



Ken Newton,  
CEO, VASA

## Under the Southern Cross

# Here is the news in brief

I thought it appropriate that I serve up a summary of probably one of the busiest years faced by your kindred association on the other side of the equator.

There's good news and bad news. Which would you like first?

Let's get the bad news out of the way quickly. There's not much of it anyway: Kevin Rudd. [Australia's Prime Minister -Ed.]

I refer to his failure to understand that we already have the world's best refrigerant reclaim and destroy program and we don't need another tax on refrigerant.

Which leads me straight to the good news.

We packed Rudd off to Copenhagen without the parliament's blessing on the dreaded CPRS (Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme - read "tax"), which would have contained a massive tax on refrigerants like R-134a. He couldn't get enough of the opposition parties to the table to guarantee a safe path for his scheme through the Senate.

Good news on the recent re-election of VASA's former president and now vice president, Mark Padwick, to the board of the

Australian Refrigeration Council. That's the body chosen by the Federal Government to administer our national refrigerant handling licensing. Mark not only got back on the Board, but was reappointed Chairman.

This appointment is a real feather in VASA's cap. It doesn't give VASA any privileges or advance notice of anything (that's a hanging offence in our new nanny-state mentality) but it reflects the high regard in which VASA is held as an organisation. Not bad for a volunteer body with about 300 members. We might be small but boy, are we loud. And credible.

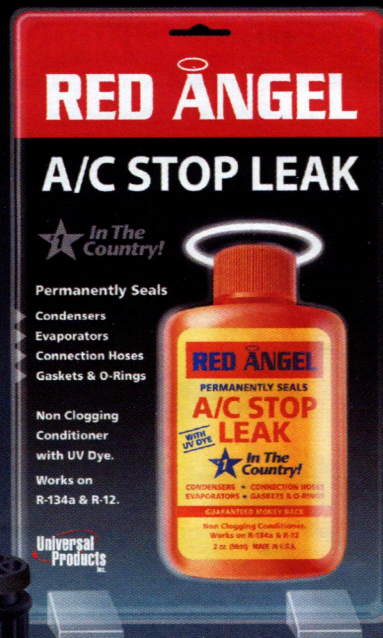
Good news on advance plans for our bi-annual Wire & Gas convention to be held on the sunny Gold Coast in June 2010. A year out from the convention, we had signed up all the exhibitors from 2008 and a few new ones who didn't want to miss out. We look like attracting a record 60 trade show booths and the plan is to try and register 400 technicians.

To put that into perspective, (and to wipe that smirk off the face of the MACS convention planners) yes, we know that's

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peanuts by MACS standards. But someone, to win a bet at the local pub one night, did the sums and was able to prove that on a per capita basis, Wire & Gas actually attracts more punters for the size of the market than MACS does. So there.

And on the subject of smirking faces, VASA thinks it may wipe a big one off the face of the Australian hydrocarbon industry very soon. I refer to that branch of the industry which insists on conning fleet owners and some shonky workshops that hydrocarbon refrigerant is good for you, regardless of whether the vehicles are designed to handle it.

The HC pushers have always exaggerated their market share. One of their number thought he could get away with it at a recent summit in Brussels when he made the claim that an Australian car maker had turned to hydrocarbon refrigerant in cars on the production line, and that distributors were retrofitting new cars to HC's at the point of new car sales. What he apparently didn't know was that his presentation was logged on a public website and we've all read it.

Our president, Ian Stangroome gave the gentleman a call and tried to find out who the manufacturer was. "Sorry, I'm not at liberty to say" was the only answer he could come up with. It was also the only answer he had to a number of other wild claims he had made in Europe.

So VASA has called his bluff. We don't expect any answers because, quite frankly, we know he told a lot of porkies in order to boost his relevance. When VASA breaks the story in its next member newsletter, all hell is expected to break loose and hopefully we will get rid of these turkeys forever.

In the meantime, it now seems most Australian state governments are stepping up their vigilance and one state is even framing a law to totally ban hydrocarbon refrigerant in vehicle air conditioning systems. Now that is good news on which to end our busy year. ❁

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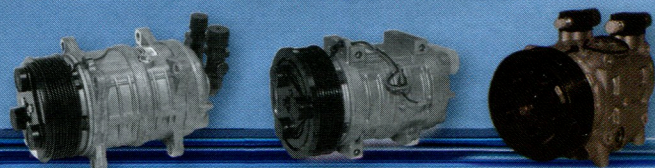


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