

MEDIA RELEASE

11 June 2009

Australia short changed on safety; RAC

Many cars being sold in Australia don't have the same safety features as those available in other countries, even if they're the same model, the RAC has said.

The latest round of safety tests by the Australasian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP) has revealed cars that received a top-level 5 star rating in Europe and New Zealand are only rated as 4 star in Australia.

The Honda Jazz and Kia Soul are the most recent cars to have their safety downgraded for the Australian market.

In Europe both models have Electronic Stability Control (ESC) and intelligent seatbelt reminders for all seats but ESC is not available on any Jazz in Australia and is not included in the base model of the Soul.

The Australian Soul and the base model Jazz only have a driver seatbelt reminder.

RAC Head of Member Advocacy Matt Brown said the Honda Jazz and Kia Soul lacked some potentially life-saving features that should have been included.

"While 4 stars is a commendable rating, Australians deserve to have the same level of protection as drivers in other countries, particularly when they're driving an equivalent vehicle model," Mr Brown said.

"These vehicles clearly have the capacity to achieve a 5 star rating but the removal of key safety features sees them fall disappointingly short."

Mr Brown said this wasn't the first time Australians had been short-changed on safety with de-specification occurring to a number of makes and models.

The Toyota Corolla carries ESC as standard in the USA and side curtain airbags are standard in the UK and USA models however both are an optional extra on the base model in Australia, which the consumer has to pay for.

The Mazda 3 has ESC and side curtain airbags as standard on the base variant in both the USA and UK but both features are only optional in Australia.

"This de-specing is unacceptable. Manufacturers need to ensure that what we buy in Australia is at least as good as what our international counterparts are getting," Mr Brown said.

"Safety is not an optional extra. These types of cars are popular with young drivers and first-time buyers and safety needs to be at the top of the list.

"These vehicles still have an acceptable safety rating but they could have been safer."

1

For more information contact RAC Media

Ph: 9436 4402, 9436 4258

Mob: 0419 813 188, 0421 586 049

or email adrian.firth@rac.com.au rosalind.lane@rac.com.au

In other ANCAP tests, both the Kia Cerato and Suzuki Alto were awarded 4 stars.

The RAC recommends the purchase of 4 and 5 star vehicles.

**Please note: Kia has advised ANCAP that there will be a production change for the Australian Soul later in the year to incorporate the safety features that make it eligible for 5 stars. This model is expected to be on sale in September or October.*

ENDS

*** For radio interviews call Matt Brown direct: 0419 813 171.**

For more information contact RAC Media

Ph: 9436 4402, 9436 4258

Mob: 0419 813 188, 0421 586 049

or email adrian.firth@rac.com.au rosalind.lane@rac.com.au