



# Flushed with power, torque

Nissan's well-regarded Navara ute has been facelifted, and the big news is that the diesel engine aboard the 4WD version has a lot more toe, as **Rob Maetzig** reports.

It's all about the engine, explains Nissan New Zealand marketing boss Peter Merrie at the start of a media function in the South Island last week.

What he was talking about was a repowering of Nissan's four-wheel-drive Navara ST-X ute and its seven-seater SUV cousin, the Pathfinder.

Previously the diesel versions of these two models were powerful enough, offering 128 kilowatts of power and 403 newton metres of torque. But now, thanks to a raft of changes to the 2.5-litre common rail turbo diesel that powers the vehicles, the power has gone up to 140kW while the torque is now 450Nm which is the most in its class.

It's all about the engine, Mr Merrie said, and to prove it the Nissan NZ people sent the attending media on a spectacular off-roading sortie that saw the journalists take a fleet of Navaras and Pathfinders up into rough country alongside the upper reaches of the Rakaia River.

This was a substantial exercise that often required the journalists to select 4WD Low to get across countryside that ranged from mountainous scree to heavy mud. But thanks to the enormous dollops of torque now available, the Nissans handled it all with ease.

In fact, one journalist was impressed to discover he was able to put the manual version of the Navara into 2WD, select sixth gear, and still get the big ute to wheelspin in the offroad slush. Now that's torque.

Both the Navara and the Pathfinder have been facelifted as well, mainly at the front where there's a new "softer" nose via new bumper, grille and bonnet that has added about 80mm to the vehicle length.

Inside, there are new soft surfaces, new centre console, changes to the instrument panel, and new seat and door trim fabrics.

But the most significant change is to the engine, because it means Navara overtakes the Mitsubishi Triton as offering the most torque in its class.

The changes include a new direct-injection

system which operates at an amazing 2000 bar that's 29,000 psi which means the fuel spray is atomised to an even finer degree for more complete combustion.

There's also a new cylinder head with parallel ports to increase the efficiency of the combustion process, while a new electrically controlled variable nozzle turbocharger replaces the previous vacuum system.

It all means that not only does the power and torque rise by 11 per cent to the top of the class, but fuel consumptions and exhaust emissions have also been reduced.

Meanwhile, the diesel engine in the two-wheel-drive Navara models has also been improved, with power rising from 106kW to 120kW, and the torque increasing from 356Nm to 403Nm. But at the same time the fuel economy has been improved by 15 per cent. There are no changes to the 198kW 4.0-litre V6 petrol engine also currently offered in the ST-X.

Last week the press didn't drive the petrol model or the 2WD diesel utes, Nissan NZ preferring instead to concentrate on the 4WD ST-X and the Pathfinder Ti, both of which now carry 450T badging to signify just how much torque they offer.

"This Navara is designed for people who attack the weekends as hard as they do the work days, it's a dual cab ute for genuine Kiwi blokes," says Mr Merrie. After taking the vehicle over those rough high-country trails, it's hard to argue with that.

The ute does impress as a genuine all-rounder, not only because of that engine but also because the interior is nice and the overall ride refined. This facelift has included installation of dual-zone climate control air conditioning, power folding mirrors, Bluetooth hands-free phone connectivity, an auxiliary input for MP3 devices, and a drive computer – all the things one would expect in a car rather than a ute.

In addition, a newly designed steering wheel holds illuminated controls for the phone and



the audio. And to top things off, the rear seats have a 60/40 split and fold function. And how do you fold rear seats in a ute, you ask? Easy – they fold upwards so all that room from the floor up can be used for storage.

Safety is well covered thanks to a full complement of six airbags, three-point seatbelts for five, child safety anchor points in the rear, and installation of “active” head restraints.

From the active safety perspective the Navara ST-X 4WD gets electronic stability control, as well as the active brake limited slip system, borrowed from the Pathfinder and Murano, which works in conjunction with the ESP and the ABS brakes.

Navara is a good-looking ute in a squarish sort of way, and the exterior changes add to the good looks because they give it a more sporting touch. The different nose has helped lower the vehicle’s coefficient of drag from 0.38 to 0.37 which Nissan says helps boost fuel economy and contributes to cabin refinement.

I don’t know about that, but the Navara certainly is refined and easy to use. The switch-operated AWD system is a doddle which simply requires the driver to turn a rotary knob to move from 2WD to Auto or 4WD High at speed of up to 100kmh, and another turn of the knob gets the ute into 4WD Low although that does require the vehicle to be stationary.

Prices for the new ST-X diesel 4WD Navara are \$59,450 for the six-speed manual and \$61,450 for the five-speed auto with manual over-ride. Prices for remainder of the Navara ST-X range go from \$48,600 for the 2WD diesel manual to \$59,950 for the V6 petrol auto.

Everything the Navara gets, its seven-seater SUV cousin the Pathfinder also gets, the big

difference between the two being that the Pathfinder is an SUV and has a passenger-oriented independent rear suspension rather than the leaf-spring setup that the ute requires.

When the last-generation Pathfinder was launched in New Zealand, it was available with a choice of two petrol and two diesel engines. Now that has been reduced to just a single high-specification model based on the outgoing Ti version, and this is only available with the 2.5-litre turbo diesel and the five-speed automatic transmission.

Mr Merrie says the rationalisation is the result of a lack of consumer demand for the lower-specification models. “When people are going to spend more than \$60,000 on an SUV, they pretty much want everything,” he says. Pathfinder’s price is unchanged at \$76,800.

The Pathfinder’s cabin boasts leather seat upholstery, chrome highlights for the instrument binnacle, six-CD in-dash audio system, sun roof with blind, and a one-touch flip operation of the second row of seats so easy access can be gained to the third row.

Mr Merrie describes the Pathfinder as the ideal family vehicle that is capable of doing everything from towing the boat to taking the kids to school. And, of course, going off the road and into the rough stuff.

**This Navara is designed for people who attack the weekends as hard as they do the work days, it’s a dual cab ute for genuine Kiwi blokes.**

**PETER MERRIE**  
 Nissan NZ



**Navara ute:** 450Nm gives Nissan’s favourite pick-up more pick-up



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**Adaptable:** The Pathfinder is the ideal family vehicle or great when going off the road