

Feb. '82

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# overlander

4WD  
OF THE  
YEAR



OVERLANDER  
MAGAZINE'S SELECTION  
AS 4WDOTY 1981.



# TOYOTA SERIES 60

# in the first place

THE MOST DIFFICULT aspect of deciding on a winner for any motoring award is determining the criteria on which such a decision should be made.

Sister publication 'Wheels', for example, which each year presents the prestigious Car of the Year (COTY) award, redefined the parameters for the thirteen year old award in 1976 to read that the model was to have been released in Australia within the calendar year; could be fully imported, locally assembled or locally manufactured; and had to

make a significant contribution in terms of advancement in design, engineering excellence, value for money, safety, utilisation of resources, and performance of intended function. Even given such detailed criteria, difficulties arise. How can one measure a Ferrari Boxer against a Mazda 323, for example?

'Modern Motor', in its one (and only?) Car of the Year Award of 1980, tried to assess what the impact of vehicles would be in the market place, and give the accolade to the vehicle(s) which would most affect the buying tastes of the consumer. A daunting task in itself.

Obviously, with our award, which in many ways constitutes an endorsement, we would want to select a vehicle

which we felt would best serve the needs of our readers.

But herein again lie inherent problems, for our readership spans a broad range of people with multifold interests and highly different reasons for buying a 4WD. Young fisherman really are better off with one sort of 4WD, while a tradesman obviously has another set of requirements. Likewise, the family man who wishes to show his children the magnificence which the Australian countryside offers selects yet another type of vehicle.

So perhaps the most important criterion is: how successful have the designers been in fulfilling an aim. There's a vastly different set of aims involved in manufacturing a successful pickup than there

is in making a station wagon. And while we took five vehicles on our 4WDOTY road test, it should be borne in mind that at no time were those vehicles 'compared' *per se*.

Certainly, there's an overlap in the functions of the Jeep Cherokee six and the Toyota FJ60. Both are designed as long distance tourers with 4WD facility when the going gets rough. In the grey area is the Holden Jackaroo, which compromises long distance speed with undeniable fuel savings. The Suzuki Sierra, though a vast improvement both in comfort and appointment levels over the old Suzi, is designed primarily as a 4WD vehicle, where speed and comfort point to point does not enter into the case.

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Then there's the Mitsubishi Express — certainly the best of the pickups to emerge in 1981 — a workhorse with an independent front end and by far the most driveable of any pickup available on the Australian market. This vehicle, in raw form, is perfect for the tradesman or farmer, and with the modification of a canopy, a viable alternative for the couple who wish to tour Australia.

So, in our 2000km test run, we tried to pick up on the strengths and weaknesses of each vehicle *individually*. And while certain comparisons were inevitable in some sections, our judges were constantly reminded that they should assess each vehicle on its own, with the intentions of that vehicle's designers

firmly borne in mind.

The route chosen was done so carefully. It involved a great variety of driving conditions as we could reasonably ensure in the limited time of four days. We had heavy rain and fog in the first day, which allowed us to assess the wet weather handling characteristics of the vehicles over the Bell's Line of Road to Lithgow, and dry weather handling abilities (on tar) as we pushed through to Parkes. Day Two saw us on corrugated dirt roads with heavy dust drifts as we reached Mt Hope and continued through to outback Queensland. Backtracks through Western NSW, with heavy corrugations, washaways and large potholes gave us yet a different slant on the vehicles' abilities,

and the 4WD tracks in the Brindabella Ranges near Canberra pointed up more strengths and weaknesses.

We strove at all times to be impartial, and chose the selection panel, and, yet again, the judges, from as varied user groups as possible, feeling that the selection of vehicles, and later, assessment of their performance and relative merits, should neither be the responsibility of one person, nor represent the needs of one only user group.

You'll be introduced to our selection panel, and our judges, (with their qualifications for being there), in the run of this issue. We've allotted a great deal of space to the manner in which the 4WD of 1981 was finally chosen, but feel that this is justified,

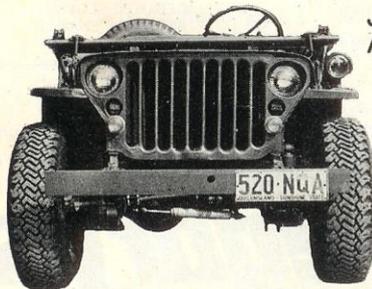
as, within the short space of one year, Overlander's 4WDOTY Award has become a highly coveted motoring prize — a recognition of outstanding achievement, and, as I mentioned earlier, an endorsement of the product. So, to prove our credibility and the fact that we take the presentation extremely seriously, we've devoted much of the February issue to that end.

Finally, although there must be only one winner, it should be remembered that the nomination as a finalist in 4WDOTY is, in effect, a commendation to each vehicle's designers, and that criticisms which emerged in the course of the test should be seen in that light.

Ian Glover

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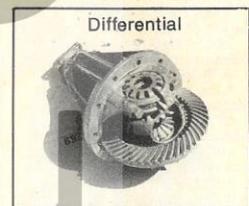


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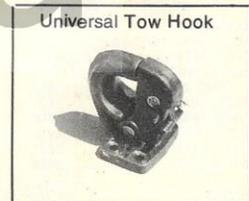
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**T**HE SELECTORS had done their job. The 'contestants' for Overlander's 4WDOTY were lined up, ready to go. The vehicles, as opted upon by democratic vote, in the end boiled down to five, as Ford's industrial havoc precluded the possibility of us including the V8 Bronco. The vehicles were the Suzuki Sierra, the Mitsubishi Express, the Holden Jackaroo (diesel), the Toyota FJ60 Land Cruiser, and the six cylinder manual Jeep Cherokee. Though the selectors had not specified that the Jackaroo should be diesel, it was felt, after consultation with GM-H executives, that the best interests of that company would be served in choosing diesel. Though the motor (Isuzu 2.2L) is no speedster, it can easily keep up with its competitors on long runs, and has definite advantages over its petrol-powered brother in the rough. Engine braking, for example, is streets in front.

You've already met the selectors

(pages 18-20). The sole overlap between selectors and roadtesters/judges/what you will was that Ian Glover and Gordon Mallett, who usually do the road tests for Overlander, also went along on the 4WDOTY test run. The other drivers, and their qualifications, are introduced after the test.

#### **Aesthetic**

Compared with the old Suzi, the **Sierra** is a designer's dream. Bodywork is cleaner, edges have been rounded, and the whole shape is more aerodynamically efficient. The model with the best lines, to our minds, is the hardtop, flagship of this new range, which also boasts utes and softtops.

Our test vehicle was a softtop, and, to some extent, looks a little agricultural. The softtop comes in two versions — one with half metal doors, the other with full metal doors. We had the half metal door type, which, at 800kg kerb mass, is some 55kg lighter than the pickup, heaviest in the range. The soft-

top itself, is located by means of press studs and 'tongue and groove' edges. Putting it on takes about ten minutes, removing it, five. The 'windows', which consist of a frame, and opaque and clear plastic, are located by two holes either end of the door frame. The clear plastic window areas unzip when needs be.

Aesthetics aside, we prefer the hardtop for practical reasons. Noise levels within the cab are high enough normally, but couple the high pitched scream of the four stroke engine with the flapping and slapping of the top, and you've got communication problems on long trips. But then, the Suzuki was not designed as a point to point tourer.

One of our judges, Michelle Herz-Murray, described the **Mitsubishi Express** as looking like 'a plumber's truck', and there's no doubt that tradesmen were amongst the marketing targets when this vehicle was designed.



# THE TEST

But it's more than that. Fitted with a canopy, the whole vehicle becomes cuneiform, purposeful and dynamic. In our original test of the Express (Sept '81), we liked the look of the non-standard wheels and tyres, but were disappointed with the performance of the chosen crossply rubber. So Mitsubishi had a rethink, retained the stylish white spokers, but clad them with Carleton Accu-Trac radials. And, in comparison with that earlier test, they performed very well. Gone was the irritating noise, and disconcerting floor pan vibration on the tar. Much better. And traction was maintained in the rough.

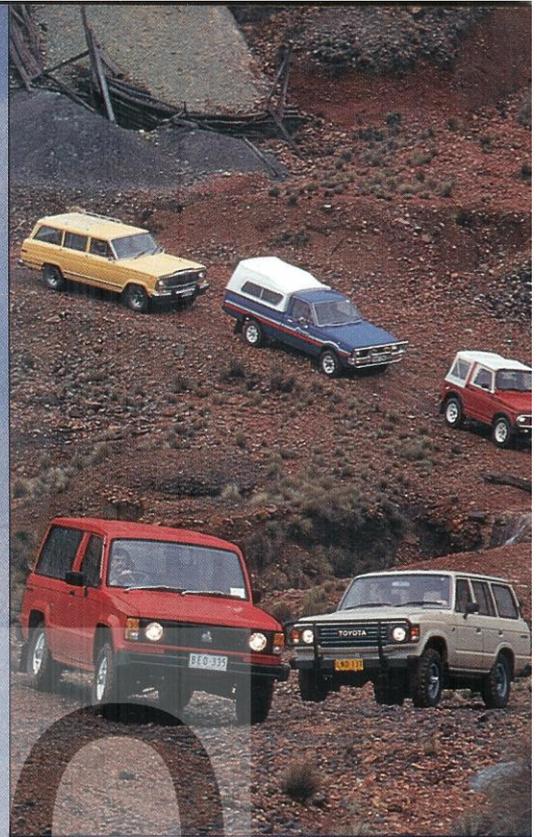
Our resident aesthetics expert, Michelle, having clapped eyes on the **Jackaroo** for the first time, murmured "Ah — a milk truck".

But in fact the styling of the Jackaroo is immensely practical, from the three quarter rear door, with its lack of rear vision problems, to the steep, cutaway

bonnet which proves a real boon off the beaten track. The tall turret provides excellent visibility all 'round, and the cavernous wheel arches promise to keep you going longer in heavy mud. As described in our December issue, the Jackaroo is in fact an amalgam of some of the best design features of other 4WDs, despite the overall 'Range Rover-ish' look.

To a large extent, aesthetic appeal is subjective, and this was demonstrated most forcibly with the **Toyota Series 60**.

The Land Cruiser is, to a certain extent, anachronistic in styling, and the bulging bonnet, compared with the FJ55, is definitely a retrograde step in terms of knowing where your wheels are. But overall, edges have been 'bevelled', and the Land Cruiser has assumed a more 'passenger vehicle' look than any of its predecessors. The **Jeep** caused the most comment. Our testers all felt that it was definitely old fash-

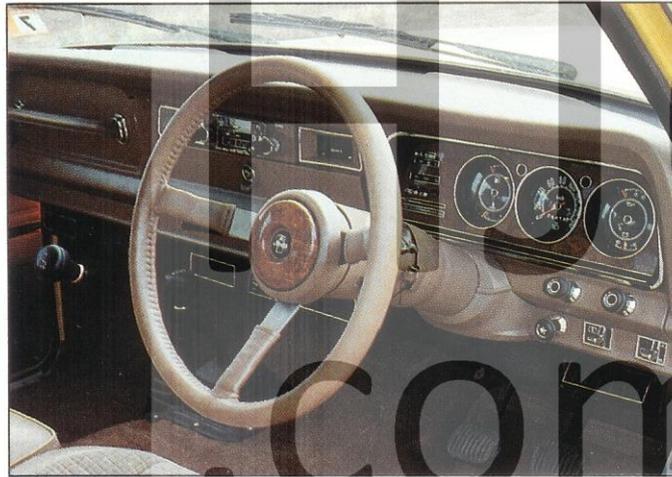


IAN GLOVER and GORDON MALLET join our other four judges in bringing you this report on the test for 4WDOTY. GREG McBEAN is responsible for the fine photography.



Above and below: Jeep's instrumentation was impressive in layout and comprehensibility, though perhaps control knobs could have been more informatively labelled. Steering wheel was well padded, easy to control. Seats, though well designed, developed irritating vibration during test.

Above and below: Jackaroo dash, though 'plasticky', is well thought out, practical, with reasonable offering of gauges. Seats are comfortable and afford good vision. Though glovebox is copious, a centre console between seats would be appreciated. Steering wheel affords good vision of relevant gauges.



## THE TEST

ioned American in appearance. 'Straight out of the '50s', was the most common comment.

### Interior

In terms of instrumentation, the **Sierra** fares worst and the **Toyota** best. The instrumentation of the **Express** is basically Sigma-like, as is the feel of the whole vehicle. But 4WDs, because of possible heavier operating conditions, need more gauges than normal passenger vehicles. In the **Express**, the only true gauges are speedo, fuel and temperature gauges. All else is catered for by idiot lights.

The **Jackaroo** comes closer to the mark, offering nice little touches like intermittent wiper mode, and an easily identifiable positioning of gauges.

Though the **Toyota** is most complete in this regard, we'd still like to see a warning light indicating when 4WD is engaged. Little things have been looked after in the **Toyota**, like an 'idle-up' switch in the petrol model which marginally increases engine revs when the going's tough and you've got the air on.

The **Jeep**, too, features air conditioning — the instant freeze American type — and it's a better unit than the **Toyota's**. But on our test, we did have trouble with fuses blowing. They're an unusual type, biforked, and the only way we kept the air on was to use silver paper to maintain the contacts.

All the panel criticised the **Mitsubishi** and the **Suzuki** on the grounds of the seats having no head restraints. The

seating in the **Jackaroo** was the best by a country mile, in comfort, driving position and the fact that, coupled with the impressive use of glass, the driver knows exactly where he is at all times. The **Jeep**, by way of contrast, seemed to engulf the driver by virtue of sheer size.

As one would expect for the price, the **Sierra** offered least in the way of creature comforts and was the least comfortable to drive on long stretches. (Then again, it wasn't designed as a tourer).

We would have liked to have seen a rear window washer/wiper on the **Jackaroo**, and certainly expected such on the **Cherokee**. Likewise, the **Jackaroo** really needs a rear window demister. In the early stages of our test, it fogged up



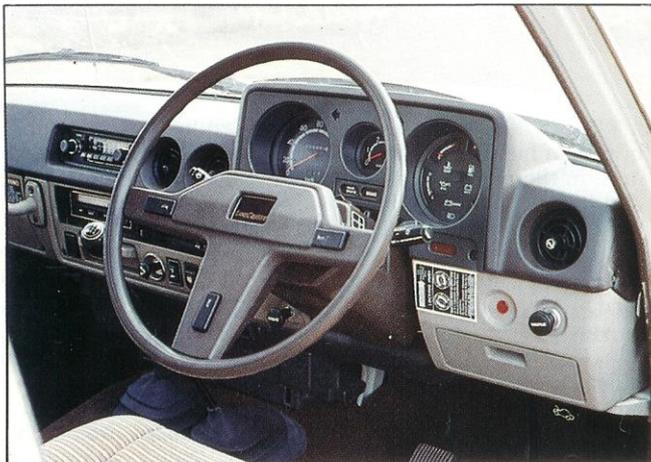
Above and below: Suzuki fared worst in instrumentation stakes. Gauges are spartan to the point of being extraneous. Though some testers complained about seats, Sierra's are distinct improvement on previous model. Steering wheel is a trifle thin.



Above and below: Instrumentation in Express is just like passenger car. Incongruity appears in choice of velour seat covers and trim (also present in other vehicles), for what is suitable as farm vehicle, or tradesman's van. Gearshift was slick and easily reachable.

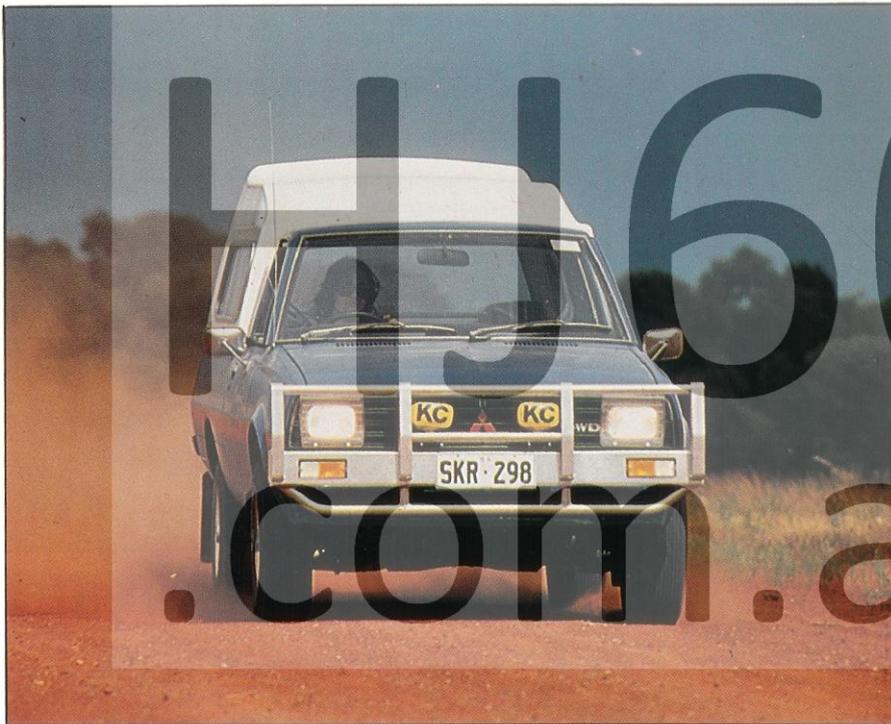


Below and right: Toyota instrumentation was best of lot, even including tacho, and 'idle-up' rocker switch for use when in heavy conditions with air on. Seats were reasonable but lacked rake adjustment. All in all, very well designed.

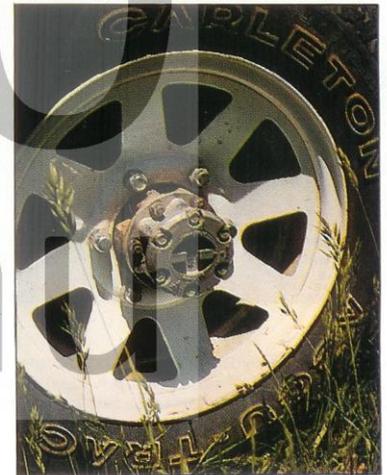




Left and below: Jeep 'off-road' is particularly impressive, despite bottoming problems caused by too soft suspension. Engine braking is excellent, but bonnet inhibits real feel for front wheels. Jeep had best overall night vision, due to standard Marchal Q1 headlights.



Left and below: Closest thing to a car - the Mitsubishi Express. With a load in the back, it's the closest anyone will come to sedan car handling. Mitsubishi changed tyres to Carleton Accu-Tracs after repeated criticism from motoring journalists - particularly Overlander.



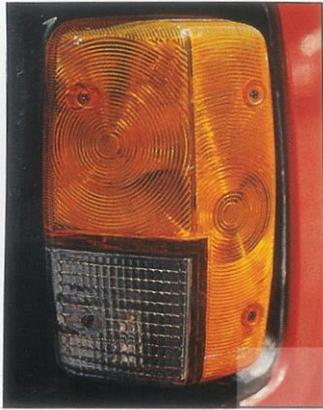
## THE TEST

very badly, giving no rear vision at all. The Jackaroo external mirrors are good, of reasonable size, fold flat against the body for scrub work, and to a certain extent, compensated for the opaque back window. Though the overall finish on the Jackaroo is impressive, we have a few niggling criticisms. The panels in the driver's footwell are merely bare metal, and a little extra money spent on the paintwork around the door pillars would not go astray. One of our testers had a little diffi-

culty with the Jackaroo's wiper mechanism, wherein the intermittent mode is engaged via slack control, in the opposite direction to slow and fast modes — a rather interesting oddity. The **Toyota** boasts the usual over-efficient heating system that must surely have been designed by Mephistopheles himself. There's very little cool and tremendous heat. It is also the only vehicle to be fitted with rear window washers and wipers. The sound system fitted to the Toyota is AM/FM, and more than adequate. A

further positive feature of the Toyota is the tilt-adjust steering column, which makes it driveable for drivers of all sizes. There's a touch of incongruity in the interior of the **Mitsubishi**. The velour seats, for example, contrast violently with the fact that there's no carpet on the floor. The door sills, too, are raised, and will cause a little more effort to be needed when cleaning the interior. On to the **Jeep**, and a few things you'd expect to find there, aren't. Like intermittent wiper mode, and adjust-

Right and below: While comfortable cruising on open road, Rodeo suspension and running gear makes Jackaroo a handful in bad track conditions, particularly where potholes and severe corrugations are prevalent. Range Rover styling is particularly evident in front hazard/indicator/parking light assembly.



Above and right: Soft-top Suzuki Sierra has 'canopy' which is easy to erect and dismantle - takes around ten minutes. Zip windows, however, are a nuisance. Buyers would be better served in buying full-frame door models. Sierra has perhaps best true 4WD ability of all vehicles tested, yet engine braking on extremely steep downhill runs leaves everything to be desired.

able rake on the seats. And something's there which shouldn't be, and that's a foot-operated parking brake. We've discussed their shortcomings at length in previous issues.

### On the road

The **Jackaroo's** engine is a bad choice for touring. Isuzu has a huge range of diesel engines, and a 2.4 litre engine would have been a better choice considering the body weight, and the fact that extra people and gear make a great difference in the power to weight ratio — more so than in the Toyota

At around 95-100km/h, that motor starts to make a bit of a fuss, and points to the fact that the Jackaroo interior could do with more effective soundproofing.

On the positive side, the starting system a ('single motion' quick-start activation of glow plugs) is good, the driving position is excellent and all the controls are easy to reach.

Of the bigger three on test, the Jackaroo rides most like a truck — a product of the perfectly predictable engineering choice of using Rodeo suspension components and chassis.

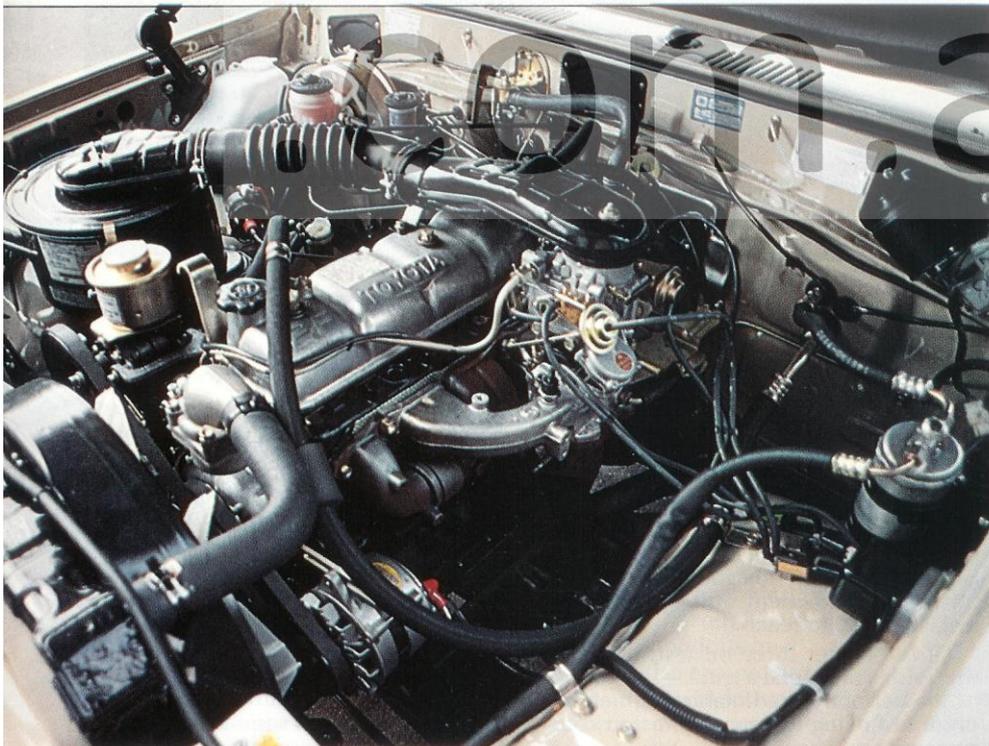
It's fine on paper, but you're conscious of the rough ride at speed over corrugated roads. The real weakness of that decision is borne out on *potholed* roads. Hitting potholes at 60km/h causes the entire vehicle to leap about a metre either way. That's not rear end skittishness or front wander, but a potentially dangerous demerit.

Early in the test, a weakness in the **Toyota** became apparent: inadequate quarter vent sealing allowed rain to get in. As the vehicle is fully carpeted, this is a somewhat more serious fault than it would be otherwise. The problem was



Above and below: FJ60 exhibits perfectly predictable, *controllable* oversteer when cornering in dirt, in marked contrast to FJ55. 2F engine has not been modified, save in ports and manifolds - as picked in our write-up of the FJ60 - but improved engineering knowhow has meant that emission requirements can still be maintained with better fuel economy.

## THE TEST



mirrored in the Jeep, too.

And the Toyota did not seem to be running properly. The fault proved to be an air conditioning bulb jamming against the advance/retard solenoid, and once rectified, it was all systems go. Likewise, the tyres were over-inflated, running at 290kPa in the front and 275kPa in the rear. Once we'd adjusted this to 220kPa in the front and 230kPa in the rear, ride improved immensely. There was still a tendency for some camber run off, but that's partly a product of the live front end. However: choice of tyres! Considering that the Series 60 was designed with a different buyer in mind than one whose needs would best be filled by a 42 or 47 Series Cruiser, fitting RTMs is just a joke.

Considering that the Series 60 can cruise effortlessly at 120 km/h, and that RTMs, at that constant speed, often develop tread lift, a far better choice would be a 7.50 x 16 *radial*. For a little extra money, you would see vast improvements in steering, ride and handling.

Yet even with the handicap of poor tyres, the Toyota was a comfortable 'cruiser'. Tony Love takes up the story

## THE TEST

... "I've just given the Toyota a fair going over between Mt Hope and Lake Cargelligo on pretty well graded gravel roads with a bit of rough stuff. It cruises very well between 120 and 140 km/h, and engine noise at those speeds is exceptionally quiet. It was beautiful to ride in and the handling was superb. I hit one grid too fast and bottomed it, but even so..."

Visibility, too in the Toyota, is exceptional, making fast driving a safe, comfortable experience.

On dirt roads, the steering in the Toyota becomes more positive. It's a very light power assist, and often on tar, the driver will be searching for a bit more feel.

The **Suzuki** is not designed as a tourer, but performed surprisingly well. On the tar, it bounces around quite a bit, but the 997 cm<sup>3</sup> engine is very impressive. It revs very freely, and sits on 110 km/h without a murmur of complaint.

Our test vehicle (the soft top) proved



Vehicles experienced heavy mud conditions at Sunny Corner, NSW. Yokohama tyres let down Jackaroo badly, showing poor self cleaning properties.

one weakness on dirt roads — it ingested great bagloads of dust. On the dirt, the Suzuki driver must keep his/her wits about him/her.

Bumps tend to throw the vehicle off course, and it doesn't really like corrugations. Nevertheless, the Sierra is a vast improvement over its predecessor.

Particularly in terms of room. There

is no feeling of being cramped, and the driving position is fine.

The **Express** was somewhat of a mixed bag over long distances. Our test model developed a highly irritating transmission whine, and, even with all the testers' gear in the back, tended to bounce around a bit.

But the gearbox is a joy. Third is very

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## THE TEST

flexible, up to 100 km/h, and there's plenty of acceleration. Top, too is commendable, and is as comfortable at 60 km/h as it is cruising between 120 and 140 km/h.

The **Cherokee** proved to be somewhat of a disappointment. Despite an excellent ride — the suspension soaks up bumps and corrugations very well — the vehicle 'floats'. This means that, travelling at high speeds, if you hit a large bump, the vehicle may suddenly be sideways on the road — a predicament that is not helped by the Jeep's power steering, as you're inclined to overcorrect, and fishtail for some distance.

Admittedly, the back does not break away all that often, but that very unpredictability makes the situation worse. On straight stretches, the steering is not too bad. There's minimal kickback, merely a little aftershudder on corrugations, but it's in extreme situations that you begin to lose confidence.

The 4.2 L six is quite responsive and very torquey, so long stretches are fairly gobbled up.

Some testers found the long throw

gearing a lot harder to handle than they thought it should be for the price of the vehicle. And the gears were sometimes hard to find.

The only other worry with the Jeep was that the fuel gauge leapt about a bit. To look, find the gauge on  $\frac{3}{4}$ , glance back a minute later and find it on  $\frac{1}{4}$ , was very disconcerting.

While on the subject of fuel, if fuel efficiency were the sole criteria for 4WDOTY, the **Jackaroo** would win hands down. Despite the fact that it was struggling to keep up with the other vehicles at times, it still returned the best readings. Consistently. With an average of 9.7 L/100 km, the Jackaroo's best figure was obtained in Expressway running: 8.8 L/100 km! It's worst was a very respectable 10.8 L/100 km.

The **Toyota** was not particularly thirsty, considering its size, averaging 18.4 L/100 km. Its best figure (14.1 L/100 km) was achieved on the open road, cruising at 80 km/h. This zoomed to 23.2 L/100 km, off the beaten track.

We said in our earlier test of the **Cherokee** six that it was surprisingly easy on juice, and this test backed those

findings up. Averaging 18.7 L/100 km, a quite respectable figure, the Jeep's best was 16.8 L/100 km (open road cruising) it showed its worst side in 4WD (20.1 L/100 km).

The **Suzi** was predictably economical, averaging 10.9 L/100 km, with a best figure of 10.3 L/100 km (tared road/easy cruising) and a worst of 11.2 L/100 km (high speed dirt work).

We were rather surprised that the **Express** did not return better figures. Its average was 14.5 L/100 km. Its best was once again achieved on open road cruising 12.7 L/100 km, and its worst was 16.6 L/100 km. That's getting up into six cylinder class.

### In the rough

Neither the **Toyota** nor the **Jeep** are designed as what used to be called 'off-road vehicles'. At the prices they are fetching, it would be a very silly buyer who would, by choice, tackle really hard 4WD. Door sills, particularly, are vulnerable, and the soft suspension of the Jeep is inclined to make the vehicle bottom out if driven hard. The bonnet, too, on the Jeep, and to a lesser extent on the Toyota, makes knowing where

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## THE TEST

your wheels are in the rough more a guesstimate than sure knowledge. But this is not to imply that the vehicles are incapable of acquitting themselves in that situation. Both will come up with the goods.

The obvious opposite end of the scale is the **Suzuki Sierra**, designed as an RV. It is extremely agile, has good clearance, reasonable wheel travel and is very easy to punt around on rugged bush tracks. The engine braking is perhaps the only area we can cite where improvements could be made, but then again, the gearing was changed to give the Suzi better cruising abilities than its predecessor. Those it certainly has.

The **Mitsubishi** is a creditable performer in the rough, showing excellent wheel travel due to the independent front end, which keeps wheels on the ground in the most demanding conditions and contributes to its driveability on the highway. It's easy to steer and will perform all but the most arduous of tasks without complaint.

As in our previous test, we were immensely impressed with the **Jackaroo's** 'off-road' abilities. The braking

afforded by the diesel engine is quite remarkable, making it possible to crawl down the steepest slopes, picking your line without any fear of being rushed. The engine offers all the torque you need for climbing the hill on the other side, too. The cutaway bonnet and excellent visibility, plus room to move in the cab are all very positive aspects of this new design. The LSD is a definite plus, too.

### Discussion

All the vehicles in the test have been roadtested in detail in *Overlander* over the previous year. Each has its own application, its own place in the market, and it may be that the vehicle we chose as 4WDOTY is not necessarily the perfect vehicle for you.

But the **Toyota** won because it is immensely driveable, has comfort, and can carry loads at reasonable speeds and over a variety of conditions (by no means all four-wheel-drive) with more chance of getting back in one piece than a conventional station wagon. The back seat can be folded down for extra load space or sleeping accommodation. In this way, it overlaps, to some extent, the function of the Express, whereas the reverse cannot apply. On dirt, the Toyota is a better performer than some cars, and is definitely richer in instrumentation than many.

The **Jackaroo** is a tremendous concept, but the engineers made a mistake in using the Rodeo components, which severely limit front end travel. (We'd like to see the Jackaroo body on a Mitsubishi Express chassis.) The engine is underpowered for long distance travel. It takes 43 seconds to reach 100 km/h with maximum revs of 5000 rpm in first, second and third. (The engine is redlined at 6000.)

The panel felt that everything should click with the **Jeep** at \$21,000. Yet things started to go wrong with the Cherokee. It developed a leak in the transfer case, the fan began hitting the cowling, which had to be relocated, terrible squeaks developed in the fan-belts, the power steering pump leaked profusely, the battery boiled over and the fuses kept blowing. Jeep Australia, we know, have been having maintenance problems, and we probably got a dud model, but all the same, awards can't be made on maybes. So ... Congratulations Toyota.

For specifications of all vehicles, turn to pages 36 and 37.



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