

NDD

INSIDE: FREE LIFT-OUT

ADVENTURE MAP

Registered by Australia Post — Publication No NBP5714

\$3.95 NZ\$5.50
(Inc. GST)

MAR '89

Overlander

AUSTRALIA'S TOP SELLING

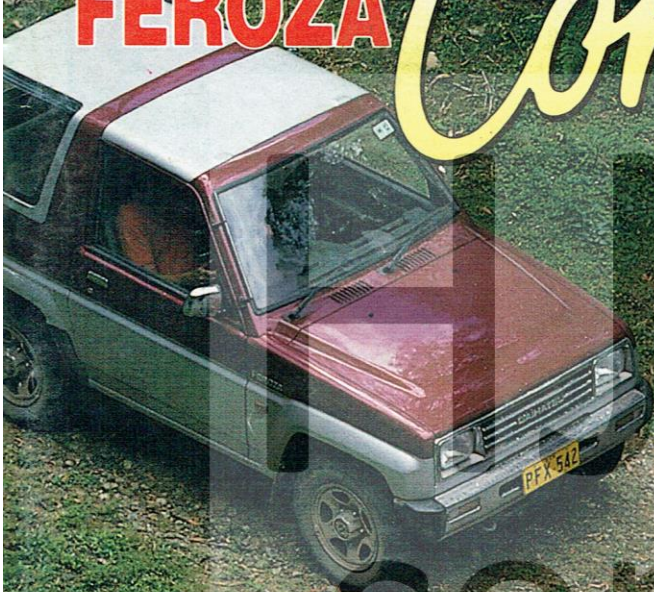
MAGAZINE

4WD

**VITARA
V
FEROZA**

Compact Shootout

OUR 4WDOTY
TAKES ON
DAIHATSU
CHALLENGER



**WHITE
LIGHTNING**



FLASH CRUISER

**HARD
RAIN . . .**

MAROONED OUTBACK

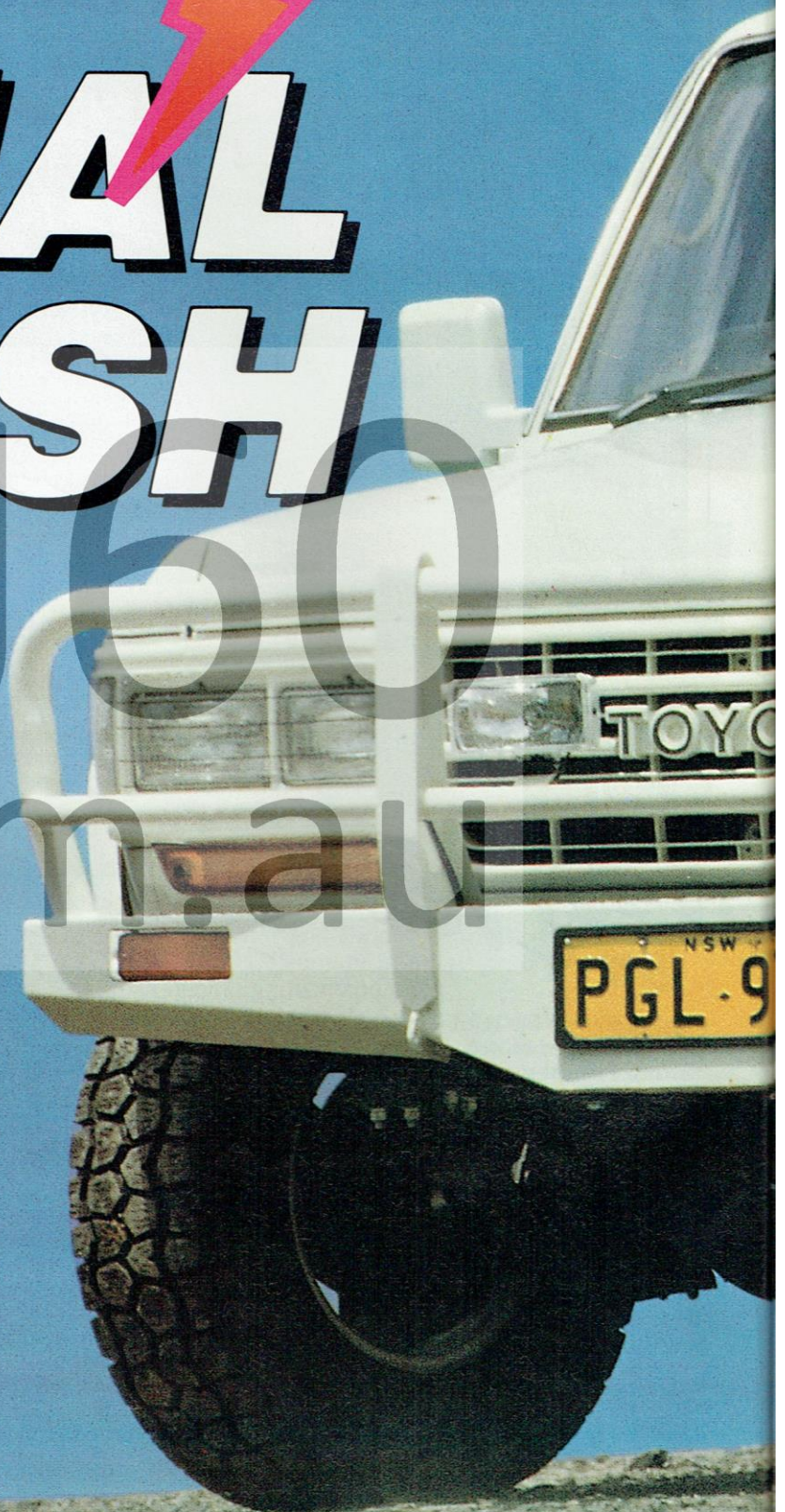
60 SERIES' FINAL FLASH

The limited-edition LandCruiser White Lightning is probably the last 60 Series Overlander will ever road test. The launch of the new Cruiser wagon (it's got to be the 80 Series hasn't it?) is due before the year is out. Does the spiffy limited-edition version end the 60's career with a bang or a whimper?

JOHN CAREY waves goodbye. Photographed for posterity by HELMET MUELLER.

IS IT a good lookin', well-built, luxuriously appointed, dual-purpose 4WD wagon? Or is it the perfect conveyance for the pimp of the only tart working the Simpson Desert? The White Lightning LandCruiser, like most any other 4WD, can be both one person's meat and another's poison. For me though, it represented a final fling with Toyota's long-lived and mightily popular off-road wagon.

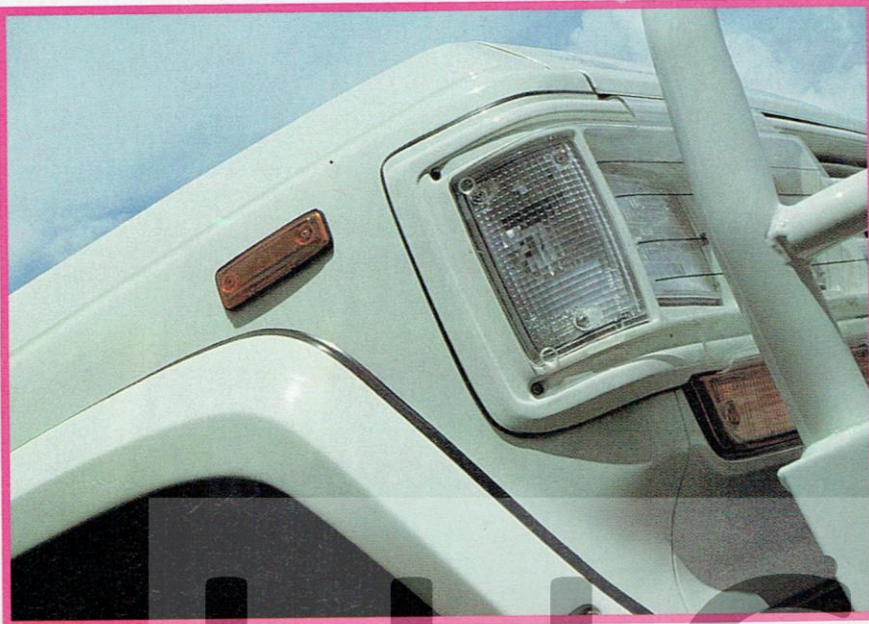
I've just finished reading then-editor Ian Glover's first impressions and full road test of the first of the line, from the January and February 1981 editions of *Overlander*. "A superb vehicle", he



First Test



FINAL FLASH



Bullbar, headlight surrounds, flares (above) all get the whiter than white treatment. The overall effect (below); you like it or loathe it.

enthused after a five-day thrash of a diesel deluxe version. He loved the engine, liked the suspension, thought the handling was fine, reckoned the interior appointments were just the business. Glover seems to have thought it a superior machine to the Nissan MQ Patrol, which had appeared a year earlier. He even compared the then-new Toyota quite favourably with the Range Rover



of the same era.

It was 1985 when I first became acquainted with the 60 Series. The occasion was a comparison between the Cruiser, Patrol, Pajero and 110. Half-way through its life the 60 Series' appeal had begun to fade a little. It still clearly outclassed the poor Nissan, but the new Mitsubishi and Land Rover products rode and handled better on roads and went further once the road had ended. There was still no denying the reputation the 60 Series had built for build quality and toughness though.

During the four years between then and now I've driven more Cruiser wagons than I can remember. But I've also driven the vehicles that have made it start to look old fashioned. The Nissan GQ Patrol and the Mitsubishi Pajero V6 wagons are the prime examples. Toyota didn't just sit back and watch all this happen without a murmur. No way! At the end of 1987 the company improved the 60 Series' suspension dramatically, by altering springs and shock absorbers.

Window tint is part of package.



OVERLANDER, March, 1989

White Lightning is basically the same as every other LandCruiser GX sold since then. There are a couple of changes that are very worthwhile improvements, plus the obvious cosmetic treatment you'll either like or loathe.

Let's look at the tart-up job first. Several litres of white paint has been thrown at the body. Things which would not normally be this colour are the grille, headlight surrounds, rear-view mirrors, back bumper, rear wiper arm, cabin air extraction grilles and wheel-arch flares. The bullbar, driving lights and wheels that constitute part of the special White Lightning package have also been carefully colour matched. The Australian-made ROH steel wheels wear Brazilian-made 255/75R15 Pirelli Scorpion rubber.

Okay, so the bar, the PIAA driving lights and the tyres aren't simply cosmetic, but I'll talk about them in just a moment or two.

The extras which complete White Lightning are a Momo steering wheel

and gear lever knob, a bucket seat for the front passenger (which allows a useful centre console to be fitted), electric windows and side mirrors and an alarm system. Oh, and there's a small plaque in the centre of the dash with the number of your White Lightning on it. Only 150 of them have been made, all of them either petrol or turbo diesel engine with manual five-speed boxes. It just happened that our test machine was White Lightning number 001, petrol propelled.

It's a lucky thing for Toyota the White Lightning had a spark-ignition engine, otherwise I would have failed to notice an improvement the company has made to the carburation of the 4-litre 3F petrol six. Since the introduction of unleaded petrol the muscular big donk was plagued by a flat spot bang in the middle of its rev range. Some petrol Cruisers had the malaise worse than others, but it affected all of them to some degree.

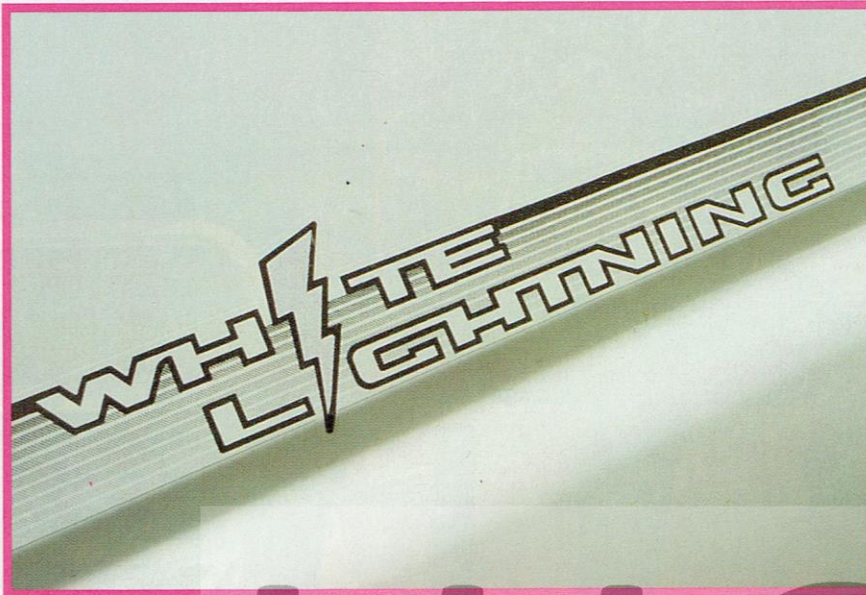
Late last year I was told a fix was on the way. Whatever the modification was, it has worked. White Lightning 001 didn't have the slightest hint of a flat spot and the engine wound smoothly and without hesitation all the way to (and sometimes beyond) its 4500 rpm redline.

The single most effective part of the White Lightning package proper is the set of Pirelli tyres. The South American rubber sharpens the steering response of the weighty wagon and are the most impressive off-road tyres I've ever used on wet bitumen, bar none.

On the way back from the day spent photographing the beast in the country west of Sydney it rained hard enough to send you to the Yellow Pages looking under 'Ark Builders'. The road surface was crook, all broken concrete and pockmarked bitumen, but White Lightning could be punched through the corners faster than the signs advised. The Scorpions begin to drift very gently, giving plenty of warning of impending doom. At speed, over very deep puddles, the tyres did occasionally aquaplane. If the tyres weren't so confidence inspiring I probably wouldn't have been going fast enough to notice the problem.

Earlier in the day we'd found a steep downhill trail blocked by an impassable drop-off just as the thunderstorm dumped buckets from the sky. Within minutes the track had become a minor rivulet and the clay surface was getting slicker by the second. With visions of being stranded flashing through the brain we beat a hasty retreat, first in reverse (bloody difficult it is too, going uphill in low range reverse in the middle of a

FINAL FLASH



Spiffy graphic is used on nose, tail and flanks.

deluge) and then, forwards. Scorpions don't look like a mud tyre to me, but despite faltering at a couple of obstacles they gave us enough traction to reach safe ground.

During this curtailed trail exercise the Cruiser had impressed with the usefulness of its low-range gearing. Engine braking was fine for a petrol-engined 4WD of such bulk. Wheel articulation was good too. Less likable was the jiggly ride off-road.

Ride on poor surfaces is fairly harsh, but better than pre '88 Cruisers.

The suspension isn't as impressive as more recent designs on dirt roads and bad bitumen either. There's a harsh edge to it that makes the ride uncomfortable and some unpleasant pitching too. Though the combination of revamped suspension and the Scorpion tyres probably make White Lightning the best handling Cruiser it's ever been possible to drive out of a Toyota showroom, it lacks both the sharpness and outright grip of the competition's products. On



rough surfaces it is disturbed more by bumps and on smooth bitumen its front wheels start to plough at fairly moderate speeds.

White Lightning's interior is a success. The installation of a proper bucket for the front passenger, instead of the impractical two-place bench of other GX Cruisers, is a welcome move. The passenger is more comfortable and the centre console provides extra (and welcome) storage space.

The lovely leather-bound Momo wheel and the matching gearknob are both pleasant to use, while the electric windows and mirrors will probably appeal to buyers prepared to lash out the \$39,329 and \$51,600 being asked for petrol and turbo diesel White Lightnings.

The nicely finished bullbar is a handsome steel thing that should perform well if required. The PIAA driving lights weren't adjusted to perfection, but still lit up the road ahead quite brilliantly. One is a spread beam and the other a spot, it seems.

I can't say I like alarm systems much, having been kept awake many a night by their horrible squawking. The Cobra fitted to the White Lightning didn't provide any cause for complaint. It's dead simple to use and isn't so sensitive that an ant breaking wind beneath it sets the siren screaming.

I imagine every one of the White Lightning production run will be snapped up, no matter what I write here. While its suspension performance and steering in particular can't be said to be good, it's still a likable machine. There's a sense of security knowing you're driving a vehicle that's had the bugs ironed out of it over an eight-year lifespan and which will possess good resale value when it enters the second-hand market. While I can't help looking forward to the new Cruiser with eager anticipation, for it should be a Very Good Thing, White Lightning wasn't such a bad way to bid the 60 Series goodbye.