



India makes inroads

THEY might be a bit thin on the ground now but expect to see a lot more Mahindra vehicles on our roads following the signing of a joint venture between Indian car maker Mahindra & Mahindra and its Australian partner TMI Pacific.

Sydney-based TMI emerged as the brand's importer and distributor last year and under the terms of the agreement will retain its interest in the

brand through a 20 per cent stake in the new company, Mahindra Automotive Australia. Mahindra & Mahindra By **BRENT DAVISON**

will hold the remaining 80 per cent.

New model plans for the local market, would be announced early next year.

SOME people were a little amused when Nissan officially opened the order books on its awesome R35 GT-R early last month. Some of them are

now laughing from the other side of their faces with word that, in the few weeks since the checkout line opened on October 9, the company is now holding more than 100 orders for the Porsche-munching supercar.

Nissan Australia boss Dan Thompson said early customer reaction had been "fabulous", adding that enough production had been secured to ensure that no one who wants one will miss out.

HONDA celebrated its 60th anniversary as a company recently by announcing at Milan's motorcycle show that it will have a new V4 engine in production in the first half of 2010 and a new scooter on the market next year.

The company is also developing what it calls its "next generation transmission", a twin-clutch automatic similar to transmissions used by Volkswagen, Audi and Porsche.



INDIAN INFLUENCE: Mahindra's Pik-Up has is part of the company's Aussie push



Mahindra Pik-Up fish finder

By **MALCOLM McCOSKER**

THE differences in environment could hardly be greater, from the teeming traffic chaos of its homeland in India to the vast golden beaches lapped by blue Pacific Ocean on Fraser Island.

Just as the new Mahindra Pik-Up dual cab 4WD ute could cope with any challenge given to it at home, so too could this gutsy and highly versatile vehicle conquer the worst of sand tracks, carry keen fishermen wherever they wanted to go and tow out some less fortunate bogged 4x4s for good measure.

The new Mahindra proved to be all muscle with a soft heart when it came to providing creature comforts.

One of the test mounts for our annual Fraser fishing trip, bright signage on the Mahindra left no doubt as to its make and breeding. It was also a welcome sight ploughing through the sand traps to rescue some sunburnt blokes with shovels trying to free yet another bogged vehicle on the notorious Indian Head back track.

With the rescue completed, the doughty Mahindra then journeyed down the sandy beach for a quick wash in a freshwater creek before a well deserved photo session with some of the best fish on show.

Indian auto giant Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) has astonished critics with this quantum leap into a range of modern single and dual-cab working utes offered in two and four wheel drive transmission.

The performance of our 4x4 Pik-Up on the fishing again proclaimed just how far and dramatic this leap has been.

In contrast with the rather jiggly ride of an earlier test drive model that was empty, the vehicle used on Fraser arrived with a full load to smooth out the ride, and subsequently carried enough big blokes from place to place to stay smooth.



Well pleased with this 6kg jewfish and 4kg tailor, some of our fishing party show off their catch before venturing out for another try.

Available for recommended retail price of \$29,990, this had the same 2.5 litre common rail turbo diesel engine offered in all four model choices, delivering 79kW of power at 3800rpm and 247Nm of torque at 1800rpm, mated to a practical five speed manual transmission.

Technology and refinement of the new Pik-Up range are light years ahead of its bygone tongue-in-cheek Jeep lookalike.

Now we are offered a roomy interior with excellent leg room even for rear seat passengers and good interior height. Entry and egress are assisted by side steps which are fitted as standard equipment.

It has limited slip differential on both 2WD and 4WD models, air conditioning and 4WD electrically engaged with automatic hub locks. Selection of 2WD and 4WD high or low range is made with a handy dial on the centre console directly below the left hand's position on the steering wheel.

There's also power steering, power

windows, remote central locking and a standard sound system with CD/PM3 player and radio, USB port and an SD card port that allows one to listen to music from a pen drive or CD cards.

On our fishing holiday the well back configuration was an ideal set-up to strap on a few beach rods and head down to a likely gutter when legs became tired of clambering over the rocks of Indian Head.

Such ventures paid off in a 6kg jewfish (mullaway) several 4kg tailor and a hard fighting 25kg shark when ended up as a delicious fish curry.

For a vehicle largely designed as a working truck, dash and instrument layout is visually pleasing, with a series of ovals for the speedo, tacho, fuel gauges and more ovals for the twin air-con or heating outlets in the centre dash.

Even when all good things had to come to an end and Saturday's early daylight revealed the daunting task of loading a mountain of gear for the return home, the Mahindra carried its fair share with no complaints from suspension or engine power.