# Holden goes further with Australian Inhibiter

Specialising in a niche market is the key to an all-Australian success story.

Among the operations of Australian icon GM Holden, builder of the first all-Australian passenger car in 1948, is exporting engines from its Port Melbourne facility to Alpha, Opel, Saab, GM Daewoo and Isuzu plants around the world.

In line with quality standards, each engine is tested prior to export – which means each engine must have normal fluids – such as water coolant – drained prior to overseas transport.

The problem is that water coolant cannot be totally drained from the engine, and during overseas transport fluids can migrate to areas such as the clutch and flywheel, causing corrosion.

To solve this problem, GM Holden called on corrosion specialist Australian Inhibitor.

The company's GM Les Amy, a 40-year veteran of the packaging industry, had previously led Australian Inhibitor's development of specialised packaging for Holden. One of his more notable developments was a wheel protector for the Holden HSV, treated in vapour corrosion inhibitor inner (VCI) employing an outer coated board.

This innovation, says Amy, "planted a seed" in Holden's mind that led them to request a more comprehensive solution for its engines – a process that involved testing specialised plastics capable of providing corrosion protection and maintaining sound physical barrier protection.

The function of the design was also of paramount importance as it had to be easily fitted and able to be securely locked to ensure it would not be displaced during transit.

"Basically, we spent six months in the lab, conducting test after test", comments Amy, adding that the initial testing was followed by many more months in development, during which physical prototypes were shipped to various sites overseas to verify workability.

Ultimately, a VCI-treated elliptical rigid plastic case was produced – and along with it, a new generation plastic for which Australian Inhibitor has a patent pending.

Australian Inhibitor's VCI engine protector export case

While Amy admits that such capital-intensive R&D of an extremely specialised application is a rare luxury in today's competitive industry, he comments that it is the company's extremely specialised field that warrants the investment.

"We protect our niche strongly – and we don't go outside our niche," says Amy, adding that it is the specialisation that gives his company a unique insight into where its customers are heading, and hence the market intelligence to work towards products suited to their emerging needs.

Amy also suggests R&D grants utilising tax allowances for new product development, as long as these developments are in a field in which you already have core expertise.

"If you specialise in a niche market, you'll be successful," he concludes.

The evidence to date – including that Australian Inhibitor is now into its sixth decade of operation, has won a Gold and Silver Award at the Australian Packaging Awards as well as commercial interest from aeronautical organisations and others in the VCI plastic case – indicates that Amy might just be right.