

JMC on the job



Work still to be done to set up a dealer network, but Chinese brand JMC is determined to launch here in April with its Vigus ute – and to succeed

EXCLUSIVE

By RICHARD BERRY

CHINA'S Jiangling Motors Corporation (JMC) will launch onto the Australian new-vehicle market with its Vigus dual-cab ute in April, revealing a competitive starting price of \$23,990 driveaway and a target of 2000 sales this year.

The first shipment of utilities – offered with the choice of either petrol or diesel power, the latter priced from \$26,990 driveaway – is scheduled to arrive next month through the Chinese auto-maker's Australian distributor Jiangxi Jiangling Motors Import and Export Co



(JMIE), with sales commencing soon after despite the absence of retail outlets at this stage.

In an exclusive interview with GoAuto this week, JMIE general manager Feng Wang said the company was still negotiating with potential dealers around Australia, with outlets in Sydney, the Gold Coast, Perth and Melbourne close to being signed up.

Regional locations are also on the radar, with JMIE working to secure as many as 15 retail outlets in total inside the next four weeks, and 30 dealerships before June as it works towards its ambitious initial 2000-unit target – more ute sales than established rival brands Great Wall (1909) and Foton (537) managed in 2014.

A flagship dealer located at 26 Parramatta Road in Sydney's inner-western suburb of Croydon is expected to open in May.

"We want 10 to 15 dealers before March, and then another 15 by June,"

Mr Wang said.

Mr Wang said he was fully aware of just how competitive the Australian new-vehicle market has become and that sales of rival Chinese brands had taken a hit in recent times, but is pushing on regardless with high expectations.

"It's going to be a challenge, because the Australian dollar is depreciating and it's a very developed and competitive market," he said.

"It won't be easy, but we are quite ready to be very patient and follow a long-term strategy."

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Mr Wang said the high-quality product, competitive pricing and the fact that JMIE is a subsidiary of JMC will ensure its success in Australia, whereas other brands managed by independent distributors have found the going tough.

“With 30 dealerships operating we think we can do 2000 for the first year,” he said.

“JMC is one of the leading automobile manufacturers and brands in China. We’re a more premium brand than Great Wall, Foton and JAC.

“We specialise in the commercial segment and JMC has a good background as far as our product development system goes – from design to quality control – thanks to a joint venture with Ford and Isuzu.

“So we can deliver very good performance and quality – and we think this is an advantage.



The JMIE team includes (from left) marketing specialist Douglas Tong, general manager Feng Wang, service manager Gary Dai and channel development manager Amos Yue

“The second advantage we have is the pricing itself. In China, JMC is priced 15 per cent higher than others in the segment such as Great Wall and JAC. But to sell in Australia we will ensure aggressive pricing – the same as Great Wall and Foton.

“And finally, as a brand and manufacturer we’re doing it ourselves – from the dealerships to the importation and distribution. It’s a good way to keep a continuous support from the manufacturer to the market.

“As a manufacturer we will never say goodbye to the dealers; we will give continuous support to them.

“This means we can also offer great aftersales service, with technical support to convince Australian consumers that we are not for one day but for the long term, and we will care about the customers.”

The \$23,990 driveaway price for Vigus will put buyers into a petrol-powered dual-cab 4x2 version, while the diesel will start \$3000 upstream.

Both powertrains will have a 4x4

driveline option as well.

As seen in a multitude of Chinese-built vehicles, including Great Wall’s V240 ute, the petrol engine offered in the Vigus is the ubiquitous Mitsubishi-sourced 2.4-litre four-cylinder, producing around 100kW of power and 200Nm of torque.

The diesel, meanwhile, is a Ford-sourced turbocharged ‘Puma’ engine, also displacing 2.4 litres and with four cylinders, and good for around 90kW and 290Nm.

A single-cab body style is expected to arrive early next year. An automatic transmission is not available, with both engines for now relying solely on a five-speed manual gearbox.

Documents seen by GoAuto show that both boxed tray and cab chassis variants have received approval for sale in Australia, and LX and higher-spec SLX model grades will be available.

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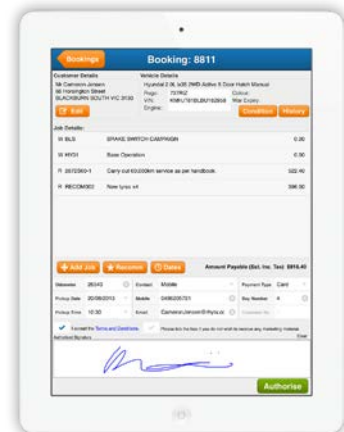
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JMC's expansion plan

Three-year rollout covers Vigus ute, Conquer truck, two SUVs including S350

EXCLUSIVE

By RICHARD BERRY

JIANGLING Motors Corporation (JMC) has outlined its short- to medium-term model plan for Australia, kicking off with the Vigus utility in April ahead of a broader rollout of trucks and SUVs over the next three years.

With prices to start from \$23,990 driveaway for the 4x2 petrol double cab and \$26,990 driveaway for the 4x2 diesel double cab, the Vigus will go head-to-head with Great Wall's V240 and V200 utes.

Dual-cab versions of the ute across at least two trim levels and 4x2 and 4x4 drivelines will begin arriving next month through factory distributor Jiangxi Jangling Motors Import and Export Co (JMIE), with a single cab body style due to be added next year.

In an exclusive interview with



Conquer



S350

GoAuto this week, JMIE general manager Feng Wang said the Vigus was benchmarked against the Toyota HiLux and Mitsubishi Triton, and that in China the Vigus is considered to be a more upmarket brand than Great Wall.

He added that Australian perceptions of Chinese vehicles as 'cheap', however, meant entering the market here to sit alongside Chinese rivals.

"From our design and development side our benchmark is HiLux and Triton, but here we need to face reality of what 'Made in China' means – that is, it has quite a low price," he said.

"So we need to sacrifice our price to let people try our products to convince them that it's good."

As reported, both the petrol and diesel engine are 2.4-litre four-cylinder units – the petrol is the familiar 100kW/200Nm Mitsubishi-sourced engine, while the 90kW/290Nm turbo-diesel comes from Ford, which has a 32 per cent share in a joint venture with JMC in China.

There is no automatic transmission available at launch, with only a five-speed manual in service.

Mr Wang said he expected the Vigus would receive a three-star crash-test rating from the independent ANCAP authority – putting it below the HiLux and other utilities which have maximum five-star ratings – and that in time, with more development, the safety rating should improve.

"Every year we're sending people here to talk to the ANCAP engineers," he said.

"As a manufacturer we need to try our best to achieve a better test rating in the future. But it's not easy. China has grown rapidly for the past 10 to 15 years and it is now that they are thinking about quality and safety."

Mr Wang said the JMC range will expand next year with the arrival of the Conquer truck.

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