

From: [Dean Hogen-Esch](#)
To: [Select Committee on Personal Choice and Community Safety](#)
Subject: Vehicle Standards and Modification
Date: Thursday, 4 October 2018 2:39:41 PM

Dear Lauren Wells,

I am writing to share my frustration and issues I've had with the technical section of the Department of Transport. My experience has not been a positive one. I've dealt with bad attitudes, a severe lack of knowledge, passion and ambiguity, non-compliance with the guidelines set out for modifying vehicles, a lack of co-operation with the public and highly opinionated and unprofessional staff.

What myself and many other car enthusiasts are trying to achieve is to be allowed to safely modify our vehicles in line with the VSB14 guideline, which is enforced by the Department of Transport, and allowed a little bit of leniency and understanding if we wish to stray slightly from the guideline and come to a compromise if possible. We want to modify our vehicles the right way and have them fully engineered and legal in the state of Western Australia however the staff at the Department of Transport are blocking applications and not even following the guidelines they've set out.

There are quite a large number of car enthusiasts who spend hundreds of thousands of dollars modifying, upgrading and enhancing their vehicles as that's our passion. Not only do we wish to be able to modify the cars performance but we also spend a lot of money making these cars safer as well. It's a journey building these cars and a lot of them are family affairs. You can grab any modified car magazine and there will be countless photos of families surrounding the modified car. I personally grew up building, modifying and working on cars with my father and I'd like to be able to share the same experience when I one day have my own children.

My main experience has been with a staff member named [REDACTED] who rejected my approval stating that the engine I wished to fit was too big. I had done my research and received proof, contacted Holden for the official weights for that era vehicle, calculated the maximum engine size I was allowed and applied to fit an engine that fitted within the guideline set out in the VSB14. When I received my rejection letter I called [REDACTED] to find out why. His response was "it sounds like you're building a race car to drive on the street and I'm only going to let you fit 'x' sized engine." It didn't matter to [REDACTED] that in my approval I had also wished to fit larger and safer brakes, better steering and improved suspension making the car much safer than the standard vehicle. [REDACTED] shared a couple of other uneducated opinions, one was that a 4 door Holden Statesman is NOT a sedan, regardless of the fact the ID tag on the car clearly says sedan, and he also claimed my Holden Utility was not classified as a commercial vehicle which would make it fall under a separate part of the VSB14 also making my requested engine upgrade suitable. Yet another opinion given by [REDACTED] was that the engine I wished to fit wasn't safe to put in a 30 year old vehicle when [REDACTED] were vehicles coming out with a heavier version of the engine I wish to fit and safety upgrades were being made to the car as well. The same week my modification form was rejected, 2 other vehicles identical to mine received approval for the exact same engine because their paperwork went to an adjacent desk.

It has also come to my attention that [REDACTED] is behind a lot of the rejections and this new power to weight calculation which is mentioned in the VSB14 is his doing. It's getting increasingly difficult to perform modifications such as engine conversions as most modern engines make significant power from the factory. Fitting modern engines to earlier model vehicles brings through a significant number of positive effects for the industry, environment and road safety.

It's getting near impossible to suitably modify vehicles in the state of Western Australia and because of that the economy is paying for it. It's effecting small businesses, employment opportunities and education. There are a number of workshops in WA that are slowly closing up shop because it is becoming too hard or too impractical to modify vehicles.

Car enthusiasts invest large amounts of money into their vehicles and because of that we want to be able to drive them safely on the road and appreciate them. The majority of us have zero interest in hooning or driving in an unsafe manner and we most certainly don't wish to hurt others. To be honest we don't spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on our vehicles to mistreat them and potentially ruin them. In our minds, there's nothing more nostalgic than seeing an old car that looks brand new driving down the street.

I understand the need to control certain modifications and that's why the approvals process exists but the guidelines set out for enthusiasts aren't even being followed by your staff. In every other state of Australia qualified and experienced engineers do the approvals/rejections. The engineers understand the modifications and because of their knowledge, expertise and passion they're able to make informed decision rather than offering biased opinions. We may wish to consider doing the same thing in WA before even more small businesses are affected or to have your staff adhere to the guidelines that have already been set out. Almost every modified vehicle that goes over the inspection pits in WA has gone through a private engineering inspection as we do wish to confirm our vehicles are safe. Not only for the drivers safety but for the safety of others.

Kind regards,
Dean Högen-Esch