 18

## Your Committee

The ASSA NSW committee continues to work hard on increasing grid numbers and overall member participation for 2010. Some strategies discussed at previous meetings and mentioned in the last newsletter have already been adopted, and further avenues are still being explored to make Sports Sedans in NSW more competitive, more rewarding and more accessible.

The committee has been individually contacting members and Sports Sedan owners, to ascertain who will be on track for 2010. The results have been good, with almost 20 starters at the opening round of the championship at Eastern Creek and 14 entries for Round 2 at Wakefield Park. We are hoping to carry that momentum into Round 3 at Eastern Creek, with the aim of at least 20 Sports Sedans on the grid.

### **The ASSA NSW committee for 2010 is:**

President	Andrew McKellar	0430 717 622	<a href="mailto:gizzmo15@optusnet.com.au">gizzmo15@optusnet.com.au</a>
Vice President	Sean Sullivan	0419 851 085	<a href="mailto:seansull@au1.ibm.com">seansull@au1.ibm.com</a>
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Committee	Jeff Brown	0418 640 495	<a href="mailto:brownjt@tpg.com.au">brownjt@tpg.com.au</a>
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Committee	Erik Gattermeier	0408 296 501	<a href="mailto:erik@bavariacars.com.au">erik@bavariacars.com.au</a>

## President's Report

With Round 2 done and dusted, and a bit of a time gap before Round 3 comes along, the opportunity to promote Sports Sedans arose with the World Time Attack event at Eastern Creek over the third weekend in May. ASSA NSW had a display set up, which is detailed in a report later in this newsletter. The display was definitely a success, due in no small part to the dedication of those members, families and mates who put their cars up, turned up at the track to help out and assisted with the preparation in the weeks leading up to the event. Check out the report and photos to see what *your* club is doing to promote *your* sport.

From my own perspective, I was pretty happy to have the Soarer there on display, considering the delays thus far in its construction. The decision to include the Soarer came about after Jeff Brown's Falcon was damaged, and having the 71 car there proved to be popular with the "Fast & Furious" spectators in attendance. My thanks go to Anthony MacReady for helping get the car to a point where it was able to go on display and Kevin Ireland for his unending assistance with preparing the car and loading it onto the transporter.

Work in other areas has not stopped either, and I'm glad to report it looks like we'll have over 20 entries for Round 3 at Eastern Creek, including a couple of new drivers and some of the National teams. Better still, it is confirmed that we'll have around 10 Victorian U2L Sports Sedans competing at Wakefield Park for Round 4 in August, as it will be included as a round of their championship. So all you people I have spoken to who have not competed this year because "*my car is not fast enough*" or "*there is nobody to race against*", here's your chance to shine. Check out the details later in this newsletter for information on the races, a State of Origin award and plans for a social event on the Saturday night.

Planning for the Presentation Night in November is about to commence, so if you have an idea of a venue, the format of the evening, who should be involved or whatever, please contact me or a member of the committee.

Meanwhile the efforts on preparing the Soarer are progressing (albeit slowly), with a possible on-track start some time prior to 2025...

Cheers,

Andrew McKellar  
President  
ASSA NSW



## Vice President's Report

**Super-Lap Saturday:** What an awesome event!

For the un-initiated, there were weeks of planning and preparation leading up to the event. Many people were involved who contributed their time, services and vehicles. As mentioned in the report later in this newsletter, this was not just a Car Show. The Sports Sedan showcase required the support of transport vehicles, cars, crew, drivers, owners, builders, family, partners, sponsors, supporters and spectators. Thank you to all involved!

It was an impressive sight. Five beautifully presented cars, arranged in front of the AGM trailer and awning. Overhead, a huge ASSA banner attracting spectators to our display.

The centerpiece was Jo Said's beautifully presented Fiat 124 (Ferrari red I think), bonnet off and revealing just a glimpse of space frame and engine to attract just about every spectator in the vicinity. On the left side we had some very serious muscle with Chris Jackson's Calibra, which later shed some skin to expose its thoroughbred bloodline. On the right side, Anthony Macready's 300ZX was just too sizzling hot for several spectators I witnessed (Nissan fans I guess) who lingered endlessly, drooling and sighing in anticipation of a lap of their dreams.

To the rear of the display flanking each side we had Andrew McKellar's (almost complete) Toyota Soarer (in rich metallic blue) which was the dream-build of many spectators who were trying to realise their own dreams. Tastefully balancing the right flank, Simon Copping's awesome Commodore (with pristine engine bay on display) completed the palette of Sports Sedans (dare I say *real supercars*) on show.

In the background, running continuously on a large LCD screen, was an assortment of specially prepared videos and photos from previous rounds of the State Championships. It still sent a tingle up my spine watching the final round at Oran Park while a crowd of spectators was building around us.

Bringing the whole show and sport into the reach of the spectators was the team of glamorous Gals and Guys all wearing the ASSA uniform, providing a coordinated and professional touch to the presentation which included fabulous colour posters and driver portfolios as spectator hand-outs.

I'd like to reiterate my appreciation to all the people who made this event possible. It made me very proud to participate at such a professional showcase, representing our club and our category.

Congratulations and Well Done to everybody involved.

**Mine's better than Yours.....** Or is it ?

If you managed to drag yourself away from the awesome Sports Sedan show case and peer over the fence for a few moments, you should have noticed some pretty impressive cars pushing the envelope and achieving some quite remarkable times in the Super-Lap event.

The competing vehicles were meant to be floorpan/factory based models and as you'd imagine some of the quickest included an amazing EVO (4WD) pulling 1:30's. At insane amounts of boost (50psi), it's a wonder these cars hold together at all, and that's when you start to look a little closer.

One of my most interesting conversations revealed some details about these cars which helped me understand how they go so quick, but much to my disappointment it's not an apples to apples comparison. I mean, a Sports Sedan would be considered an endurance car compared to some of these Super-Lap cars.

Under the covers of one of these cars was a carbon-fibre chassis that looked like an F1 car, containing sophisticated engine management, electronics, traction control with every driver aid you could think of, but the real highlight was the special compound tyres which were so soft – they lasted a massive 3 Laps.

Despite my feeble attempt at a comparison between categories, whichever way you look at it – these cars are still very quick.

Further down the field there are plenty cars which would qualify nicely in the sports sedan category. On reflection, there must be an opportunity to attract some of these cars to our State rounds. Our Sports Sedan display was a fabulous opportunity to show case our category and we certainly attracted many spectators. Now we just need to figure out a way to connect with these potential members and future racers.



Sean Sullivan  
President  
ASSA NSW



## ASSA (NSW) CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2010

- ~~Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> January – Committee Meeting~~
- ~~Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> February – Committee Meeting~~
- ~~Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March – Committee Meeting, **General Meeting**~~
- ~~6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> March **Nationals Round 1** Wakefield Park~~
- ~~13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> March **NSW Round 1** Eastern Creek~~
- ~~Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> April – Committee Meeting~~
- ~~10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> April **NSW Round 2** Wakefield Park~~
- ~~Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> May – Committee Meeting, **General Meeting**~~
- ~~21<sup>st</sup>/22<sup>nd</sup> May Super Lap Event Eastern Creek (ASSA Static Display)~~
- ~~29<sup>th</sup>/30<sup>th</sup> May **Nationals Round 2** Mallala~~
- Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> June – Committee Meeting
- 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> June **NSW Round 3** Eastern Creek
- Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> July – Committee Meeting
- Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> August – Committee Meeting, **General Meeting**
- 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> August **Nationals Round 3** Morgan Park
- 28<sup>th</sup>/29<sup>th</sup> August **NSW Round 4** Wakefield Park
- Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> September – Committee Meeting
- 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> September **Nationals Round 4** Eastern Creek
- Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> October – Committee Meeting
- 23<sup>rd</sup>/24<sup>th</sup> October **NSW Round 5** Eastern Creek
- 23<sup>rd</sup>/24<sup>th</sup> October **Nationals Round 5** Sandown
- Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> November – Committee Meeting, **Presentation Night and Annual General Meeting**
- Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> December – Committee Meeting

## **NSW Sports Sedans Static Display, World Time Attack Eastern Creek**

In an effort to promote Sports Sedans as a category, to attract more competitors and reconnect with motor sport spectators so that we see more people interested in coming to watch, ASSA NSW put on a static display during the World Time Attack event at Eastern Creek on 21-22 May. Overall the display was a great success, with numerous enquiries about the cars, the category and the championship from genuinely interested potential competitors and a huge number of spectators walking through the display, obtaining information packs, checking out the cars and chatting with the drivers and crews.

We had five cars on display, with the backdrop provided by Anthony MacReady's car transporter. Thanks must go to the members who volunteered their cars for the display:



**Joe Said, Fiat 124**



**Simon Copping, Holden Commodore**



**Andrew McKellar, Toyota Soarer**



**Anthony MacReady, Nissan 300ZX**



**Chris Jackson, Holden/Opel Calibra**

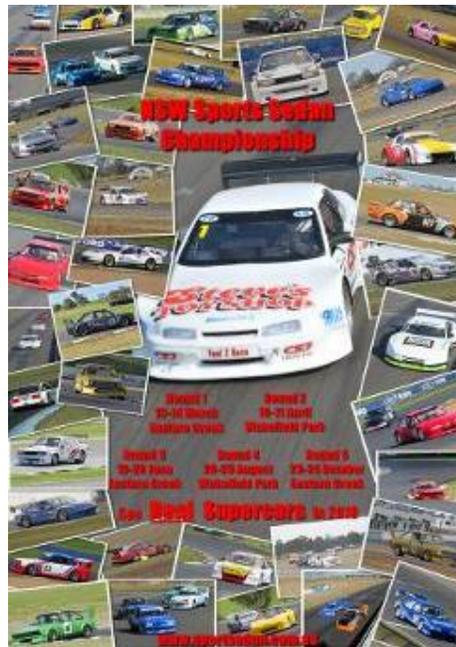
The display went together well and presented Sports Sedans professionally and invitingly to competitors and spectators alike:



The display also included music videos of Sports Sedans, which proved popular with spectators and some of our drivers too...



About 100 Sports Sedan Information Packages were handed out, with about the same number of posters given away as well. Thanks to Terry Denovan for all his efforts in preparing and producing the information packs, which were turned out looking professional and generated a lot of interest amongst spectators who wanted detailed information about the category, cars and drivers.



Special thanks must go to our “promo girls” Gail and Dee, who were on their feet all day handing out packages and posters, talking and providing information to potential members, competitors and spectators, and enticing people into the display for a closer look at the cars. Their hard work on the day provided us with several genuine inquiries from potential new members and competitors and even a possible series sponsor. Thank you to both girls, who no doubt are only just thawing out and getting over the frost bite.

Thanks also to Gail and Anthony MacReady who put in a lot of effort in preparation prior to the weekend and produced the profile display boards for all the cars. Having the same format for all the profiles looked fantastic and the idea of putting the fastest lap times up was inspired.

Kevin Ireland deserves special mention as well. Kevin turned up before 7am on the Friday, tirelessly assisted with setting up the whole display (which included the cars, trailer, AV gear, canopies and tow cars), stayed the whole day providing help, then was back on Saturday afternoon to lend a hand and pack the whole lot up. Kevin also spent time on Thursday night sorting the transporter for the Soarer, and packing all the display equipment into the trailer. Thanks Kev, great job.

Thanks also to Simon Copping's sponsor Bob McDonald, who was there for the two days manning the display and wondering through the pits chatting with competitors about coming to play in real races instead of doing glorified lap dashes. A couple of the enquiries we had were generated by Bob's efforts in getting the Sports Sedan message out, which is very much appreciated.



Round 4 sponsor **Air Technology Australia** also had a presence at the display over the two days, with Rod McKellar on hand to take charge of the AV equipment and chat with potential competitors about the benefits of running with Sports Sedans.

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Jeff Brown gave up his Friday to help set up the display and stayed throughout the day doing lots of running around and liaising with spectators, despite the fact that his car was no longer available for the display. Chris Jackson and Brock ??? showed up on Saturday with the BBQ and cooked lunch for everyone manning the display, which was very much appreciated.

Without the help of Gail, Dee, Kev, Bob, Jeff and Rod the whole display would not have been nearly as successful as it was, so once again thank you to all of you for your time and efforts.

And finally thanks must go to Erik Gattermeier, who hit us up with the whole crazy idea in the beginning, and who did a lot of work in the lead-up to the event liaising with the World Time Attack organisers and sorting out some of the display logistics for us. Nice idea Erik, we need more promotion of Sports Sedans and this was a great opportunity that we were able to take advantage of due to your input.

## **Entries for Round 3, Eastern Creek**

Round 3 of the NSW Sports Sedan Championship is nearly upon us, scheduled for 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> June.

Entry forms have been emailed out and are also available on the Eastern Creek website. As mentioned in the President's Report we are looking to get over 20 Sports Sedans on the grid for Round 3 so if you haven't sent your entry in yet, jump on now and get it sorted so you don't miss out on the fun.

Round 3 will be sponsored by:



And:



## **Can I Help?**

Do you know someone who owns a Sports Sedan?

Are they competing, or not?

If they aren't, do you know why?

Is there a Sports Sedan just sitting in someone's shed, begging to be raced?

The committee is working hard to entice more cars onto Sports Sedan grids this year, so if you know someone with a car in their shed, why not help the cause by trying to get them onto the track? Have a chat to them; see what you can do to assist!

And if you *are* that person, with a perfectly good Sports Sedan locked away, get it out of the garage, put it on the track and come racing. The more the merrier.

## **Sports Sedans DVDs For Sale**

A bit of interest was generated at the static display at Eastern Creek in relation to the Sports Sedan music videos that were playing. If you would like to obtain copies of the clips they are available for sale on DVD. There are 7 clips in total on 2 DVDs, with 6 music videos and 1 unedited on-board camera video from Jeff Brown's Falcon at the final 2009 round at Oran Park.

The 2-DVD pack costs \$5 for members and \$10 for non-members, and can be ordered through Andrew McKellar.

## Point Scores

The NSW State Championship point score after Round 2:

2010 Sports Sedans NSW State Championship Point Score						
	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	Round 5	Total
Jackson, Chris	57	62	0	0	0	119
MacReady, Anthony	54	52	0	0	0	106
Smith, Graham	49	50	0	0	0	99
Copping, Simon	37	38	0	0	0	75
Brown, Jeff	42	30	0	0	0	72
Leithhead, Andrew	35	31	0	0	0	66
Sullivan, Sean	20	35	0	0	0	55
Polovic, Berry	49	0	0	0	0	49
Millar, Kerry	18	30	0	0	0	48
Stevens, Garry	0	42	0	0	0	42
Auld, Michael	30	0	0	0	0	30
Smith, Nick	0	28	0	0	0	28
Said, Joseph	25	0	0	0	0	25
Martin, Bill	0	9	0	0	0	9
Denovan, Terry	0	0	0	0	0	0
Folioni, Carlo	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gattermeier, Erik	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gattermeier, Herbert	0	0	0	0	0	0
McKellar, Andrew	0	0	0	0	0	0
McLeod, Peter	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nolan, Denis	0	0	0	0	0	0
Shiels, Stephen	0	0	0	0	0	0
Whittaker, Geoffery	0	0	0	0	0	0

And the ASSA NSW Club Championship point score:

2010 NSW ASSA Club Championship Point Score	
	Total
Copping, Simon	118
Jackson, Chris	115
MacReady, Anthony	106
Leithhead, Andrew	103
Smith, Graham	99
Sullivan, Sean	86
Millar, Kerry	77
Brown, Jeff	72
Polovic, Berry	49
Stevens, Garry	42
Auld, Michael	37
Smith, Nick	28
Said, Joseph	26
Martin, Bill	13
Denovan, Terry	0
McKellar, Andrew	0
Whittaker, Geoff	0



[www.bavariacars.com.au](http://www.bavariacars.com.au)

## **Round 4, Wakefield Park**

Round 4 of the championship is scheduled for 28<sup>th</sup>/29<sup>th</sup> August at Wakefield Park. For the event we are playing host to the U2L Sports Sedans from Victoria. The weekend is a round of their championship, so there'll be about 10 U2L cars making the trip up to compete. As mentioned in the President's Report, all you people with U2L cars in NSW who have not wanted to hit the track because there wouldn't be anyone to race against, here's your chance. I expect we'll see a number of NSW people encouraged to enter for the round, which will mean the field will be dominated by the smaller cars, and that's a good thing.

As the usual format for the U2L championship rounds is to have one qualifying session and 4 races, Wakefield Park has agreed to stage an extra Sports Sedan race on the Saturday afternoon. The extra race will be for U2L and floorpan cars only, so the chance for some of the non-spaceframe cars in our category to have a go and to shine is better than ever before.

The weekend is also the first of two rounds of the U2L Club X Cup, which the Victorian guys are happy to have NSW U2L cars competing for. Here's how the Club X Cup is awarded, according to the U2L website:

### ***The Club X Cup***

*Proudly supported by Club X and is a inter-championship cup thats held over 2 rounds of the championship, they will be Rds 4 and 5 of this years championship. The basic rules are as shown:*

*The best lap time set in qualifying will be recorded, and for each lap that you match your qualifying time you will be rewarded with 3 Club X Cup points for the Cup. This is for each race.*

*EG. At Calder if you qualify with say 1min 05.37 then every lap that you do for the weekend that is in the 1 min 05's you will get 3 points. Say you did 4 laps in the 1.05's then you would get 12 points regardless of your position for that race.*

The Club X Cup prize also includes \$500 cash, so maybe it's time a few of our U2L cars in NSW got involved and got on track to have a go.

During the Wakefield Park weekend we will also be playing host to a State of Origin type challenge between NSW and Victoria, the rules and point scoring of which will be sent out in a later newsletter. There will be a perpetual shield awarded to the winning State, and individual trophies for the winning cars.

An organised social event for the Saturday evening is also being planned. The social event at the last Wakefield Park round proved a success, and the next one promised to be better. Due to the cold weather the social event will be held indoors, with the most likely venue being the Goulburn Workers Club, where we will book a function room. Keep an eye on future newsletters for more details.



## **Round Sponsorship**

A number of businesses have lent financial support to the ASSA and the championship this year. Advertisements for our sponsors will appear throughout the newsletters and on our cars at each round of the championship. The committee would like to thank the following businesses:

- CSJ Engineering (Round 1 Sponsor)
- AGM Engineering (Round 1 Sponsor)
- Bavariacars (Round 2 Sponsor)
- Doulman Automotive (Round 2 Sponsor)
- Koen Photo (Round 3 Sponsor)
- Jim Aitken & Partners (Round 3 Sponsor)
- Air Technology Australia (Round 4 and Best Presented Award Sponsor)
- Aussie Auto Art (Round 4 Sponsor)
- Syd-Fab (Round 5 Sponsor)
- Specialised On Site Fibreglass (Round 5 Sponsor)

## **Club Meetings for 2010**

An open invitation is extended to all ASSA members to attend committee meetings, which are held on the first Tuesday of each month, from 7pm. It was good to see a few members and guests take up the offer at the April meeting, which was most welcome.

In addition, all members are invited to attend general meetings to be held in March, May and August. These meetings will include guest speakers and lots of information for the benefit of all members.

The Presentation Night and Annual General Meeting are scheduled for November. A schedule of events with all meeting dates and State and National rounds is included with this newsletter.

The meeting venue is:

**The Gondola Room, Marconi Club**  
**Marconi Plaza**  
**Prairievale Rd, Bossley Park NSW 2176 (Off Cowpasture Rd)**

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## **New Website**

The new ASSA website has been uploaded to a new hosting site. The domain name has been re-registered, so the new website will have the following web address:

[www.sportsedan.com.au](http://www.sportsedan.com.au)

Our thanks go to Martin Koen who has spent a good deal of time designing the new website, and will continue to provide technical support and updates for the site in the future. The efforts of Terry Denovan who has been involved in the domain logistics, website updates and technical support are also very much appreciated.

The NSW Motor Race Advisory Panel (MRAP) now also has a website. The site includes information about the latest in NSW motor sports news, rule changes and advising, and news and results from the NSW championship categories, including Sports Sedans. You can find the website here:

[www.nswracer.com](http://www.nswracer.com)

## **Newsletter Submissions**

Was that one race just more spectacular for you? Did you get your best result ever? Did you go through three engines and a gearbox in one weekend? Why not tell everyone about it?

Member contributions for articles in the newsletter are most welcome. Our enormous editing staff (well, there's two of us) can help you out, so you'll always have an article that is in the newsletter format. Even bad spellers (like your esteemed President) can be made to look good here.

So why not have a go? Tell us your story. Get involved.

## **Have Your Event Entry Fees Paid For**

All members who enter an event will automatically go into the draw for a 2010 "lottery", with one member from each round having their entry fees for the next round paid for by the ASSA, thanks to the generosity of the businesses that have come on board this year as Round Sponsors.

Once you have been drawn out at one event, your name gets removed from future draws, so everyone who enters an event gets the chance to win. How easy is that?

Congratulations to Nick Smith, who will have his entry fees for Round 3 paid for.



## ASSA Membership for 2010

Membership fees for 2010 have been reduced significantly to \$70. New membership forms are available on the website or can be sent out on request. Membership fees can also be paid via direct deposit into the ASSA account. If you would like a new membership form to be sent to you please contact Chris Jackson.

## CSJ ENGINEERING



*Chris Jackson*

**Director**

**Ph 0409 209 480 Fax 02 46284676**

**Email: [chris@chris-jackson.com](mailto:chris@chris-jackson.com)**

## 2010 Best Presented Award

Thanks to the generosity of our sponsors, 2010 will see the awarding of a “Best Presented” prize. The award includes a perpetual trophy and an individual trophy each year. To be eligible all you have to do is turn up and race, having put a little pride and preparation into your beloved Sports Sedan. An independent judge representing one of our sponsors will allocate points at each round of the championship for the cars deemed to be best presented, with the winning car being that with the most accumulated points over the year.

The running tally after Round 2 is:

Bill Martin	Mazda RX7	3 points
Sean Sullivan	Nissan Bluebird	3 points
Simon Copping	Commodore	2 points
Jeff Brown	Ford Falcon	2 points
Andrew Leithhead	Alfa Romeo	1 point
Joe Said	Fiat 124	1 point

## AGM Engineering Pty Ltd

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### CNC Engineering Services

9 Pullman Place, Emu Plains 2750  
P: 02 4735 7214 F: 02 4735 7231  
e: [sales@agmengineering.com.au](mailto:sales@agmengineering.com.au)

## **Used Tyre Register**

Some of the front running drivers change tyres fairly frequently, and the tyres they are removing still have quite good, usable rubber for the rest of us to take advantage of by purchasing them used for a cheaper price than new tyres. If you have used tyres that you'd like to advertise in the register please send the details to Andrew McKellar, including tyre sizes, number of tyres and the price you want for them. Likewise if you are looking for tyres send the details of what size you are looking for and your request will be included in the register.

This should be a good way for all of us to save a bit of money, so take advantage of the offer when you can.

No Used Tyre Register entries for this newsletter.

## **Classifieds Section**

If you have anything you want to buy, sell or trade send the details to Andrew McKellar for inclusion in the classifieds.

### **1984 Toyota Supra For Sale**

Original condition MA61 Celica/Supra. Original paint, great condition interior, digital dash. The Momo steering wheel and Pioneer head deck are the only non-original items on this car. Very low KM for a car that is now 26 years old. The car is A1 condition mechanically with new clutch, brakes, tyres, dampers, hoses, fluids, plugs, etc. Regularly serviced and very well looked after car, and an awesome thing to drive. Registered until August, 2010.



Contact Andrew on 0430 717 622

## **The Final Word**

*For each newsletter a member will be asked to contribute a short article, on a subject matter of their choice. The article will be published as the final word, to cap off each newsletter. For this month we have no contributor, so in a follow-up of Chris Jackson's previous article on HANS devices, the following extract about the design and construction of helmets is included. The article, written by an anonymous contributor, was lifted from a Formula 1 website [www.fl1live.com](http://www.fl1live.com) and although it describes F1 technology it translates well to the helmets we wear:*

### **The Helmet**

One of the most important safety devices in Formula One racing is the driver's helmet. Although its fundamental shape may look very similar to those worn by drivers in the 1980s and even the 1970s, the underlying design and construction technology has changed radically over the years.

As late as 1985 a typical Formula One helmet weighed around 2kg. That amount increased dramatically under high-G cornering or deceleration, adding to the risk of 'whiplash' type injuries in big accidents. As head and neck trauma has been identified as the greatest single risk of injury to race drivers, helmet manufacturers place the greatest importance on reducing the mass of helmets, while increasing their strength and resistance to impacts.

Current Formula One helmets are massively strong, but they are also considerably lighter, now weighing approximately 1.25 kg. Helmets are constructed from several separate layers, offering a combination of strength and flexibility (vital to absorb the force of large impacts). The outer shell has two layers, typically fibre-reinforced resin over carbon fibre. Under that comes a layer formed of vastly strong plastic, the same material used in many bullet-proof vests. Then there is a softer, deformable layer made from a plastic based on polystyrene, covered with the flame-proof material used in racing overalls and gloves.

The visor will be made of a special clear polycarbonate, combining excellent impact protection with flame resistance and excellent visibility. Most drivers use tinted visors, the insides of which are coated with anti-fogging chemicals to prevent them misting up, particularly in wet conditions. Several transparent tear-off strips are attached to the outside. As the visor picks up dirt during the course of the race, the driver can remove these to clear his vision.

In recent seasons the actual shape of helmets has gradually evolved, as more aerodynamically efficient shapes are brought into use. Sitting directly below the main engine air intake, helmets are increasingly shaped to assist in the process of reducing drag in this notoriously high-turbulence aerodynamic area. The modern designs also reduce the lift produced by more traditionally shaped helmets - which can be anything up to 15 kg at racing speeds.

The helmet design must also provide ventilation for the driver. This is achieved through the use of various small air intakes. To prevent small particles of track debris entering the helmet these intakes are equipped with special filters.

Despite the cutting edge materials used in their construction Formula One helmets are still painted by hand, an incredibly skilled job requiring hundreds of hours of work for more complicated patterns and designs. And most drivers will go through several helmets during the course of a season.

The FIA has currently commissioned work for the development of a next generation 'super helmet' for Formula One racing, intended to improve safety standards still further, especially in conjunction with the now mandatory use of the HANS (Head And Neck Support) system.