

PLAYING TO OUR STRENGTHS – AUSSIE INGENUITY

I recently attended the launch of an Australian remanufactured hybrid battery exchange program as a guest speaker. It was a significant event for a number of reasons.

Firstly, after a prolonged period of ongoing lockdowns and working remotely, it was refreshing to attend my first public industry event in person, in over a year.

I attended with a new appreciation of how important face-to-face interaction is and I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Secondly, the program, designed and implemented by IM Group/Injectronics is a great initiative for the emerging hybrid/electric market here in Australia. See page 59 for full story.

If a workshop is presented with a hybrid vehicle with a faulty battery, the workshop can order and fit a remanufactured unit and send back the faulty battery for remanufacturing.

As you can imagine, this program will significantly reduce the cost of hybrid vehicle ownership, while having a positive impact on the environment.

While preparing my speech for the event, I was able to reflect on our innovative and exciting industry, on where we should focus our attention and why we should be proud of our industry.

Initiatives like this demonstrate the resilience and smarts of our local companies. Our six billion dollar automotive aftermarket manufacturing industry continues to go from strength-to-strength in both domestic and export markets.

Much of the inspiration for our most successful companies and products came from clever people

in our industry who looked at the best the car industry can do and thought 'we can do it better' – we can design products that better suit car owner's needs.

Products like frontal protection systems that protect vehicle occupants from animal strike in rural and regional areas, to suspension upgrade solutions that enhance vehicle handling and control when towing – I could name hundreds of innovative products that have been developed by the aftermarket industry.

As an industry we must continue to play to our strengths. We should not engage in a race to the bottom on price.

Australia's success in automotive manufacturing lies in our commitment to invest in research and development, state-of-the-art equipment, and skills.

This underpins our position in the global market to compete and succeed on innovation, brand reputation and quality.

Our biennial Australian Auto Aftermarket Awards program is another great activity that showcases, recognises and rewards the incredibly varied array of clever new products and technologies developed by our industry.

We look forward to our next Aftermarket Awards program which will coincide with the Australian Auto Aftermarket and Collision Repair Expo, from 7 – 9 April 2022.



It is also great to see Government supporting our manufacturing industry. IM Group was just one of several aftermarket companies participating in the Federal Government's Automotive Innovation Lab Access Grants program.

This program, which came about through lobbying by the AAAA, provided a total of seven million dollars in grants to assist companies to develop and commercialise new technologies.

These grants are making a real difference in fast tracking the development of technologies and products that will further enhance Australia's reputation as market leaders across the globe.

It was indicative of this support that politicians were in attendance at the IM Group event, including Federal Senator, David Van; Federal Member for Bruce, Julian Hill MP; and Member for the Northern Metropolitan Region in the Victorian Parliament, Craig Ondarchie MLC. I wish to thank each of them for their support for our industry.

From the winged keel to the world's first RaceCam, innovation is part our DNA. And the world needs and wants that Aussie ingenuity, and the Australian auto aftermarket can deliver this in spades. The world may be different, but the opportunities are limitless.



L-R: AAAA CEO Stuart Charity, Injectronics Executive General Manager Gino Ricciuti and Federal Senator David Van

STUART CHARITY
Chief Executive Officer