

CNG & LPG



The fuel crisis of the 1970s caused a flurry of activity to produce a safe, economical alternative to petrol. The most successful of these was CNG (Compressed Natural Gas), followed by LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas). CNG is rarely used these days.

LPG is far less efficient than both petrol and diesel. For example, one Ford Falcon powered by LPG used over 15 litres per 100km, compared to around 10.5 litres per 100km for its petrol sibling. You also lose a significant amount of power running on LPG, so LPG conversions are less practical on smaller engines. Also LPG tanks take up a large amount of rear storage space in the vehicle.

Then there's the question of engine damage. Every type of engine is different, and if

the engine is not suitable for LPG or isn't converted properly then major damage can be caused, mainly due to internal overheating.

LPG in New Zealand

New Zealand, at one point, had one of the world's highest numbers of cars on CNG (120,000). However, the glutted world oil market, the local synthetic fuel plant and a change of government policy combined to reduce this number substantially to its present low levels. CNG is all-but dead as a fuel in New Zealand because there are virtually no fuelling stations. LPG is holding its own, but the local supplies are about to run out, so future LPG is likely to have to come from Australia and at a higher cost.

The alternative fuels industry is well established in New Zealand and most of the installers are pretty reputable. If you're considering an LPG conversion, get a few quotes and discuss your particular needs with an installer. They will probably be able to tell you if the conversion is worth it.

LPG in Australia

LPG was also ran in Australia until August 14, 2006, when Federal Resources Minister Ian Macfarlane promised Australian car owners cash handouts of up to \$2000 if they would convert their cars to LPG.

LPG is typically half the price of petrol, so there are big savings to be made, but you have to be doing a high mileage to make the conversions costs worth it.

Although the government still gives grants for LPG conversion, these grants don't cover the entire cost and not all vehicles are eligible. Also, the amount of these grants is shrinking each year.

Therefore, before you give any consideration to an LPG conversion, go to lpgautogas.com.au and click on 'Converting your vehicle'. •

