



Nissan Qashqai in seventh-seat heaven

by John Maslin

If you look at the sales data alone, Nissan would have to be mightily pleased with the impact of its compact hatch, the Qashqai.

The Qashqai has racked up 600 sales here since its launch a year ago and more than 80 per cent of those buyers are new to the Nissan brand.

Those numbers represent almost 10 per cent of Nissan's sales and the company is confident that number will increase.

As well as some significant upgrading, the 2010 Qashqai includes a new seven-seater, the Qashqai+2.

The "plus 2" doesn't get here until July-August, so pricing hasn't been indicated at this stage.

The Qashqai — it's named after a semi-nomadic Iranian tribe — is still offered in ST and Ti variants and the +2 gets the same specification level as the ST but adds on-roof rails, 16-inch alloys and, of course, that third seat row.

Peter Merrie, Nissan NZ's marketing manager, said at the launch last week that the Qashqai would remain in two-wheel-drive format only in New Zealand.

He said it was the car that sat in the middle in marketing terms.

But there's another key reason. Merrie said fleet buyers were not interested in four-wheel-drives and to go that way would cut directly across the bows of the Nissan X-Trail anyway.

The revisions for 2010 include a new grille, bumper and bonnet, headlights and mudguard panels

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and the rear lamps are now LED. Inside there's new instruments, more storage, a drive computer, Bluetooth connection and steering wheel controls for audio, Bluetooth and the drive computer.

With another row of seats added, the Qashqai+2 is 200mm longer than the five-seater models, the body is a little wider and it's also taller.

The Ti model gets a panoramic glass sunroof with separate blind, 18-inch alloys, Xenon headlights, intelligent key operation and

dual-zone climate-control air conditioning.

And Nissan has dropped the manual transmission from the line-up opting for an all-auto CVT affair across the range.

The Qashqai continues to deliver its five-star ANCAP rating and fuel consumption is reckoned to be return 7.6l per 100km for the CVT auto.

New features for the ST model include steering wheel audio, Bluetooth hands-free phone system and drive computer control.

Carried over from the previous ST model are cruise control with steering wheel controls, air conditioning, disc brakes all round, ABS/EBD with Brake Assist, Vehicle Dynamics Control (VDC) and traction control, MP3 aux input, and six airbags including front to rear SRS curtain airbags.

Two new exterior colours have been added to the existing line-up — Mineral Grey and Nightshade.

Pricing:
■ Qashqai ST CVT — \$35,900
■ Qashqai Ti CVT — \$39,900

