

Comment on the proposed Standard for Fuel Parameters (Biodiesel)
Commonwealth Position - August 2003

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**COMMENTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT AUSTRALIA PROPOSED STANDARD FOR FUEL
PARAMETERS (BIODIESEL) – COMMONWEALTH POSITION**

The proposed standard for biodiesel specification in Australia is based to a large extent on the soon to be issued European Standard EN 14214.

The EN 14214 specification is the result of several years of technical discussions between vehicle manufacturers, biodiesel producers, fuel distributors and independent experts, and is based on the best available knowledge to ensure satisfactory vehicle operation and durability when biofuel is used. The fatty acid methyl ester producers were obliged to accept some constraints on the quality of their existing production in order to obtain the confidence of engine builders that performance and long life would not be compromised. Any other approach was likely to jeopardise the quality necessary to satisfy the end users and would ultimately result in the failure of the fuel in the market.

The most important aspect of biofuel discussed in the CEN working group was that of biofuel stability, as biofuels are intrinsically less stable than petroleum based diesel fuels. The stability of biofuel in terms of storage, oxidation and thermal stability are all important to ensure a successful use in the market place. The experience at that point was based on Iodine Number as a characterisation of biofuel stability, and a maximum value of iodine number of 120 was chosen as a compromise between what the biofuel producers could achieve in best quality and what engine manufacturers could accept. Further precautions regarding stability were taken by the CEN working group in incorporating constraints on linolenic acid methyl ester and polyunsaturated methyl esters into the European specification. The absence of these constraints in the proposed Australian specification may not provide the full range of safeguards ensuring as stable a fuel as possible. A full adoption of the EN 14214 specification would provide the best available safeguard in the light of present knowledge. It should also be noted that a number of the EN test standards are presently under review to make them better adapted to biodiesel, and advice on updating may be sought from the CEN secretariat.

The use of biofuel conforming to EN14214 as a blend component at up to 5% is accepted by the European vehicle manufacturers and their guarantees are honoured, providing the finished fuel remains in conformity with the diesel fuel standard EN 590. A blend component exceeding this percentage will no longer be in conformity with EN 590, and any vehicle guarantees are then a matter for individual companies. As the major injection equipment manufacturers refuse to guarantee their systems beyond 5% biodiesel (this includes 100% biodiesel), many vehicle manufacturers may be reluctant to honour guarantees for such fuels. Therefore it is important to obtain the advice of local vehicle manufacturers and importers on this point, and to label filling station distributor pumps clearly so the customer knows what fuel he is buying.