

# CLUB TALK

Season 1998

A Quarterly Publication of the MX-5 Club of NSW Inc

Vol 8, No 2



## The President's Word

By Tony Buon

Over the past twelve months your elected committee have served with dedication, and indisputable expertise. As you know, only a few of them stand for re-election. To those, like myself, who are not re-standing, I pass on all our thanks for their work and commitment.

I have been president for two years and was the club Captain prior to that. After four years on the committee, I like many of the others not re-standing for election, leave with a mixture of relief and sadness. Sadness for we have greatly enjoyed our time on the committee and relief as we may now

*"lets go up north in force and bring back the national trophy we have held for the past three years."*

have more time for those family, work and other commitments in our lives. I would like to thank our Corporate Sponsors John Newell Mazda for hosting this AGM and putting on a great night and Bar-B-Q.

I would also like to thank Ruth McDermott - Lecturer in design at UNSW & Prudence Black - Cultural Historian for their great talk about the MX-5 as a design object.

We began the year in the wake of the announcement of a new model. To say the least, as members, we were uncertain what to expect. We were cautious, would Mazda be true to the car we love or would they try to create a whole new car from the ground up.

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## This Is Your Captain Speaking

By Jean Cook

I can't believe it has been a whole year since the last meeting (AGM). We have just completed another 12 months of interesting activities with the Club. We have had rainy days, sunny days, long runs, short runs, picnic lunches, evening dinners and weekends away.

My three years on the Committee are finished now, the last two as Captain. I will admit to accepting the position with some apprehension, after all, I did not really think that I fitted the so-called accepted model for your average Sports Car Club. The one thing

*"One goal I set, was to get more ladies out on the race track with me and I have certainly succeeded in that."*



Captain Jean Cook

## The Club Welcomes

Janet Atkinson  
Helena Katerinka  
David Farnecourt  
Richard Scerri  
Janet Atkinson  
Cheryl Barr  
Robert Barr  
Chris Black  
Cecily Black

(Continued on page 4)

# Club Sporting Talk

By Ed Chivers

## Competition Secretary Report

The past 12 months has seen the competitive side of the club grow from strength to strength. We have run 8 Wakefield Park practice days, 2 Observation runs, joined the Combined Sports Car Association (who run monthly supersprints & motorkhanas), and we had several members participate in two driver training days.

For me the highlight of the year's events was the April Wakefield Park practice day. Mazda kindly loaned us



Ed Chivers

four brand new MX-5's for the day. A record of 65 members came that day, to test out the new car on the track (some even tried

*It's also apparent that driver skills are fast improving too. For example, around a dozen drivers are regularly circulating faster than the best lap time achieved at Natmeet 96!*

out on the open road).

My aim when I took on the role of Competition Secretary was to provide the club members with the opportunity

to have some fun in a friendly, safe and (mildly) competitive way. Along the way I expected them to also improve their driving skills and have the opportunity to explore the full potential of their beloved cars. Well, the past 12 months has certainly been fun. The number of members participating in the Wakefield Park practice days has grown and now the event is almost fully booked before the flier comes out (some members even have standing bookings). A number of members are also participating in CSCA and other formal competitive events.

It's also apparent that driver skills are fast improving too. For example, around a dozen drivers are regularly circulating faster than the best lap time achieved at Natmeet 96! Some as much 5 to 6 seconds faster, equating to an average speed of 110 kph around the circuit.

The hill climb times have tumbled too. Whereas a year ago a time of 60 seconds was considered fast, we now have several drivers doing it in 57 to 58 seconds. Pretty good times for a very twisty 1km course!

I'm particularly pleased to see several ladies regularly participating and a core team of regular volunteers running the day. Last year getting volunteers was a major problem. This sometimes saw myself and one or two *Competition Secretary's Report* others marooned in the control tower, often operating two or more stop watches. I'm pleased to say that this

(Continued on page 5)

## Voodoo What?

For those who have commented on my "Lovely Knob" and asked where I got it, the answer is simple, I bought it from another member! However, as it still excites people, it is part of a range made by ex-Nuclear Scientist (really) Bob Krueger of San Diego, Vbob as he is known, originally made one for his own Mariner Blue Miata (MX-5) from solid aircraft quality billet aluminium. Lots of experimentation with size and weight, resulted in a knob which sits a little lower than standard and damps out slightly more of the vibrations from the gearbox. The knob is of course, similar to those which have been fitted to Ferraris for years. To find out more, go to the Voodoo Home Page (check the photo gallery) in the list below <http://www.teamvoodoo.com/>. They are also available from Wellington New Zealander, Gary Morrison and I've just convinced him to advertise! See the ad page 15.



## MX-5 Cybercar

How often have you wanted to know something about the MX-5 and not known where to look. Try the Internet, there are literally hundreds of sites that deal with our car and many many more with general car information. Check some of these out:-  
<http://www.miata.net/>  
<http://www.99miata.com/>  
<http://www.lg.com.au/justmx5>  
<http://www.miataclubs.com/>  
<http://www.roadster.net/>  
<http://www.sunriders.com/>  
<http://www.teamvoodoo.com/>  
<http://www.mazda.com.au/>  
<http://www.mazda.com/>

<http://www.paradise.net.nz/~gm/voodoo.html> There is a long list of vendors at Miata.net, selling all kinds of goodies for the MX-5 as well as a list of links to other sites related to the car.

For some general car stuff, try:-

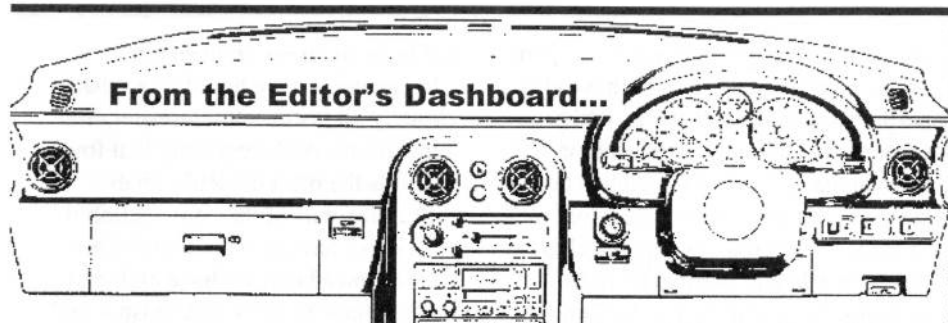
<http://www.topgear.beeb.com/>  
<http://www.classiccarsworld.com/>  
<http://www.carnet.com.au/>  
<http://www.cams.com.au/>  
<http://www.meguiars.com/>

For everything and I mean everything you wanted to know about tyres try:-

<http://www.tirerack.com/>

Thanks to Ross Hutcherson for that one.





From the Editor's Dashboard...

**W**here to now? A new Committee, of which I hope to be a useful part, new ideas, new directions. We need input from you the members, we could easily interpret the very poor roll up for the Christmas in July run, as a sign that the monthly outings are losing favour with the membership, or was it just that the concept of Christmas in July is becoming a little jaded? We were outnumbered at the meeting point, three to one, by the Corvette Club!

Lots of new members out there, what would you like to do? If you do like the idea of the Sunday drive, on the kid of roads that suit the MX-5, plan a run for us, take us somewhere we haven't been, many of our runs go north, , take us south, or west, we've done Jenolan Caves a few times but maybe you have a different way of getting there. South through the National Park , has been popular too but if you have a favourite days good drive, there's a good chance that the rest of us might enjoy it just as much. The Wakefield Park Track days have proved very popular and are fully booked almost as soon as the date is set and we can get them published.

What other activities would you like to see the Club undertake? We're open to suggestions and the Club is here for you.

I know that there will be letters of thanks officially thanking John Newell Mazda for the AGM but what a great job they did, we really enjoyed it, nothing like a Barbie and a glass or two of wine to get one in the mood for business! The generous donation of prizes for the raffle was also much appreciated.

Thanks also to Ruth McDermott and Pru Black for their observations on the MX-5 culture, they might have felt that talking to us was a little like teaching ones Grandmother to suck eggs, but in spite of not having even driven the car, they identified much of that which not only endears the car to us but attracts us as a group to join together as a Club and celebrate the car together. Hopefully, Pru and Ruth will take up Ann Lyons offer of the loan of one their two cars, and join us on my run to the Hunter Valley, who knows, we might even turn them into enthusiasts!

Once again, I ask for contributions to Club Talk, even recipes if you feel so moved! Anything that you think might interest the rest of us.

## Dash Lights

Edited By Jeff Gehrig

*From Roger Johnson.*

Having driven to Adelaide for the Formula 1 Grand Prix, on such a long journey and having long legs I found that the steering wheel restricted my movement considerably. After much research I found a Momo wheel that has a flat bottom ( There's lots of people who would like that I'm sure) that would give me that little bit of extra leg room that I required. I purchased the wheel and had it fitted at Roman Auto-Tek. On the way home (with the roof off of course) I was stopped at the traffic lights in Chatswood when I noticed two middle aged women in the car in the lane alongside admiring my car. The inevitable question came. " I like your car, what is it?" Normal reply given but them "Devilment" took over. I had the original steering wheel sitting on the passenger seat next to me so I reached over and grabbed it, thrust it out the window towards them and said "Here, would you like a drive?" The lights changed at that moment, I took off and left them sitting there. The driver had stalled the car as they were rolling around in fits of laughter. I had a smirk on my face all the way home as I went through the event in my mind. Yep they sure are a fun car those MX-5s. *RJ*

*Next Issue, Rogers Movie appearance with Kate Winslett!*

### Familiar?

A message from Lester Welch on miata.net, following one of the larger MX-5 gatherings at Deals Gap:-

I discovered something at the Gap that should've been obvious Janeth (my wife) drives LadyBug, but I realized at the Gap, that in the past, whenever we get in curves I 'volunteer' to take over. Thus she had never driven LadyBug except in the most boring of roads. The road from the Tuskegee motel to the lodge is a NICE Miata road. I suggested that Janeth drive it. She started taking the curves better and faster. I'd offer a suggestion about shifts. Keep the hands at 9 and 3, I'd offer. She was really getting into it BUT - the great thing now is that when she rides as a passenger, instead of squirming and stepping on a non-existent Pax-side brake, she's relaxed and actually expresses disapproval when I take a curve too slow. I asked her about the change in her attitude.

"Well, now I know what the car can do."

Lester Welch, Gapped

## Coming Events

**Pencil them in your diary so you don't forget!**

**12th September** Café Paradiso 10. am Canberra Coffee Group.

**20th September** Canberra Hyatt 9.30am Run Brunch \$38/head RSVP Rick Fischer 62171834 (bh or 62901945 (ah)

**20th September** Sunday Run

**8th October** C'wealth Games Parade cars needed If you want to be on the volunteer list call me (02) 99681103 first in best dressed!

**11th October** Concours d'Elegance at Al Palmers.

## The Presidents Report

(Continued from page 1)

Would there be a bigger engine, new shape, tiptronic transmission or as one so called expert in the states predicted a coupe model?

Well, we were to be pleasantly surprised. The 1999 Mazda MX-5 has kept true to the original design concept. Rather than a radical new model what we were given was a transitional upgrade. A car that enhances the great things about the original model while giving the car a needed facelift. As an owner of a new model, I can truly say it is still an MX-5, but the improvements will I predict see it continue to be the most awarded car of all time. Despite an environment where social and sporting clubs like ours have a declining membership, we reached several milestones. We've started and finished a solid foundation for our future. Let me get specific about what we've done in four areas: membership, activities, regalia, and finances. But to get specific about these dramatic changes I'm referring to: First, at a time when other car clubs have lost members we have increased our membership by approximately 40 members in real terms. Our current financial membership base in NSW & the ACT



President Tony Buon

is over 200. This month we welcomed our 500th member.

Public awareness is another area we've tackled. We found that many MX-5 drivers are almost totally ignorant of what we really do here. So to improve awareness, we've recently completed a new membership pamphlet and this is being widely distributed. Please take some of these and place them under the windscreen of any MX-5 you see. Our new corporate

sponsorship arrangements are also part of our promotional plan. We have also participated in several events in the community and in the larger motor sport arena and the MX-5 club is now seen, as another club president told me "a truly active club". In fact the club has been asked to participate in the welcome home parade for the Commonwealth Games later in this year. In the area of club activities, we have tried to offer a social and sporting calendar to suit all tastes. Some of our runs have been long, some shorter. Some with excellent lunches and some as picnics. We have had social activities ranging from Bar-B-Q's through to Ten-Pin Bowling nights. Our Sporting calendar has expanded from a few motorhousas when I joined the club to events now on almost every weekend. I will leave the specifics on this to our Club Captain and Sporting Secretary to report on.

We think we have put our ear a little lower to the ground to hear what the members are telling us in the area of club regalia. During the last twelve months, we have invested approximately \$2600 on a wide selection of merchandise. We now have available everything from shorts to jumpers. Please have a look at what is on show at the back of the room. I would like to especially thank Al Palmer for arranging the production of this merchandise.

Turning our attention to management of our finances. Our treasurer will shortly present you with our annual accounts. But in summary, the club is in a healthy financial position. Thanks at least in part to the increase in motor sport activities. We have good cash reserves and some sizeable investment in merchandise. The club has sponsored a number of events for members and has managed your money with due diligence.

In each of these areas I've outlined - membership, activities, regalia, and finances - we've made progress in a difficult environment. Without a doubt, our achievements directly reflect the expertise and dedication of our committee and those members who have assisted in or organized activities and I want to publicly thank them for their outstanding work. In particular, I would like to thank my Vice President, Steve who has assisted me in many ways throughout the year, particularly representing me at meetings when I

had to be overseas on business.

In closing, I want to point out that virtually all lasting structures require foundations. And frequently that foundation is the most difficult, time-consuming part of the construction. I believe we have laid the foundation. I'm convinced that we have a club that will continue to grow and prosper and I welcome the incoming committee. Next year brings the tenth anniversary of the MX-5 and NatMeet 99 in Brisbane. My outgoing wish -- lets go up north in force and bring back the national trophy we have held for the past three years.

Thank you

Tony Buon

President 1997/98

## The Captains Report

(Continued from page 1)

that I do hope is that I have encouraged more female members. One goal I set, was to get more ladies out on the race track with me and I have certainly succeeded in that. One of the biggest pleasures I got from all that, was winning the "most improved driver" last year, it also meant that for only a short time, I had the slowest times!

The runs I feel, have been a good mix of long and short with hopefully enough variety to keep all the members happy. It has certainly kept me busy and it will be very pleasant just to arrive at the meeting point and just take off with everyone else and enjoy the runs. I would like to encourage everyone to get out there and turn your own favourite run into a Sunday run and share it with the rest of us. It really isn't that difficult and there are enough of us more than willing to help you set it up for the group.

I want to thank all of you for your help and support over the last few years and special thanks go to all of the rest of the Committee. I will certainly miss the fun we had at the meetings.

Jean Cook

Captain 1997/1998

(Continued from page 2)

year each event has had a full compliment of volunteers to help run the day. It takes a special person to give up a day of their time to help run these events so that others can have fun all day.

This year has seen us attract more new members through these events. These have been either current owners who hadn't got around to joining or friends of members who became so sold on the MX5 they traded their "normal" cars for an MX-5! Welcome to you all.

We have even developed a social side to the track days. The evening before the event a number of members stay at the Heritage Motel, where a table is usually set for anything from 15 to 20. Most evenings are well behaved, but occasionally one or two get into the party spirit and more than one member has been known to be "under the weather" the following day.

I wish to thank all the members who have got behind me and made our competition events the success they are. I thank the drivers for participating and being such good sports. I also wish to thank their partners for letting them attend and in some cases lending them a car. I wish to give a very special thanks to all the volunteers for giving your time working at the track to support the club and myself. Last but not least, my thanks to my lovely wife, Patsy, for putting up with all the phone calls and doing such a good job organising the lunches, collecting the money, handing out licences, etc.

In summary, the last year as Competition Secretary has been great, I've enjoyed it immensely. Indeed I have had a great 2 years in this role and I feel it is now time to step down and let others bring fresh ideas and enthusiasm to the role. I am confident that the new committee will continue to develop these activities and I'm really looking forward to be able to participate in the events as a driver.

Looking forward to seeing you all on the track.

Ed

## STOP PRESS

### *Concours d'Elegance*

*We have changed the date AGAIN!*

*There is of course, a reason firstly, it was felt that those participating in the Club run, the week before, would only have the next Saturday to prepare their cars for the Concours.*

*This being the last Concours before Natmeet, it was decided to drop the October Club run and do the Concours properly so that those going to Queensland will know what to expect.*

*The Concours d'Elegance will now be held Sunday October 11 at the previously advertised venue,*

*Al Palmers Repairs  
Lot 12 Robertson Place  
South Penrith  
Tel 02 4721 5060*

*For those not interested in aligning their screws with true magnetic north, a new class is being introduced, "Show and Shine".*

*Full details of classes etc., will appear in the next Club Events.*

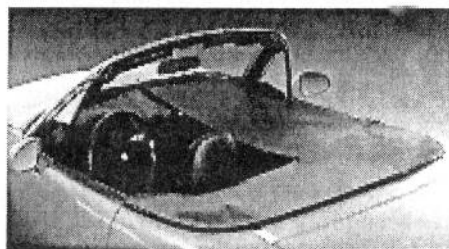
## ADVERTISEMENT FOR SALE

### FULL TONNEAU COVER

I can't use this on my new 98' model so sadly I have to sell it. This is a FULL Tonneau Cover suitable for any 89-97 model MX-5. This is a British configuration of the great Robbins model (therefor the steering wheel allowance is on the right side).

Drive warm and cozy in winter, in the rain or just have the cockpit nicely closed up when parked. This is in very good condition. There are no dash clips or mirror clips (you will need to order these for your particular model).

I'll let this go for \$275 (members) \$325 (non-members). Phone Tony Buon (mob) 0419 36 6789 or e-mail [tonyb@eap.com.au](mailto:tonyb@eap.com.au).



### More Internet Stuff

Good news, our Web site is currently being "re-furbished" and will be available shortly, we'll let you know via Club Events when it's on-line.

A couple more addresses:-

<http://www.web-cars.com/detail/>

Find out some of the secrets of how to make your car look a million bucks.

<http://www.mx5.net/> a link to Australian MX5 Clubs

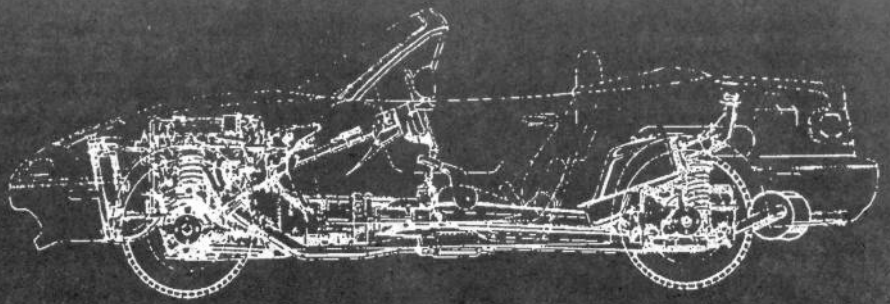
<http://www.cotc.com/index2.html> your chance to vote for the Car of The Century and yes, **The Mazda Miata/MX5** is one of the 200 finalists.



# Inside Your MX-5

Information and tips on how  
to get the best from your car.

Edited By Jeff Gehrig



## Beyond the Car

Why do they get paid so much money? TV Hosts and Hostesses? All they do is walk through a scene, say a couple of words and the world falls at their feet! TV, such a glamorous industry, just like being an Air Hostess (a creature that hasn't existed for more than 20 politically correct years, now known as Flight Attendant) or a Sex Therapist, doesn't that conjure up an image or two? Certainly does with most of my friends, they're all deviates of one kind or another! If you are any of the above, I was also, read on before you pick up the phone and threaten to separate my molecules or release viruses that would make even my ex Mother in Law look attractive!

What the Hell am I talking about, you're asking? Well, a few weeks ago, I got a phone call from the resident Sadist, sorry, Club President, telling me that he'd had a call from Beyond Productions, producers of old familiar TV programs such as Beyond 2000 and they were looking for sexy sports cars (his words) to use in an episode of SEX/LIFE, another program in their stable. Why me? My car is DARK GREEN, I've been in TV studios DARK GREEN doesn't light well, his car is Silver, the very same Silver that mine was

supposed to have been and about which I'm not obsessing, I'm not obsessing, I'm not obsessing, I'm not.....damn, sorry about that! So, I said yes and called them, yes the rumor was true, Senator Haradine had succeeded in having their show cancelled but they were going ahead with the last show, which if I interpret what I saw, correctly, focuses on masculinity and yes, they would still like to use my car.

I arrived at a very unobtrusive looking, small office building in the near north of Sydney and was guided backwards (!) into a very dark barn like environment with huge light fittings hanging from exposed trusses in the roof, walls, nothing but very heavy black acoustic material. I wasn't alone of course, Steve Busuttil a Corvette owner and Corvette

**OK, this is hardly tips on how to get the best out of your car! Don't you just love surprises though? Sadly, Channel TEN is holding the last two episodes, which may or may not go to air.**

Club member was there with his Yellow '69 Vette and another chap who left his '66 Mustang and left immediately with his wife in their '89 Mustang, three interesting cars in a bloody freezing

barn, a couple of enthusiastic owners and a bunch of TV type people, you know, producers, directors, camera gurus and of course the essential make-up person.

Lots of time spent setting up cars, lights, camera dollies (those amazing things that the cameras whiz backwards and forwards on)!

The sexually deprived or deprived or both, will be asking, OK so what stories does your car have to tell? In two words, not much! The Hostess of the show, Alyssa-Jane Cook was "in make-up" as the cars were being positioned and lights selected and arrived looking very cold, funny how many celebrities are much smaller than they appear on screen, this little girl, 7 months pregnant with child number two is tiny and very aware of the studio temperature. For several hours, she, in a light summery dress performed rehearsals, walk throughs and repeated takes on film, until she, the cameraman, the director/producer and the sound recorder were happy with the results. I think there were around eight separate scenes, anything up to fifteen takes for a couple of them, easy to see how such programs such as TV Bloopers have material to keep us laughing, unfortunately, this particular Sydney winters day didn't really lend itself to uncontrollable mirth.

An interesting day with a group of people who were very obviously disappointed to have their successful TV show axed as part of a political deal (or so it seems), as the group "filmed" their final closing remarks, there were a couple of "tributes" (the camera was NOT rolling) to Senator Haradine, the writer shares their view, that the person controlling the TV on-off switch, should be the ultimate censor. By the way, I was of course right about my car, I kept hearing the cameraman complaining about "losing the green" it blended with the black curtains, maybe his creative lighting will mean that my car will be visible on the night, Tony's car would have been better.



A very cold Alyssa-Jane Cook Blends into my car

# JUSTMX-5



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- 1800..... \$295**
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**<http://www.lg.com.au/justmx5>**



# On A Sunday Drive



Just a few MX-5s, waiting for the ferry at Wisemans.



Tony Buon notices that an Albatross, has recently flown by.



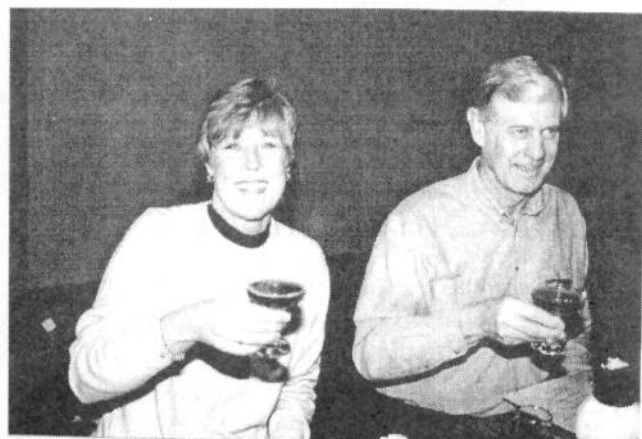
And you thought that the "Old Committee" was a little strange!



Eva, after finding out that she has another term as Secretary



Bill and Santa can't decide who has the silliest hat.



Peter and Ruth Simpson share a little Christmas (in July) cheer.





# Near The Track



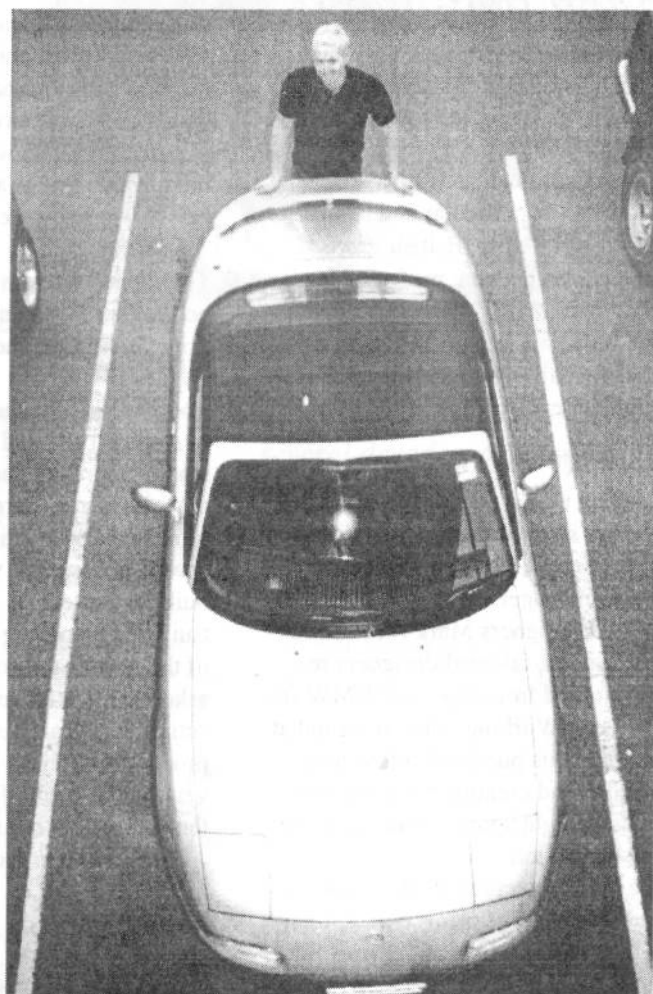
Sorry Simon, not exactly CAMS approved



It doesn't get THIS cold in Scotland!



We'll get it off the trailer after it melts!



And Matthew makes three. Father Ed, Brother Paul and now Scuderia Chivers has a third MX-5.



Yes even the new Vice Pres. and Editor gets his picture in the Magazine.

# As Others See Us

## *Form Follows Emotion*



certain that the Japanese teams would come up with two directions - mid engine (such as you might see on sports cars such as Ferrari Testarossa) and the more conventional Front engine / Front drive layout. Most cars with an engine under 2 L have one of these formats.

The Californian team wanted to have the classic light weight British front engine/ rear wheel drive layout - this would give the particular handling characteristics which were an important part of their concept. They maintained, with some passion, that a sportscar needs to have a certain type of feel in it's handling and for it to be fun to drive.

## *In the beginning*

In 1979, Bob Hall, an American motoring journalist suggested that Mazda develop a low priced open-bodied sports car. Bob came from a sports car family - in particular and significantly for this story, British sports cars. The suggestion, made to Mazda Managing director, Kenichi Yamomota may have remained just that except Bob Hall joined the Mazda North American research division 2 years later.

On taking up his new position in 1981, Bob Hall seemed to have found like minded people including Shigenori Fakuda, manager of the unit, Bob also enthused designers Mark Jordan and Tom Matano, talented designers recently joined from Opel and BMW respectively. Working after hours and at lunchtime this bunch of enthusiasts pushed ahead creating their ideal of the lightweight sports car based on the British tradition.

Mazda then decided to give some official status to this project and, treating it as an experimental proposition, commissioned its designers in Yokohama, Hiroshima and California to develop ideas for a light weight sports car.

An important technicality comes into the process at this point. Tom Matano tells us that the Californian team were

The California team also argued persuasively for the convertible rather than hard-top approach. Tom himself puts it poetically saying "the true essence of the LWS was, and still is, the thing which brings a driver closest to nature in a four wheeled vehicle."

The Japanese teams did indeed propose either Front engine/ Front wheel drive or mid-engine.

The three approaches were evaluated in August 1984 and the Californian studio approach and styling won the day - however, there was still no promise of production. Finally, a "proof of concept" working model was built in September 1985 and Mr. Matsui, then managing director in charge of the technical research division asked the team to test the customer reaction four years before it went into production. This was highly unconventional not only for Mazda but for the automotive industry.

The reaction to the first MX-5 on the



streets of Santa Barbara was overwhelming with people chasing the car, taking photos and asking where it was from. The project by then had become an official on-line project and production was scheduled. The engineers, under the leadership of Toshiko Hirai, now took over to make the car a reality.

It is worth remembering that in the mid-eighties there was no existing market for a lightweight sports cars. People who were interested in that sort of car were either buying the classic British cars to restore or sporting hatchbacks and GT cars (example being the Golf Gti). None of the major players had successfully launched a lightweight sports cars for many years.

Sports cars - the two traditions

The development of MX5 relied heavily on the sports car tradition - or at least one of the two main traditions. These could be broadly summarized as the European and the British.

The European cars - mainly Italian and German - are generally the high-powered and high performance super cars. They originated from track racing and Grand Prix models - success at the race track translating into a prestigious and powerful car. They were often well funded (sometimes even from governments aware of the cache of powerful cars) and were often more likely to be the result of corporate rather than individual efforts. Porsche, Alfa Romeo, Mercedes, AUDI, Ferrari were all examples.



*Hillman Aero Minx at the 1935 Lands Ends Trial*



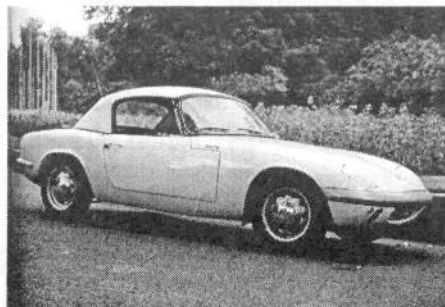
The British tradition was more of an amateur practice, based on racing at local club level often on roads. The participants developed sports cars by putting a well-performing (not necessarily high performing) engine on a light weight chassis without frills.

The idea was a simple one. Rear wheel drive with a front engine gave the car the responsive feel that was so important. The resulting oversteer from this format made the cars fun to drive. And from this tradition came the greatly loved cars such as the MG, (image of 1948 MG TC, ) Morgan, Triumph, Austin Healy and – later – Lotus. Though Lotus has achieved success on the track as well as on the road

Much has been written about the relationship between the MX5 and the Lotus Elan, first launched in 1962. The Elan, described by Sports Car World as “brilliant, innovative and ultimately, infuriating”, is a rear drive roadster with a 1.6 L engine that was the preferred personal car of racing luminaries such as Jim Clark.

The Lotus Elan, for those who remember was immortalized by Emma Peel in the 1960s British series *The Avengers*. Emma Peel was known as much for her blue Lotus Elan, number plate SJH 499C as she was for her stretch jump suits and thigh high boots. The Elan stirs memories of the Swinging Sixties despite being an incredibly impractical car, almost miniscule in its interior proportions, with faulty Lucas wiring, and none-too-solid fibreglass body. Diana Rigg who portrayed Emma Peel commented on the disintegrating fibreglass after some heavy

cornering in her Elan saying “One doesn’t expect cars to be fibrous.



But the Elan was fast (it could out accelerate an E type to 100MPH ) and had handling that was rated as good as racing car. The secret to it’s speed was light weight construction. People would put up with the faults to savor the delights of driving this tiny thrill machine on sunny Sunday mornings.

The MX5 design team were very much inspired by the ideas behind the Elan – as they were many other British cars such as Triumph and MG . These peculiarly British cars provided the cultural software – the essential idea behind the MX5.

Why Britain?

In the first two decades of the century America, Britain, France and other European countries were all starting to produce sports cars in one form or another. Why did this particular type of sports car tradition develop more strongly in Britain than other places.

Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote in the 19th Century that the genius of the British people lay in the practical arts e.g. blacksmithing, building bridges . Perhaps it is no accident that England was the powerhouse of the industrial revolution. We think it is interesting that Britain developed this particular individualistic tradition of cars. The British, being great tinkers, didn’t seem to mind that the cars needed to be maintained constantly, improvising with parts.

The driver became involved in the whole process and thus they were

able to express something about themselves.

The very flaws of the cars seem to add to their personality - people we spoke to seemed to remember with great nostalgia the leaking oil, unreliable starting and general wind-in - your-hair noisiness.

There is also the issue of geography, the winding, leafy lanes of the English counties are perfect for full enjoyment of these cars. With secondary roads of good quality and a picturesque pub around each bend it would have been the perfect Sunday excursion. Though the inclusion of the unreliable English weather would have put the well know “stiff upper lip” stoicism of the British to the ultimate test!



*The Morgan, little changed in several decades, a “Classic” by any standard.*

What is a sports car ?

So with that in mind we could look at the following ideas about sports cars.

A sportscar must have a degree of performance but more importantly be fun to drive even if there is some sacrifice in terms of practicality.

A sports car’s appearance must be unique and catch the imagination. However, though they differ from one another, sports cars often have similar visual cues such as a strong horizontal line low to the ground. Other frequently seen details are the incorporation of the bumper into the nose (so the bumper bar doesn’t create an obvi-



*The Lotus Elan, with or without Mrs. Peel, a major influence on current sports car design*



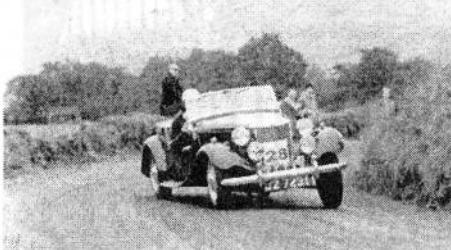
(Continued from page 11)

ous "ledge" from a side view), the correct position of the driver (not too high, upright or too far forward), correct proportions of tyres (not too small) and a longer bonnet than boot.

There can be a streak of traditionalism in sports car enthusiasts so changes such as the introduction of front wheel drive are looked on with suspicion.

Though it could also be argued that the practical benefits of the front wheel drive go against the "purist" grain of the true sportscar!

Successful sports cars always have an image – that intangible quality that gives it cult status. MG and the Lotus Elan had it but many well made cars didn't have it. It's the combination of elements which make a car successful – the appearance, the story and the tradition.



*The MG TD, still loved and sought after by "enthusiasts".*

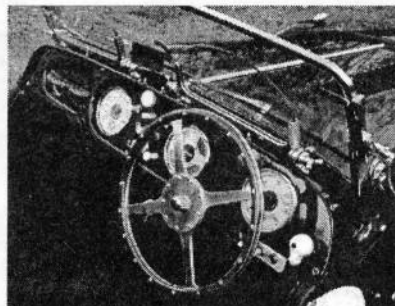
And to be successful the car must provide particular physical sensations – for example, the driver must feel the click of the gearshift (Mazda reintroduced a click' near the completion of the shift stroke with the MX5), hear the burble of the exhaust, feel the rumbling of the engine ever so slightly under the body, and have sensation of speed even if not travelling at high speed.

Feeding into this physical sensation is the fact that most successful sports cars have been convertibles – two seats with enough luggage space for a weekend away also seems to be the accepted norm.

The driver needs to be part of the experience of driving – a feeling of communication between car and driver. Toshiko Hirai (the man in charge of the MX-5's development) describes it as "oneness between horse and rider".

Finally, a colleague of mine who owns an MX-5 told me that he doesn't mind

driving a station wagon full of children, as he knows he can break out occasionally and drive up the expressway in his sports car. I think a true sports car allows the owner to express something about themselves – sometimes subversive, sometimes humorous but always outside the norm.



*The Morgan once again, shrouded in mystery, built by "Hobgoblins" in the middle of the night? Of course not but still hand made and with a wooden frame.*

Back to the Future: The Success of the MX5

The MX5 revived a whole market segment and has sold 480,000 units world wide. It set a new benchmark by combining traditional sports car values with comfort, reliability and affordability. This combination allowed what was initially a car for the enthusiasts, to appeal to a much broader market. It is no accident that Porsche, Mercedes, AUDI, BMW (some of whom are traditional occupiers of the sports car niche) have all recently launched new low cost sports cars (though low cost is a relative concept with the Porsche Boxster costing \$110,000).



## Jaguars E-Type

In any evaluation of the MX-5 it is important to remember that what inspired it what were quite simple cars. The MX-5 has been described as organic – and yet we find it also has a slight boxiness about it which gives it an almost naïve charm and personality –

harking back to the simplicity of it's British forbears. Interestingly, it's appearance has not dated over the 10 years.

It is a credit to the design teams involved that this essential idea survived through a rather convoluted design process.

Keeping the pure concept behind the product idea is not easy to do – but it is something that has made the MX-5 a success as much as it's performance, manufacturing and reliability.

Mobility and speed have characterized much of the twentieth century. If 'society is defined by its lines of flight' then the sportscar is a perfect vehicle to symbolize this.

*I think that cars today are almost the exact equivalent of the great gothic cathedrals; I mean the supreme creation of an era, conceived with passion by unknown artists, and consumed in image if not by usage by a whole population which appropriates them as a purely magical object .....*

Roland Barthes

Ruth McDermott (industrial designer and lecturer in design at UNSW) and Prudence Black (cultural historian) are currently working on a book about the relationship between culture, design and sports cars in the post-war period. If readers have any comments on this article or anecdotes on the MX5 or sports cars in general email them to [r.mcdermott@unsw.edu.au](mailto:r.mcdermott@unsw.edu.au)



# To Make a Sows Ear

Take one perfectly normal MX-5, and frighten the Hell out of it by putting it too close to an old Karmann-Ghia, then totally confuse the poor thing by showing it rear end of a



Datsun 1600 Sports, or TVR.

You could then show it the huge amount of fun involved in tightening spoked wheels to keep them from self destructing and purchase a rubber mallet for removing knock-off hubs. Whatever you do, don't feed all this into your cars computer and leave it on "auto-mix" or you might end up with a mon-



strosity similar to this one, snapped by our fearless (and guileless) raving, sorry, I meant roving (London based) photographer and reporter, the One and Only Russell Wheatley, who will waste film on anything and spotted this in Narita (Japan)!



There is really only one thing to say about the poor car, Why?

Call me "Old Fashioned" I rather like the MX-5, Mark 1 and Mark 11, just as they come from the factory.

## Al Palmer's EST 1974 Repairs

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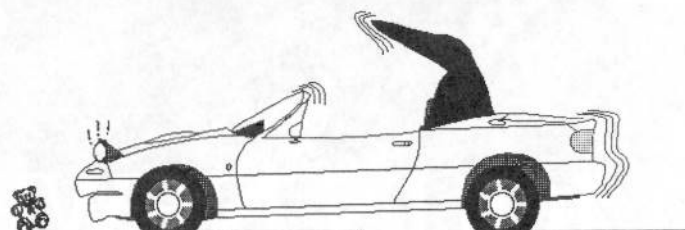


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# Newells Notes

John Newell Mazda was very pleased to make our Waterloo premises available for the recent annual general meeting. We hope that all members enjoyed themselves as much as we did and still managed to make it home safely. It was a pleasure to be in the company of such an enthusiastic and fun group of people. We look forward to doing it even better next time.

The new 1998 MX5 has certainly been a huge success both for John Newell and for Mazda. Being Sydney's MX5 specialist, our dealership has the largest range of new and pre-loved MX5 for immediate delivery. We also have limited stocks of the hard to get body kits for the 1998 model

in various colours and more exciting goodies to come such as wood kits, white instrument faces and stainless grilles arriving soon. Please talk to myself (Helder) or our Parts Manager Philip Adler for more information.

As you may be aware, John Newell Mazda was recently awarded Mazda's coveted Mazda Master Dealer Award for the fourth consecutive year. We are the only Mazda dealer in Australia to achieve this amazing success. We can therefore assure all MX5 club members that they will be receiving the best service available. Please don't forget, we offer special discounts on Mazda vehicles and parts exclusive to all club members.

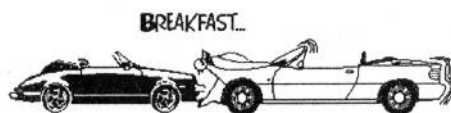
Please note our contact details:

Helder Ferreira  
Ph: 9319 0011 e-mail: waterloo.newell@dealer.mazda.com.au

Philip Adler  
Ph: 9310 4044 e-mail: padler.newell@dealer.mazda.com.au

Philip and I are always available to assist you with any inquiry for your MX5 or of course any other Mazda. We are proud to be associated with the MX5 Club of New South Wales and assure you of our ongoing support.

Regards  
Helder Ferreira



*Russell Wheatley*

## Sydney's MX-5 Specialist

Enquire now about special discounts for MX-5 Club members



**JOHN NEWELL** **mazda**

83-97 Flinders Street SURRY HILLS DL 1995 9380 5500 Cnr. Bourke & Botany Rd. WATERLOO DL 96/98 9319 0011



# Your Local MX-5 Service Station

A notice board for club members to advertise MX-5 items they may have for sale, and other interested parties to advertise their goods and services. A nominal fee for your advert is charged (see below).

To place an advert contact Jeff Gehrig on (02) 99681103

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A Personalised Name Badge

Wear it with pride at club events. Free to all financial members. Just \$5.00 for all non-financial partners.

Phone Eva on (02) 9449 5113 to place your order.



**STEVE**

MX-5 CLUB OF NEW SOUTH WALES

## We Need Your Input

**Club Talk is YOUR magazine and needs your contributions.**

We are seeking short articles, photographs, and / or funny stories relating to you and your MX-5. We are not looking for epics to rival War and Peace. We only need half a dozen paragraphs or so and possibly a photograph.

If you want to make a contribution you can send it to the Magazine Editor, Jeff Gehrig, via post, fax, or e-mail. Refer the back page of Club Talk for contact details.

## LOOKING FOR A WINDBLOCKER?

Here's one, made in Australia, from Plexiglass  
No drilling required, the brackets use existing holes.

Price :\$145 plus Postage & Handling

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E-mail beval49@connexus.net.au



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Voodoo Knobs, Brake Handles and Clothing

Bob Krueger

by

Designed specifically for your MX5, see them on-line at

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Web Page <http://www.paradise.net.nz/~gm/voodoo.html>

## Out of the Boot of an MX-5

The following items of Club Regalia are available for sale out of the boot of Al Palmers car at club runs. See Al and he can make the sale.

*Remember we take Bankcard, MasterCard & Visacard*

|                                     |         |
|-------------------------------------|---------|
| NSW Club Cloth Patches .....        | \$5.00  |
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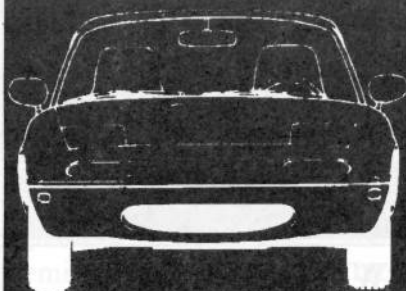
To book these services or to order any of the Nutri-Metics range of products contact:

Sylvia Tikellis  
.0418709819

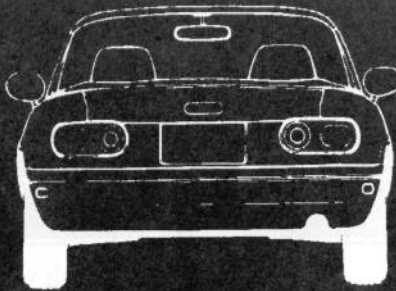
### Club Talk Advertising Rates

| Size              | Base Rate |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Maxi (1/2 Page)   | \$40.00   |
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| Mini (1/8 Page)   | \$10.00   |
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The above Base Rates apply to commercial advertisements. A 50% discount on the Base Rates applies to club members who are placing an advertisement for personal purposes (eg selling your standard wheels after buying new alloy wheels).



# Members Only...



The following companies have agreed to offer special discounts for products and services to members of the Mazda MX-5 Club of NSW. Please note that you must produce proof of membership by showing your current Club Membership Card.

## **AMR Motors Mazda Service**

Complimentary loan vehicle, 10% discount on labour, free exterior and interior wash and clean

370 Parramatta Road, Petersham

Ph: (02) 569-2844

Contact: Contact Dominic or Robert

## **Canterbury Mazda**

15% discount on labour, Trade price on parts, free courier service to train or shops, free exterior & interior wash and clean.

818 Canterbury Road, Canterbury

Ph: (02) 758-2600

Contact: John or Darren

## **Eurocars Northside Mazda**

Trade prices on parts and accessories, 15% discounts on labour charges, complimentary car wash and vacuum, courtesy transport nearest transport station and monthly parts specials.

43-45 Hotham Road, Artarmon

Ph: (02) 439-2733 / (02) 439-2499

Contact: Bruce Roberts (Parts)

## **Trivett Classic Mazda**

Trade prices on all parts, discount on labour, free loan car and free car wash and vacuum.

364 Princess Highway, Rockdale

Ph: (02) 599 3399

Contact: Carlo or Peter

**Eurocars Northside Mazda**

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43-45 Hotham Road, Artarmon

Ph: (02) 439-2733 / (02) 439-2499

Contact: Bruce Roberts (Parts)

## **John Newell Mazda**

Trade discount on parts and accessory purchases. Complimentary use of a loan vehicle and free car wash and vacuum with every service.

301 Botany Road, Waterloo

Ph: (02) 9319-0011

So that your name can be entered in the database, please

**Contact: Philip Adler (Parts Manager)**

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Discount packages available for Defensive Car Control, Skid Tuition and Performance (CAMS License) courses.

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Fax: (02) 9829-5499

Contact: Ian Luff or Office Staff

## **Burncroft Guest House**

Burncroft is a small guest house set on 20 acres in the Lower Hunter Valley, with views across the valley to Watagan Mountains and Brokenback Range. Your hosts are club members, Suzanne

and Richard, 10% discounts for MX-5 club members. For reservations and information:

Ph: (049) 30-7246

Contact: Suzanne or Richard

## **Robco Products Pty Ltd**

Car Bra manufacturers. Car Bras can be tailor made if your car is customised. 10% discount to club members.

49 Shepard Street, Marrickville

Ph: (02) 560-5393

## **Roman Auto-Tek Pty Ltd**

Momo steering wheels, soft-top repairs, Recaro seating, alloy road wheels, gear knobs and other accessories. 10% discount to club members.

14 Cavell Avenue, Rhodes

ph: (02) 743-6822

## **Al Palmer Repairs**

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South Penrith

Tel 02 4721 5060

20% Discount for Club Members

see advertisement Page 11

**Dr Dent (Chris Warwick)**

Unique Paintless Body Repairs

02 9542 5055

dr.dent@bigpond.com.au

# Contacting The Committee

## **President - Steve Remington**

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Fax - (02) 9685-6007

Mobile - (0411) 649-655

E-mail - sremin@055.aone.net.au

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## **Committee Regalia/Assisting Captain**

### **Bill Whitehorn**

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## Club Talk

Club Talk is a quarterly publication of the Mazda MX-5 Club of NSW. Please send all editorial contributions and advertising copy (hand-written, typed or on floppy disk) to marked to the attention of Jeff Gehrig at the club address below.

The Mazda MX-5 Club of NSW operates as a non-profit organisation and relies primarily on volunteer services. However, sponsorship of events, the publication and mailing of the newsletter, and operating supplies constitutes a financial burden that must be met by the membership. Make your MX-5 experience more enjoyable - join and participate. To keep the club meaningful, we need your support. To become a member send you name, address, and phone number to:

**Mazda MX-5 Club of NSW**  
PO Box 267  
North Sydney NSW 2059