



Top accessories rate as standard

Mark Hinchliffe

WHAT was once luxury equipment in a car is now considered standard. Airconditioning, power steering, remote central locking, CD-MP3 player and power windows are deemed mandatory by 90 per cent of buyers, according to a survey.

The research, conducted by vehicle importer TMI Pacific, has found that more than 97 per cent of drivers expect at least three of these items to be included as standard in a medium-priced car.

TMI Pacific chief operations officer Claire Tynan said people felt "duped" if they had to pay extra.

"The days of getting RSI from winding your windows up and down, or turning a heavy steering wheel are long gone," she said.

Less than 3 per cent of those surveyed said they wanted a basic car for a basic price with no extras included. The main feature Australian drivers could not live without was airconditioning for 45 per cent and power steering for 25 per cent.

Next were safety features, followed by "creature comforts" such as remote central locking, a CD-MP3 player and power windows.



SURPRISED at features . . . Luke Greenslade with his Mahindra Pik-Up.

"The bar has certainly been lifted," she said. TMI Pacific imports the Indian-made Mahindra Pik-Up utility vehicle, which is at the budget end of the utility market.

However, even buyers in this sector were becoming choosier, Tynan said.

"Even within the utility vehicle category, which has traditionally appealed to farmers and tradies due to their basic workhorse appeal and practical function, we're seeing consumers gravitate towards a vehicle which offers much more," she said.

"It's no longer viewed as just the

workhorse that's used only during work hours." Apprentice electrician Luke Greenslade, 21, of Buderim, needed a four-wheel-drive utility for his work, but found he did not have to compromise on "creature features".

"I was surprised when I looked inside and saw what features it had," he said.

"It's the only vehicle my wife and I own so we also use it for shopping and leisure driving."

He said he considered power steering and airconditioning the most important features.