



Safer ute reaches for the stars

Graham Smith

MAHINDRA'S progress in the Australian market might have been slow and steady but it says it is here for the long term and its revised Pik Up is proof positive of its commitment.

Key among changes the Indian carmaker has made to its tough workhorse are those aimed at lifting its safety rating to an anticipated three stars once it is tested by ANCAP.

With dual front airbags and anti-skid ABS brakes standard across the Pik Up range, Mahindra is confident it will achieve the three-star ANCAP rating.

While some Pik Up customers, notably farmers, might not appreciate the addition of airbags as they prevent them from using their vehicles to push and shove gates, equipment and stock around farms, the extra safety features are sure to appeal to city slickers.

Town dwellers are also likely to be attracted to the new grille, headlights, fog lamps, bumper and bonnet scoop that

combine to give the Pik Up a fresh new face and make it more appealing.

Add to the external makeover new ergonomically designed seats for improved comfort, a sporty gear knob and park brake lever, tilt-adjustable steering column, new fabric trim, a new CD sound system with MP3 compatibility and steering wheel controls and powered mirrors and you get the impression Mahindra is trying to reach out to buyers wanting more from their utes than the rugged reliability Mahindra has been relying on to win over sceptical Australians.

As it was in the first generation of the Pik Up, the range consists of single and dual-cab utes and cab-chassis models, with either two or four-wheel-drive and powered by a 2.5-litre common rail turbodiesel engine boasting 79 kW at 3800 revs and 247 Nm at 1800-2200 revs.

A five-speed manual gearbox is standard, there is no auto available, and the four-wheel-drive transfer case has electric selection.

The suspension is a proven tough combination of front torsion bars and rear leaf springs, the steering is power assisted and the brakes are a combo of front discs and rear





drums with standard ABS anti-skid electronics. All boast a payload of at least one-tonne, the single-cab two-wheel-drive boasting the highest at 1160kg, and all will tow up to 2.5 tonnes.

Mahindra's warranty is for three years or 100,000km and there's also 24-hour roadside assistance for three years.

Mahindra launched in the Australian market with the Pik Up two years ago as partner in a joint venture with Tynan Motor Industries but has since taken control of the operation by acquiring an 80 per cent share and renaming the company Mahindra Automotive Australia.

Taking control was necessary to advance the Mahindra cause in Australia, says Mahindra Automotive Sector International Operations executive vice-president Pravin Shah.

Shah says he is satisfied with the progress made to date and reconfirmed the commitment to stay in Australia for the

long term. When asked about sales to date, Shah refused to elaborate, saying he preferred not to speak about sales as they simply provide a yardstick for others outside Mahindra to measure his company's success.

All he would say is that they are in the thousands.

But Shah was keen to talk up the future, saying Mahindra was likely to release an SUV, the Scorpio, in coming months and had plans for all-new SUV and Pik Up models for 2011.

The new global models are being developed on all-new platforms with the intention of selling them in markets around the world.

