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**ABOVE & BEYOND THE STANDARD**

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Just like any product or service, a range of considerations come into play when we look at purchasing a new piece of capital equipment, be that a truck, a car, even a motorcycle.

However, well before a purchaser strikes a blow researching specs on the internet or dropping into their local dealership, a myriad of regulatory processes has already taken place, hidden from view.

Whilst not obvious to the prospective purchasers, these lesser-known processes play a critical role in keeping our roads safer and our environment in better shape.

It begs the question then, what are these processes, how exactly do they contribute to safer roads, what part do they play in protecting the environment and what do these rules mean for Australian-based Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs)—such as Isuzu—that are bringing these vehicles into the country every day?

**A-D what?**

For the uninitiated, our national manufacturing standards for road safety, anti-theft and emissions are known as Australian Design Rules or ‘ADRs.’

All new on-road vehicles manufactured in Australia and imported new or second-hand vehicles, must comply with relevant ADRs when they are first supplied to Australian buyers.

When a vehicle is first released for sale in the Australian market, it must first comply with the relevant ADRs.

ADRs set the minimum safety and environmental standards that on-road vehicles must meet at the time of manufacture and throughout their life on public roads.

**Where are we at?**

The current standards in play right now are known as the ‘Third Edition’ ADRs.

Reviewed every 10 years, ADRs are amended to ensure they remain relevant and new regulations added to cover developments in road vehicle manufacturing and technology.

From a truck or ‘heavy vehicle’ perspective, new ADRs relating to vehicles over 3.5-tonne Gross Vehicle Mass (GVM) come into effect this year and are worth unpacking here.

**What’s new?**

On the safety front in 2025, there’s ADR 35/07, which stipulates the mandatory inclusion of Electronic Stability Control (ESC). This is a major win for drivers: ESC automatically adjusts throttle and braking systems to reduce rollover risk, giving trucks a much-improved chance of staying stable and upright, especially during emergency manoeuvres.

Another active safety measure, Advanced Emergency Braking (AEB), is also mandatory on all new on-road heavy vehicles from 1 February 2025 – known as ADR 97/00.

With sensors that detect potential collisions before they happen, AEB technology allows larger, heavier vehicles more time to slow down or stop safely, thereby mitigating or even avoiding collision situations.

Finally, on the emissions control side of things, there’s ADR 80/04, which introduces a new tailpipe emission standard applying to all new and existing on-road heavy vehicle models for sale in Australia from November 2025.

For truck manufacturers, Isuzu included, this means new vehicles will most likely require AdBlue diesel exhaust additive, utilising more advanced Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) to reduce harmful emissions.

**Do they work?**

So how do ADRs play a role in keeping our roads safe?

A relatively recent historical example of an ADR having a huge, proven impact on road safety in Australia is the implementation of ADR 85, introduced across all light vehicles (that is, up to and including a Gross Vehicle Mass of 3,500 kg) in 2017, which focused on side impact performance.

This rule aimed to reduce serious and fatal injuries in side impact crashes by setting limits on the forces and accelerations experienced by occupants during crash tests involving poles or trees.

From a truck perspective, and in the case of Isuzu, similar preventative measures have formed part of the manufacturing process for many years prior to 2017.

Adopted from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), all current model Isuzu cabins are certified as UNECE R29 compliant regarding their superior cabin strength.

Introduced by Isuzu way back in 1994 and despite there being no mandatory requirements, ECE R29 compliant cabins have since become hugely popular in the Australian truck market thanks to incentives such as steer axle mass concessions. They’re also proven to save lives.

**Above & beyond**

This brings me to the current state of research, development and product approach adopted by truck OEMs and again, I’ll use the example of Isuzu.

Both the global Isuzu Group and its Australian subsidiary, Isuzu Australia Limited, have adopted a ‘full noise’ approach to road safety—in other words, a prevailing attitude of supplying all the safety aids it can muster, rather than simply what’s mandated.

To this end, merely meeting the imminent ADRs was not enough.

With the launch of an all-new model change-over slated for this year, Isuzu made a deliberate decision to push above and beyond, not only meeting incoming ADR requirements, but exceeding them significantly.

Particularly in relation to safety, just under 14 per cent of the total suite of safety features being released across the 2025 model range, are related to the incoming ADRs just mentioned.

Another 14 per cent are related to soon to be mandated safety requirements, leaving a huge 72 per cent of our safety features going above and beyond what we’re obliged to meet.

Some models benefit from a comprehensive safety suite of 15-plus features.

This is a huge leap forward in not only the prioritisation of safety as a concept, and importantly for consumers, it may have the effect of raising the bar across the competitive landscape, instigating a safety arms race of sorts.

It should be noted that it’s no small feat for any OEM to meet the growing and increasingly complex gamut of manufacturing standards and from the customer perspective, the day an active safety system helps you avoid what could have been a fatal accident 10 or 15 years ago, is the day you’ll thank processes such as the ADRs and those OEMs that choose to not simply meet obligations but push beyond them for the greater good.

**ends**

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