

Hot Air



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Newsletter of the Vehicle Airconditioning Specialists of Australasia

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National Secretariat: VASA (ACN 063 969 783) 30 Lexton Road Box Hill Vic 3128

An Australasian First

VASA Warranty is the dynamic new competitive edge for service centres

VASA service centres across Australia and New Zealand will receive their biggest promotional lever yet when the first warranty program devised specifically for vehicle airconditioning systems begins in August.

The VASA Manufacturers and Express Warranty will undergo

field trials in May, but will be officially launched at the Auckland 2000 Convention in July.


The VASA Warranty Program has been developed in cooperation with underwriters FD and W Holdings Pty Ltd, which already runs a successful program in Australia for the vehicle engine reconditioning industry.

FD and W Holdings will administer a VASA Warranty Department, where all claims, inquiries or referral to a VASA workshop will be handled by trained operators.

The Warranty Program is something that should be embraced by all VASA service centre members, which is of course the majority of the VASA membership.

More about the warranty inside

Warranty Number:




**Manufacturers
and
Express Warranty**

AIRCONDITIONING

SERVICE AND

WARRANTY BOOK

Underwritten and administered by FD&W Holdings Pty Ltd 

For location of VASA registered workshops in Australia and New Zealand go to www.vasa.org.au



The America's Cup has turned Auckland NZ into a happening city

It's alive, it kicks on well into the small hours, the food is brilliant and the hospitality will require stamina.

It will be the place to be in July for the annual VASA convention - read the full story inside.

The VASA Warranty Main Points

Members will pay for the cover by purchasing the VASA Warranty and Service Book – but the savings in claims management and the on-going retention and promotion of customer loyalty is expected to far outweigh the cost.

The warranty is only available to customers of VASA workshops and is issued free to customers.

The warranty is a guarantee against failure of any one or a combination of major airconditioning system components. These components are:

- Compressor
- Evaporator
- Condenser
- TX Valve
- Pressure Control Valves
- Hose Kit

The Warranty Program is voluntary, but its ultimate success will be measured by how many workshops across Australia and New Zealand are offering the warranty.

Customers can be offered something no-one else can!

The warranty answers the challenge which VASA members have thrown at the executive for years - how can VASA promote itself as a national group of professional workshops which offer not only good service,

but offer something that no-one else can?

THE NATIONAL WARRANTY PROGRAM IS THE ANSWER.

The customer benefits are huge. The warranty program sells professionalism as well as workshop guarantees against equipment failure.

It is seen as a demonstration of the pride VASA technicians take in their work. It is an assurance to customers that only quality components, fitted by skilled VASA technicians, using pure refrigerants recommended by the original equipment manufacturers have been used in their vehicle.

The practical objectives

To protect the workshop and the customer in the event of a claim for faulty equipment or workmanship.

to eliminate the problems, plus loss of time and money when trying to juggle claims and counter claims between customers, your workshop and equipment manufacturers.

Will raise the benchmark of technical expertise among all VASA workshops because recurring problem areas in both component parts and workshop practices will be quickly identified.

The promotional objectives

Separate VASA workshops from the rest of the crowd - give them a competitive edge and stand alone individuality.

Build loyalty between motorists and VASA.

Introduce more motorists to the VASA network of workshops, building a loyalty which is transferable from workshop to workshop.

Keep motorists in the VASA "loop". As motorists move around, they are conditioned to look for another VASA workshop - not just any A/C workshop.

Travelling motorists can be assured that breakdown repairs and diagnosis in other cities or states will be well coordinated.

What are the benefits for the VASA member

Encourages customer retention.

Helps build up a trust between the workshop and the customer.

It will highlight the difference in professional standards between VASA workshops and non-VASA non-professional competition.

The workshop doesn't waste any time on warranty claims - it is all handled instantly by the Warranty Department. It clears up all the questions - there are no more gray areas, only black and white.

Even if the customer does not return to your workshop, the terms of the warranty will require that vehicle to be taken to a VASA workshop - the customer is encouraged to stay within the VASA "loop". The goal is for VASA to retain the customer in the long term.

The warranty is transferable, so that in the event of the vehicle being sold, VASA does not lose the new owner, provided of course that the services required by the warranty are up to date.

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It is the answer to the problem of poor support on component part replacements across the industry.

Being able to offer a warranty which protects both your workshop and the customer is value-adding to your business, thereby providing you with a competitive advantage over non-VASA workshops.

Instant approval and prompt payment of claims made by any VASA workshop.

Affords the workshop much greater protection against claims than they currently have.

Warranty is a solution to many of the problems which emerge through system breakdown. It separates you from the problem, leaving your time free to get on with making another dollar.

VASA members will be able to refer all customer problems to their Warranty Department who will sort out the problem, authorise repairs and payments and get the customer on the road as quickly as possible, with minimum impact on the customer relationship with the business. The workshops are no longer the "bad guys".

Your workshop and your customers will be offered a longer period of warranty on expensive replacements than is currently available under manufacturers' statutory warranty.

Warranty brings a legal understanding to a technical problem and deals with it without the involvement of the workshop.

A properly applied Warranty Program has the ability of improving relationships between the workshop and the customer. Better relationships usually translate to greater satisfaction for the

customer and the immediate benefit of this is the building of loyalty with a workshop and with the VASA network of workshops, leading to more business for everyone.

What if a customer wants service where there is no VASA workshop

If a VASA customer is stranded in a town or region where there are no accredited VASA workshops, the customer calls the Warranty Department and they will find a workshop or technician with the capabilities to assess the situation and, if necessary, carry out the repair. The benefits for VASA in this process are that competent workshops will be introduced to the VASA network. If new members are found in this way, VASA grows as a network, strengthening its marketing edge with the Warranty Program and all other workshop activities.

This process depletes the "cow-boy" market and grows VASA.

While the VASA Warranty Program is not compulsory on all workshops, there are considerably greater opportunities for business growth for those who participate. The Warranty Department will favour participating VASA workshops in all areas when they have to recommend a repairer for a Warranty breakdown.

What are the service centre's responsibilities

All work must be carried out strictly in accordance with the

VASA Repair Procedures.

The VASA workshop must fill in the Warranty Registration Form, which is part of the VASA Service and Warranty Book you will give to the customer - before the customer leaves the workshop. This form is simply faxed or posted to the Warranty Department and from that moment on, that installation and repair is traceable.

The VASA workshop must be prepared to accept responsibility for the actual "fitting" of any warranty component for a period of 18 months.

If the installation is found to be deficient within a period of 18 months, the Warranty Department may recover any costs incurred in correcting the deficiency.

Should a motorist seek to make a claim against the Warranty, the motorist may present the vehicle and the VASA Service and Warranty Book to any VASA workshop in Australia and New Zealand and expect to have the Warranty honoured in every respect, provided the Warranty holder has met their obligations with regard to annual service and non-interference with the system by non VASA workshops.

The VASA workshop which carries out the warranty annual service, must fill in the service coupon in the VASA Service and Warranty Book and send it to the Warranty Department each month.

What are the consumer's responsibilities

Have the system inspected and serviced in strict accordance with the VASA Service Schedule which is:

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A once only free inspection one month after installation.
One service per year.

Never allow any refrigerant gas other than R134a to be used in the system.

All inspections, services and repairs must be carried out at any VASA workshop nominated on the Warranty throughout Australia and New Zealand.

A motorist who chooses a VASA workshop can be confident that any ancillary services required to the vehicle will be carried out in a professional way. It is VASA's experience that because of the training regime adopted by VASA technicians, their approach to general vehicle mechanics is also very professional.

The cost of Warranty cover increases if more than one component is replaced.

If every component - which is virtually a complete new system - is replaced, the Warranty cover can be offered for the base price of

Service and Warranty Book to the customer, the workshop nominates those components which are to be covered by the Warranty simply by ticking off the relevant components on the Registration Form which is inside every Warranty Book.



VASA President Mark Mitchell hands over the mock-up of the finished VASA Service and Warranty Book to Glen Conrad, CEO of FD & W Holdings Pty Ltd.

The program on which the VASA warranty is broadly based, has been running successfully for engine reconditioners.

Prior to the program, approximately 6% of all reconditioned engine sales were subjected to warranty claims. After the program was introduced, the percentage of claims fell to between 2 and 3% after the first 12 months.

This was because of a combination of the success of service education of customers, which resulted

in better relationships and more recommendations for the participating workshops; and the fact that spurious claims were dismissed quickly and efficiently, through proper third party management of claims by FD&W

Testimonials from engine reconditioners can be found on the VASA website, in the members lounge, www.vasa.org.au

The Cost

Minimum order of Warranty Books is 10 @ \$35 per book = \$350, which covers the basic warranty on one component.

The Warranty Books are purchased through the Warranty Department, administered by FD & W Holdings Pty Ltd.

\$35 to reflect the lower risk factor with a completely new system.

The prices are:

- ONE component replaced = \$35
- TWO components replaced = \$50
- THREE components replaced = \$57.50
- COMPLETE A/C SYSTEM (new system or total replacement) = \$35

At the time of issuing the VASA

Do I hear it once, twice..... going...going.....(gone on April 30)

A VASA sponsor, ORICA has donated fifty 13 kg disposable bottles of R134a for sale to a VASA member, with the total proceeds going towards VASA funds to be spent on maintenance of the website and other initiatives.

The offer is already on the website in the member's pages and there are already two "tenders". What is this amount of refrigerant worth to your business?

Submit a tender to the Secretariat by simply sending a fax to 0398900061 or email the secretariat at johnb@melbautoair.com.au or go the members page, look at the message board and post your tender bid there.

The secretariat will assemble the bids on April 30 and advise the successful party to "pick up the gas".



A national Warranty Program covering air-conditioning parts and services WILL NOT WORK unless all participating workshops are following the same service standards.

Any national program to promote VASA workshops implies that every participating workshop must reach a certain standard of performance and technical excellence. Those who don't meet this standard will pull down the entire side, so this Warranty Program will be the moment of truth for many workshops.

Historically VASA has been an association targeting the professionals of the automotive air conditioning industry. The founding members fitted this mould perfectly. The original criteria for membership was that 50% of income had to be generated directly from air conditioning. Those that satisfied this criteria were obviously the professionals – simple!!

In response to operational and financial pressures and to pressure from businesses that wanted to become members but did not fit the 50% criteria, membership has been opened up to a limited degree. This places VASA in a Catch 22 situation.

Our continued respect and profile within the broader automotive air-conditioning arena which includes suppliers, manufacturers, government agencies, refrigerant suppliers and environmental agencies, depends on VASA maintaining a professional operating platform.

However we also need sufficient members for financial survival and growth to serve the members needs in an increasingly competitive market. Survival therefore becomes a balancing act.

We are not saying that recently joined members are not of suitable professional standard. On the contrary, many are professionally equal to any founding

The VASA challenge to all workshop members Raising the technical standard the hidden agenda of the Warranty Program



by Grant Hand
VASA Training
Coordinator

VASA member, but the probability of new members not conforming to VASA's strict technical and ethical operating platform is real.

Amplifying this is the competitive nature of the industry and the "how cheap can we do a retrofit" mentality that is destroying the market for everybody who aspires to professional standards.

Allowing price to dictate the quality of the job to the point of risking system integrity and reliability is a joke, as well as being a breach of VASA ethics.

VASA's technical advisers are fast running out of patience with people ringing up with a system not operating correctly only to find out 10 minutes into the conversation that the TX or orifice tube was not replaced even though it was a compressor burn out.

Setting the standards

There are three ways of ensuring that new and existing members share the professional ethics and technical professionalism ethic of VASA.

1

New members must be nominated and seconded by exist-

ing members. It is the responsibility of the nominating party and the seconder to ensure the prospective member is of suitable standing. Professional ethics is the key factor here. The future firmly rests with personnel who aspire to professional standards. Technically there may be areas that need to be addressed, but this is no big deal – in fact a part of the agreement of membership is to attend identified training courses or submit proof of attendance to an equivalent within a 12 month period and to have at least one staff member in the RTP program.

If you wish to gauge how to vet prospective new members, talk to the New Zealand members at the Auckland 2000 conference or contact them via email. Their efforts and success in bringing in professionals or aspiring professionals into the association is unparalleled – so far without a hint of dropping standards.

2

VASA must have the political will and the power to exclude those who break the rules. A "please explain" letter has been forwarded to VASA members who allegedly have contravened the articles of the association by using non-OEM/VASA approved refrigerants and/or substandard work practices. Termination of membership will result in cases where a breach of policy is proven. We simply cannot afford to risk the future of the association through the lowering of professional standards by non-conforming members.

3

The Warranty Program needs to be embraced enthusiastically by all workshop members. It is the promotional and operational tool by which VASA will prove its professional status and in the process, it may indeed weed out any shortcomings.

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Standards and the Warranty Program

Central to the success of the program is that warranted components and systems must be fitted and commissioned in accordance with recommended professional standards.

The warranty program is being used by VASA as a "maintenance of standards" tool. The launch of the program at the Auckland 2000 Convention will involve an orientation to its operation, the supply of warranty books and associated materials to support the program.

From a customer perspective the warranty program must offer confidence in the product – the product being professional service and quality componentry.

To support this initiative, VASA is developing its "Customer Confidence Pack" – the support material for the program. A substantial part of this material directly dictates standards to which all members must conform.

The key items in the pack are:

1. Code of Professional Practice – covering all aspects of professional servicing and repairs.
2. VASA Members Directory and Manual – containing all policies, procedures, standards and lists of member workshops.
3. Wall Plaque – outlining membership accreditation, ethics and service pledge.
4. Point of sale and media material in disk form for use in your territory.

The underlying requirement of this program is that all members will now be required to uphold professional standards as clearly spelt out in the literature which will be provided.

There will be a set of standard work practices and documentation which must be followed for the success of the program.

To be able to offer a warranty that boasts professional standards as its cornerstone must have the documentation and personnel to support it – and in turn this supports the entire association.

"Procrastination is the art of keeping up with yesterday."

This quotation could apply to some VASA members who seem totally oblivious to the fact that sooner or later, internet connection will be as commonplace as today's telephone - especially if you want to stay in business.

Slowly but surely, VASA is dragging its members into the cyber age.

We are well on the way to reaching our target of having every VASA member connected to the internet by the end of this calendar year.

At last check, we were heading for the first 100 members on line with their passwords, or roughly 26% of the membership.

Members who have logged on to the VASA website are going out of their way to report their enthusiasm.

"Just had my first look at the web site. Very good. Keep up the good work, it is greatly appreciated." Jeff Smit

"You really have an attractive web site and I'm looking forward to exploring the rest of it now that I have things straight." – Joan Jones – IMACA (USA)

"Keep up the good work with the VASA site," Keith Row

"Congrats on a fantastic site!", Jeff and Bronwyn Barker.

"Any tool dropped while repairing a car will roll underneath to the exact centre"

"Anything you try to fix will take longer and cost more than you thought" - Murphy - the optimist.

"I think you have done a terrific job and deserve a big pat on the back. Keep up the good work. I will be looking at our site often. Thanks again," Bob Mol.

THE



WEB

The directors and members are now receiving all information and correspondence over the website. The paper trail is NO MORE.

From reading the correspondence alone, VASA members will gain a great deal of new knowledge about their industry and the steps being taken by the executive to improve business, make life easier and generally look after the interests of members.

They will see that VASA is not like many other volunteer organizations. VASA actually does WORK.

VASA is not about competition. It's about sharing of information for a common cause.

So those members who are not yet connected to the website, please act to get involved as quickly as you can.

Unless you are on line by the end of this year, you will never find out what VASA is doing for you, you will not get access to any technical information, you will not be made aware of the major issues which face your industry and you will remain ignorant of the steps being taken by your fellow members to improve their business.

AUCKLAND

VASA



2000



SEVENTH ANNUAL CONVENTION AND TRADE SHOW

WHEN

Thursday 20 July 2000

Delegates arrive Auckland New Zealand

Friday 21 July 2000

Golf tournament
tours, inspections, trade show.

Saturday 22 July 2000

Annual General Meeting,
keynote speakers, trade show,
training workshops
annual gala dinner

Sunday 23 July 2000

Wrap up breakfast, optional
tours

WHERE

Sky City in Auckland, New Zealand

This is a city within a city.

From Sky City Conference Centre through to the restaurants and bars, Sky City Hotel, Sky Tower and casinos there's a place for everything and everyone.

The Conference Centre is one of Sky City's greatest assets. It's a haven of privacy and seclusion in the heart of Auckland's leading entertainment and leisure destination.

HOW MUCH

Typical convention package to take part in everything but optional tours will be:

Delegate Registration

NZ\$495

AUD\$395

Partner's registration

NZ\$395 (incl tour) or \$295

AUD\$317 (incl tour) or \$237

Accommodation at Sky City

NZ\$180 per room (2 persons)

AUD\$144 per room (2 persons)

Return Air Fares from

Australia

(if booked direct with convention agent)

Includes Australian airport tax, Sydney airport tax, but not NZ airport tax of NZ\$20 on departure only

ex Sydney AUD\$566.40

ex Melbourne AUD\$628

ex Brisbane AUD\$628

ex Adelaide AUD\$755

ex Perth AUD\$915



The magnificent Auckland Harbour, home of the 2000 America's Cup races, with the Sky City prominent in the centre background.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAN

PASSPORT: You'll need it for NZ. Make sure yours is current. If you don't have one, find out how to apply by visiting this internet site:
www.dfat.gov.au/passports

REGISTRATION FORMS:

Registration forms will go out from the Convention Committee to all VASA members before the end of March. The form will also

be available on the VASA website at www.vasa.org.au

An agency in Auckland, **The Corporate Traveller**, has been appointed to handle all registration and travel arrangements and we recommend members use this facility. You will be able to pay by cheque or credit card and this will be explained on the Registration form.

If you are thinking of staying for a break or touring in NZ, **The Corporate Traveller** will provide individual service to all VASA members. Call or email early.

Contact is Jacque Ryan

Phone +64 9355 7575

Fax +64 9355 7578

email:

Jacque_Ryan@flightcentre.com

AIRLINE TICKETS

Airline tickets, on either Qantas or Air New Zealand will be available electronically at your airport of departure. **The Corporate Traveller** has negotiated the best advanceairfare rate you will get, but this will only apply as long as these seat allocations last...so the message is clear, book as early as you can to save money. The deadline dates will be published in the Registration form.

The VASA message on refrigerants for auto a/c systems is so simple and so clear - a mono refrigerant industry based on the universally adopted R134a will save frustration, time and money for all - so why do some authorities have so much trouble grasping this concept. Or is there another agenda?

VASA has delivered a strong message to the New South Wales Government about the need to keep the ban on the use of flammable hydrocarbon refrigerants firmly in place.

The New South Wales Government is reviewing the ban on the use of flammable hydrocarbon refrigerants in vehicles and has sought input from a wide range of industry associations.

Late last year the Regulation was referred to the Parliamentary Regulation Review Committee. This Committee, without contacting VASA or a number of other interested industry Associations, proceeded to recommend that Workcover New South Wales reconsider the Regulation to see whether it is justified.

Workcover undertook a wide ranging consultation process, and, at the time of writing, was about to finalise its report.

VASA told the review committee that apart from the simple fact that any authority supporting hydrocarbons as a replacement gas is condoning unsafe procedures in every Australian workshop and placing car owning Australians outside the protection of warranties from all major car manufacturers and air conditioning component manufacturers, they would be ignoring the reality that car air conditioning systems are not designed for hydrocarbons.

Other organisations seeking to extend flammables ban on all airconditioning and refrigeration equipment

Associations representing manufacturers of stationery air-conditioning and refrigeration equipment, the Air-Conditioning Equipment and Manufacturers Association and the Australian Appliance Industry Association have made representations arguing that the ban on the use of flammable hydrocarbon refrigerants should be extended to cover all air-conditioning and refrigeration equipment. Recognising the risks inherent in the use of these refrigerants in equipment not designed to handle them, these manufacturers wish to see it made illegal to use flammable hydrocarbon refrigerants in their equipment other than with their written permission.

VASA will continue to press for controls on flammable hydrocarbon refrigerants in those States where they do not exist – that is Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia.



On the President's Mind



Perhaps some members thought we were joking when the executive voted to expell any member found using anything other than R134a in automotive airconditioning systems.

The strength of an organisation can only be measured by the way its members stick to its principles or rules.

Here is the draft from VASA's lawyers - expect one in the mail if we have reason to suspect that blends or hydrocarbons are being used in customer's cars...

"Compliance with VASA Policy No 5

As a member of VASA you are required to comply with the policies which have been developed to maintain high standards of practice and promote professionalism in our industry.

It has come to the Board's attention that you may be conducting business in a manner inconsistent with VASA policy No 5 and in particular, clause 3:-

"VASA does not recommend the use of hydrocarbon refrigerant or refrigerant blends of any kind in automotive air conditioning systems that are not designed specifically for their use."

VASA has developed this policy with particular regard to the over-riding importance of safety, both to members and consumers.

We enclose a copy of the VASA Membership Policies Brochure for your information. We also enclose a copy of Clause 12 of the Articles of Association. We request your response and information from you as to the manner of your operation and compliance with Policy No 5. We request your response within seven days."

VASA shows the world - our intellectual property is worth money

Training program earns international praise with US licence deal

The VASA training program, the RTP (Registered Technicians Program), will be used to train technicians in the USA and many Spanish speaking countries as a result of a licence deal with IMACA (International Mobile Air Conditioning Association) of Dallas, Texas.

IMACA is one of the two major industry organisations with whom VASA is affiliated in the US.

IMACA has bought the rights to the RTP from inception two years ago and after "localising" the terminology, it will be offered to airconditioning technicians around the USA.

In addition, IMACA have the rights to use the RTP in all countries where Spanish is the first language.

VASA has received a licence fee and will be paid an ongoing royalty for every person who enrolls for the course.

The RTP was developed with the guidance of the VASA executive

by training coordinator Grant Hand of Adelaide.

"IMACA's CEO Frank Allison, sees Australia as a very innovative and aggressive country when it comes to keeping up with technology," said VASA president Mark Mitchell, who negotiated the final agreement with IMACA in Dallas last year.

"They liked our no nonsense approach to the basics of vehicle electronics and airconditioning systems.

"It is a great tribute to Grant Hand and his awesome knowledge of vehicle systems. Without training, VASA has few reasons to exist," added Mark.

IMACA has also shown early interest in VASA's new warranty program, which will be launched in Australia and New Zealand in August this year.

"The RTP was a major initiative of VASA to improve and maintain the standard of its member technicians in the face of rapidly changing vehicle technology," Mark said.

"It was launched in 1998 with a

course of basics designed to provide underpinning knowledge for more advanced courses which will follow each year.

"The RTP culminates in a recognisable qualification for automotive airconditioning technicians and it is compulsory for every member to have at least one person enrolled in the RTP each year.

THOSE WHO DON'T KEEP UP WILL FALL BY THE WAYSIDE

"The executive's insistence on training is now paying dividends. We know that some workshops treat it lightly, but at the end of the day, those who don't keep up their knowledge of vehicle electronics and management skills with refrigerant gasses, will be the losers.

"I really don't want to hear any more talk about ' what does VASA do for us'.

"With a combination of the website information and the RTP, we think you get pretty good value for a small annual contribution,." added Mark.

Products and Corporate News

If you want to showcase your product or company on this page and on the VASA web site go to www.vasa.org.au and click on *Sponsors*.



What possible connection could there be between VASA manufacturing member, Autofrost at Milperra, Sydney and our own bushranging hero Ned Kelly....read on

Member Profile No. 4

Bushranger Ned Kelly's postbox helmet is as far removed from vehicle air-conditioning as you can get.

But it was manufactured at Autofrost, in Sydney. Yahoo Serious wore it when he played the bushranger in the 1993 Australian movie Reckless Kelly.

There's a new series of hub-cap shaped clocks from Coca Cola – where are they made? Yep, Autofrost.

For a man who grew up with good old traditional car air-conditioning systems, Greg Thomas, owner of Autofrost is quite an enigma.

While he owes airconditioning his livelihood, we suspect that he would much rather hang around the Fox lots in Sydney, inspecting the flim flammery of movie making, or alternatively burning the Sydney backblocks in his '67 Mustang.

While all of this might sound a bizarre collection of manufacturing output for an aircon factory, Greg Thomas is probably doing what many others in the industry are doing – diversifying - only he's doing it very differently.

He admits the Autofrost manufacturing skills are enhanced by his company's ability to design and mould plastic. They have four plastic vacuum forming machines which were supposed to be used for manufacturing ducts and end caps for customised airconditioning systems in vehicles, farm and construction equipment, boats, planes, classic cars and people

movers.

However, when more vehicle manufacturers started installing factory air, Greg boosted the output of his machines with a simple ad in the yellow pages which indicated he could make anything you wanted, in small runs.

We do everything the big boys don't want to do



Some of the Autofrost team (from left) Aida Adam, Te-Anu Ishibashi, Greg Thomas, Matt Crockett and Ron Coffre.

"These days we try to do specialised work, in lower volume and of course we look for stuff with a better bottom line," explains Greg.

In normal circumstances, Autofrost would do 80% to 20% aircon work over general manufacturing. However, while the aircon industry undergoes some changes, he's happy to churn out false bricks for movie sets, plastic gable vents for federation archi-

ture and suits of stage armour, to augment his airconditioning activities.

Greg Thomas learnt his aircon skills on the workbenches of the old Mark IV factory in Sydney. He went on to become assistant to the design engineer.

Then, with a mate, he airconditioned scores of tractors and farm equipment in the Orange region for several years before joining James N Kirby, which then owned Autofrost.

He was sales manager and then engineer and product manager. When Kirby's wanted out in 1983, Greg and his father in law bought the company. Since then Greg and his wife Irene have assumed total ownership.

Greg and ten employees churn out an astounding range of movie props and commercial gadgetry, while still catering for specialised sections of the mobile airconditioning industry. They can design and manufacture aftermarket airconditioning systems in which they often make their own evaporators.

"We can design, develop, manufacture and fit," says Greg. "A fitting shop, which runs as an adjunct to Autofrost keeps us in contact with vehicle changes, so that makes us very adaptable.

"We still have some stock of the older aircon parts like the Mark IV evaporators and coils, so if VASA members ever get stuck in the 'odd and interesting' department, they can always call on us."

Nostalgia . . .

In this episode of this nostalgia series, Frank Allison looks at the rise and fall of the major aftermarket companies and reveals how the OEM's were doing quite nicely with this new technology.



Frank Allison
CEO



By 1960 no fewer than 15 different aftermarket companies were making automotive A/C units, a few had already come and gone and even more would do the same in the years ahead.

How were the OEMs doing? Quite nicely. U.S. factory installations doubled from 1966 to 1969. By 1972, fully 70% of all vehicles produced in the United States had factory installed airconditioning. This figure reached 75% in 1976. So the OEMs were doing all right.

As if things weren't busy enough with all of this industry growth going on here in the U.S., the first export markets were also being developed in the 1960s. Sophisticated market studies or consumer demographics were not available at the time, so the market selection process was simple.

Choose a country with a hot climate, stable economy and enough cars on the road to justify the effort and expense necessary to find the customers and develop the business.

Now, with the science of automotive airconditioning (for the most part) resolved, system development in the 1960's shifted to creating a more competitive appearance. Late in the decade the first aftermarket in-dash units began to appear.

However, the manufacture, sales and installation of under-dash and even the bulky trunk-mounted units, would still continue for several years. In one decade, just a few short years, the automotive airconditioning industry had changed tremendously – and this Trade Association needed to evolve as well.

At the 1970 Trade Show, we changed our association's name from the Automotive Air-Conditioning Association, or

AACA, to IMACA, the International Mobile Air Conditioning Association and suppliers, distributors, and international attendees were invited to become full Members.

The interests and issues of the Association were also changing. For example, in 1971, IMACA took a formal stand against air bags, citing unreliability and lack of side-impact protection – a position held for more than a decade.

In 1972, IMACA held its first International Trade Show – a World Exposition exclusively for the mobile airconditioning industry.

Expanding on a trend begun a few years before, markets were being developed in off-highway equipment, Recreational vehicle airconditioning, farm equipment, heavy trucks - even pleasure boats and aircraft. The future was looking very bright indeed. And then the fuel shortages and gasoline rationing of the mid-1970s hit. Sales of full-size cars and motor homes plummeted.

As motorists scrambled to buy small, fuel-efficient cars, critics warned that airconditioning was one of the major contributors to poor mileage. Estimated "costs" of three to five miles-per-gallon were touted in the press as reasons not to buy or even use auto airconditioning.

Our industry had already conducted wind-tunnel tests that showed that the increased wind resistance created by driving with the windows down and the A/C off reduced mileage as much or more as driving with the windows up and the air conditioner on. Despite the rumours of wasteful inefficiency, A/C sales continued to be strong.

In the 1960's and 70's, the parts

segment of our industry was also beginning to grow in importance. As more mechanics became trained in A/C service procedures, many of the shops specialising in A/C installation, began to develop and expand their repair, service and parts side of the business.

Now, the A/C systems manufacturers had sold parts to installation shops all along for warranty work. But it was not until the aftermarket installers began to actively pursue A/C service and repair, that parts sales came into their Own.

The shift to increased service activity among the installation shops launched another sector of the A/C industry, the distribution of airconditioning parts through traditional automotive parts distribution system.

And as the increasing number of vehicles equipped with factory airconditioning aged and required service, the demand for parts also increased.

Another shift in the service side of the industry was also taking place - consumers began to take their cars to the independent A/C repair shops for service instead of back to the new car dealerships.

And since the average American motorist waits until the airconditioner starts to perform poorly or has quit working altogether, many general automotive repair facilities began adding A/C service and repair as a seasonal profit center.

To be continued next issue:

Frank Allison winds up this fascinating history of the auto airconditioning industry in the last episode. This entire history will also be available for members to read at their leisure at

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VASA encourages existing members who know of any workshop worthy of membership of VASA to approach them and nominate them.

The only way to stamp out inferior practices in our industry is to dedicate ourselves to workplace improvement through VASA membership.

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