

## ***“Develop for the Future”***

Roadsafe Automotive Products are looking to the future with regard to product range and development. With Australia's largest range of steering and suspension components, comes a great deal of industry confidence that the company is constantly updating the range, and developing aftermarket components for late model vehicles.

The process for parts development is quite extensive, and relies heavily on customer feedback and consumer information. Unlike many other 'consumables' or 'upgrades' in the industry, determining what to develop for steering and suspension replacement parts is reliant heavily on current 'wear' knowledge. To stay on the front foot with regard to development is to know intricately how general suspension parts operate, and to determine where the weak or wear points in a suspension system may occur.

Peter Taylor (Product Development Manager) and Tania Allatt (Product Marketing Manager) of Roadsafe Automotive Products are charged with ensuring that the front end development program for Roadsafe is second to none. At present Roadsafe are releasing at least 2 to 6 new development numbers per month. The items vary from Heime joints (cross axis ball joints), to Adjustable Panhard Rods, to Tie Rod Ends, to Control Arms – and everything in between!

Significant emphasis has been put into developing and expanding the 4WD range of products, whilst still maintaining focus on common passenger vehicle applications.

Peter explained “It is imperative that as the industry leader in steering and suspension, we have a strong emphasis on our range. Constant development in all facets is required”. Tania concurred “Not only do we focus on the end component and ensuring we grow the range to cater for newly identified wear items, we also look at ways of improving manufacturing and individual components with the goal of further improving product quality”.

“Based on our collective 50 plus years experience (Tania – 20 years and Peter – 31 years), and our knowledge of suspension systems, for the most part, we can determine basically where we believe the weak point in a new setup will be. We start the development process on these items, and finalise it once the wear starts to become evident.” Tania said. “Unfortunately, it is not as simple as just developing every item in the system, because as systems improve and wear items become less, there is no need to develop some components – as there will probably never be a call for them. Our system of development works for us, and ensures we do not waste time and money developing items that will never be asked for” Peter continued.

Roadsafe has probably the strongest development program from any front end supplier in Australia. “That is going to be our key for ongoing success in our industry. We develop parts, and we try to stay ahead of the opposition” Peter said. He continued “We work very closely with our manufacturing facility in Taiwan to determine what new items are developed. This gives us a great deal of confidence in our ability to stay ahead of the opposition with regard to range development”.

Some of the new development items from Roadsafe include...

## AU-BF Forged Arms

While a replacement aftermarket ball joint (BJ426) is available for the genuine AU-BF arms, unfortunately when the arm is bent or has excessively worn bush or ball joint apertures, the replaceable ball joint does not solve the problem. In this instance a complete replacement arm is required, and is often found to be quite expensive. Due to this cost, it is generally not carried by resellers or suspension specialists as a stock line.



The new Roadsafe forged arms to suit the AU-BF were developed in Melbourne, and include an innovative bracket design to cater for the two sway bar configurations. "AU1 has a straight style sway bar positioned above the arm. Whereas AU2-BF has a ball style sway bar link running from below the arm. Both sway bar link designs attach to the arms in a different location and configuration. Subsequently, to offer customers one part to run for all applications, a modified style arm was required." Peter said.

"The options for this design process was to develop a sway bar link to suit all models, or develop an arm to suit the existing sway bar link designs. As it is the arm that is under the most demand for replacement, it was far more cost effective, for the consumer, to develop one arm (both sides) for all applications." Tania explained.

Having one arm only means lower inventory, lower tooling costs, and in the end, a lower item cost. Obviously all of these factors are an important consideration in today's market conditions, and now means resellers and suspension specialists can stock these items, to capitalise immediately on the sales as they are presented.

The new AU1-BF Forged Arms are available for left and right hand sides – BJ426L+ARM (left) and BJ426R+ARM (right). "Suiting the complete 10 year life span of the vehicles means in excess of 600,000 vehicles on Australian roads – so these are definitely some positive figures to consider when looking at inventory evaluations" Peter said.

The BJ426L&R+ARM's are supplied complete with 3 bushings, an up-rated serviceable ball joint – featuring a newly designed nylon seat and newly formulated high temperature grease.

## VE Commodore Arms

Early 2010 saw the development of the Front Lower Control Arms and Caster Bars to suit for VE Commodore.

Both the current VE Commodores and FG Falcons have adapted the more highly sophisticated 'European' trend design,



common in BMW's and other euro brand vehicles, incorporating a smaller, lighter lower front control arm and a stronger caster bar, to carry much of the lateral load, in the front suspension setup.

The Roadsafe replacement lower arms have been upgraded from genuine to incorporate a larger OD to make the arms stronger. In addition to the thicker body, the ball stud insert has also been improved for greater durability. Peter also explained "The bush design in these arms, is especially crucial to the handling characteristics of the vehicle and we have developed the item to retain the bridge ferrule feature, to ensure accurate camber and caster settings are maintained throughout operation".

The new VE arms are available for left and right hand sides, being BJ3309R (right) & BJ3309L (left) for the Lower Control Arms and BJ3310R (right) & BJ3311L (left) for the Caster Bars.

### Hilux Drop Arm

As part of Roadsafe's focus on forged arm development, they have also manufactured the commonly replaced Hilux Drop Arm. Also known as the 'Boomerang Arm' or 'C Arm'.

Although the Hilux models the arms suits are getting a bit old, more and more customers have been asking regularly for the Drop Arm, as it is a very high wear item.



Tania explained "Although a few genuine arms get bent, the general reason for replacement is the significant wear suffered by the ball pin or ball pin aperture. Various attempts have been made to rectify this problem however the safest option is to fit a complete replacement Drop Arm".

"Each year new vehicles get released, that offer us new challenges in development" Tania said. "We look forward to the future, and further developing the range to remain the market leader in steering and suspension" Peter concluded.

So whilst Roadsafe work hard at developing items to suit today's current markets & demands, and keeping costs down for consumers, you can see how they are 'developing for the future'.