

18 May 2019  
Whanganui Chronicle, Whanganui

Author: Colin Smith • Section: Motoring • Article Type: Car Review • Audience : 8,404  
Page: 1 • Printed size: 1562.00cm<sup>2</sup> • Region: NZ • Market: New Zealand  
ASR: AUD 3.659 • words: 998 • Item ID: 1122430547  
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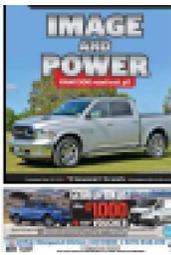
# IMAGE AND POWER

**RAM 1500 road test, p2**



Saturday, May 18, 2019 / **Whanganui Chronicle** / [whanganuichronicle.co.nz](http://whanganuichronicle.co.nz)

# RAM has both image and power



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## Road Test: Colin Smith Pictures: Colin Smith

**M**odern ute popularity has the paradox that fashion often motivates what was once the most practical of buying decisions. Image can be as important as the weights and measures that dictate how much work a ute can do.

Provided you have the budget to buy it, fuel it, and the space needed to park it, the mighty RAM 1500 wins on both fronts.

It's a XXXL solution that operates beyond the pretty much standard five-and-a-bit metre length, four-cylinder turbo diesel ute formula that's typically capable of towing 3500kg.

Subtle it isn't, and when it comes to image the bold chrome front end and the rumble of a 5.7-litre Hemi V8 towers over the opposition at the same time as shouting America. With 4.5-tonne towing capability to set its skills apart from smaller and less expensive utes.

And the RAM 1500 — and its even bigger 2500 stablemate with Cummins diesel grunt — also provide a big, wide-body cabin that copes with a crew aboard as well as cargo in the tray and a heavy load in tow.

The RAM is built for contractors who tow some heavy duty gear and as a hauler for the likes of large race car and boat trailers. With the additional benefit of four-wheel-drive — including low ratio — when hauling in or out of some rough ground or muddy work sites and pit areas.

My first exposure to the RAM brand was a 1500 Laramie. It's the upper level of a two-tier RAM 1500 range that starts with the Express

model at \$89,990 with the luxury Laramie priced from \$114,990.

The two vehicles share the same 5.8-metre overall length but have a different configuration. RAM calls the Express a Quad Cab combining a four-door cab with a 1939mm wellside load length. The Laramie is a Crew Cab with a shortened 1712mm load bed behind a longer cab with larger rear doors.

RAM vehicles are built in the US and then shipped to Melbourne for conversion — or as RAM calls it re-manufacture — to right-hand-drive. There's only one significant compromise in the right-hand-drive swap.

The foot-operated park brake ends up hard against the right hand side of the driver's footwell and a driver with longer legs — or larger knees and thighs — might not find enough room between the steering wheel and the door to comfortably give the brake the kick it needs to be applied. The problem is halved by a hand operated release.

A big part of the RAM 1500 appeal is the 5654cc fuel-injected Chrysler Hemi V8 beneath that big bonnet. It develops 291kW of power at 5600rpm with 556Nm of torque at 3950rpm. It starts with a rumble and has an engine note that any serious muscle car would be proud of when fitted with the optional Mopar exhaust system.

Give it some throttle opening and Hemi power shifts the RAM 1500 with some urgency and little regard to fuel consumption. RAM claims a combined cycle fuel consumption figure of

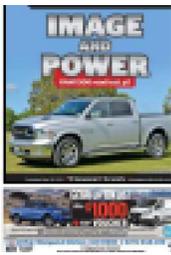
12.2L/100km and my drive — which included a Tauranga-Meremere open road return run and some city running — averaged out at 13.2L/100km. The fuel tank capacity is 98 litres so you can extend the range out to a conservative 600km.

The Hemi muscle works though an eight-speed automatic transmission with close ratio smoothness and responsive shifts. The Laramie cruises at 100km/h using only 1600rpm in eighth gear and there's a push button sequential selector on the steering wheel that prompts downshifts to 2000rpm in seventh and 2500rpm in sixth gear at 100km/h.

The surprise element from a vehicle that looks and works like a truck is that it doesn't drive like a truck. There are challenges when it comes to fitting the RAM into anything like a standard car park — it's just over 2.0-metres wide as well as 5.8-metres long — but once it's up and moving the main impression of size is restricted to looking down upon Hilux and Ranger drivers.

The RAM's ride quality is nicely settled and the steering weight provides an informative feel as you guide it through the city streets. It's not realistic to call it agile but neither is it unwieldy and it's even better on the highway as a very comfortable way to complete an open road journey sitting up high in supportive and 10-way power adjustable leather seats.

**GIVE IT SOME THROTTLE  
OPENING AND HEMI POWER  
SHIFTS THE RAM 1500 WITH  
SOME URGENCY AND LITTLE  
REGARD TO FUEL**



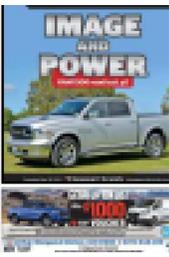
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**CONSUMPTION.**

THE NUMBERS	
<b>Engine</b>	5654cc, 16-valve V8 sequential fuel-injected petrol
<b>Maximum output</b>	291kW at 5600rpm
<b>Maximum torque</b>	556Nm at 3950rpm
<b>Length</b>	5817mm
<b>Width</b>	2017mm
<b>Height</b>	1917mm
<b>Wheelbase</b>	3569mm
<b>Kerb weight</b>	2650kg
<b>Fuel tank capacity</b>	98 litres
<b>Wheels</b>	Alloy, 8.0 x 20-inch
<b>Tyres</b>	Hankook DynoPro H/T 275/60 R 20 radial





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