

# Advanced Vehicle Inspection Checklist

Enterprise-grade guide for Australian buyers, fleets and rental operations

**Built for Australian operating conditions**

## A premium inspection framework for serious used-car buying, fleet onboarding, rental turnarounds and regional-duty vehicles.

This edition blends the basic daily pre-start essentials found in operational checklists with a deeper compliance, structural and mechanical audit. It is designed to be practical in the yard, scannable on paper, and useful when defects need to be documented and escalated quickly.

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| <b>Who this is for</b><br>Fleet managers • rental teams • workshop controllers • private buyers • 4x4 operators | <b>What it covers</b><br>Legal checks • daily pre-start items • hidden crash signs • ECU scan logic • outback stress points  |
| <b>How to use it</b><br>Tick each item, note faults immediately, escalate roadworthiness issues before dispatch | <b>Australian focus</b><br>PPSR, state inspection terminology, ADR-style glazing checks, heat, hail and dust conditions  |
| <b>Inspection order</b>   | 1) Legal & paperwork 2) Exterior walkaround 3) Cabin checks 4) Under-bonnet & underbody 5) Road test / operating checks 6) Fault log & sign-off  |
| <b>Escalate immediately if found</b>  | Unverified VIN, critical warning lights, severe leaks, structural rust, brake material below serviceable condition, windscreen damage in driver vision, tyre damage, suspension or steering defects. |

## Core Daily Pre-Start Essentials

Foundational checks for dispatch, shift start and handover

These are the essential items that should be checked every day before use. They consolidate the recurring checks shown in operational pre-start templates and expand them into a cleaner enterprise format.

| CHE CK                   | ITEM   | WHY IT MATTERS / HOW TO CHECK  | NOTES |
|--------------------------|--|--|-------|
|                          | Tyres & pressure                                       | Look for tread depth, sidewall cuts, nails, flat spots and incorrect pressures. Tyres are the fastest way for a safe vehicle to become unroadworthy.       |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Wheels, wheel nuts & indicators                        | Confirm all wheel nuts are present and, where fitted, indicators remain aligned. Movement here can point to dangerous wheel-off risk.                      |       |
|                          | Fluids — oil, coolant, brake fluid, washer fluid, fuel | Do not only check quantity; look for contamination, unusual drop in level or signs of leakage. A sudden change often matters more than the absolute level. |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Windows, mirrors & washers                             | Glass must be clean, mirrors adjusted and washer bottle functional. Visibility defects create immediate safety risk in traffic and poor weather.           |       |
|                          | Lights, indicators, brake lights & hazards             | Run a quick all-lights check, especially after night shifts or wash bay work. Faulty lighting is both a safety and defect-notice risk.                     |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Seatbelts, seat adjustment & steering position         | Seatbelts must latch and retract correctly, and the driving position should allow clear pedal, steering and mirror control.                                |       |
|                          | Horn, warning lamps & gauges                           | With ignition on, confirm normal lamp prove-out; after start, ensure critical warning lights go out and gauges behave normally.                            |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Loose items, paperwork & cabin readiness               | Secure loose objects, check registration/required documents where relevant, and make sure the cabin is ready for safe dispatch.                            |       |
|                          | Body, structure & obvious damage                       | Walk around the vehicle and note dents, cracked lights, loose trim, broken brackets and anything that appears newly damaged.                               |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Leaks under vehicle                                    | Check the ground and underbody for engine oil, coolant, fuel, transmission or differential leaks before moving off.  |       |

### Additional heavy-vehicle / towing checks

| CHE CK                   | ITEM                                      | WHY IT MATTERS / HOW TO CHECK  | NOTES |
|--------------------------|---|--|-------|
|                          | Couplings, trailer electrical & air lines | For trailers and plant, confirm couplings are secure, lines are connected and undamaged, and safety chains are in good condition.            |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Air tanks & air system recharge           | Where fitted, drain tanks and watch for excessive water or oil. Slow recharge or contamination can indicate compressor or air-system issues. |       |
|                          | Load restraint / cargo security           | Check that loads have not shifted and restraints remain appropriate. A mechanically sound vehicle can still be unsafe if the load is wrong.  |       |

## 1. Legal & Compliance Audit

Verify the vehicle before you trust the metal

| CHE<br>CK                | ITEM                                   | WHY IT MATTERS / HOW TO CHECK  | NOTES |
|--------------------------|--|--|-------|
|                          | PPSR clearance                         | Run a PPSR search before purchase or onboarding to check for outstanding finance, stolen records and written-off history. This is the fastest legal risk screen for a used vehicle in Australia.                                   |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Registration status & seller authority | Confirm current registration details and that the seller or operator has authority to transfer or dispose of the vehicle. This helps reduce identity and title disputes.   |       |
|                          | State inspection readiness             | In NSW, many light vehicles over five years old need a yearly safety inspection report (pink slip) for registration renewal; Victoria and Queensland use roadworthy / safety certificate processes for transfer and sale contexts. |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | VIN, chassis & engine number match     | Cross-check VIN and engine number against registration and service documents. Any mismatch should be explained in writing before proceeding.   |       |
|                          | Logbook verification                   | Look beyond routine stamps: confirm milestone work such as timing belt / chain service, transmission servicing, brake-fluid replacement and coolant history.   |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Recall & campaign history              | Check whether any safety recalls or manufacturer campaigns remain open. Unresolved recalls can affect both safety and resale confidence.   |       |

## 2. Structural & Exterior Integrity

Crash history, weather damage and visible roadworthiness clues

| CHE<br>CK                | ITEM                                    | WHY IT MATTERS / HOW TO CHECK  | NOTES |
|--------------------------|---|--|-------|
|                          | Panel gap symmetry                      | Inspect bonnet, doors, guards and boot gaps from both sides. Uneven shut lines often reveal hidden collision repair or poor reassembly.                                      |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Paint consistency & overspray           | Check colour match, texture, orange peel and masking lines around seals and trims. Overspray or abrupt texture changes can point to partial repaint work.                    |       |
|                          | Hail damage scrutiny                    | In strong light, inspect the roof, bonnet and boot for clusters of shallow dents — especially relevant in QLD and NSW hail zones.  |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | ADR-style windscreen compliance check   | Any crack or chip in the driver's critical vision area can create a roadworthy failure risk. Treat larger chips, spreading cracks and edge damage as immediate repair items. |       |
|                          | Headlights, tail lamps & lens condition | Clouded, cracked or moisture-filled lamps reduce output and can fail safety inspection or customer handover standards.   |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Structural vs surface rust              | Surface rust on brackets or fasteners is common; rust at the chassis, sill seams, suspension mounts, floorpan or firewall is a much more serious integrity issue.            |       |

| CHECK | ITEM                             | WHY IT MATTERS / HOW TO CHECK   | NOTES |
|-------|----------------------------------|---|-------|
|       | Bonnet, boot & door apertures    | Open all closures and inspect shuts, hinges, latch panels and weather seals. Wrinkles, fresh seam sealer or uneven weld areas can indicate structural repair history. |       |
| □     | Underside scrape & impact damage | Look below bumpers, undertrays, jacking points and sills for signs of bottoming out, rough off-road use or lift-point damage.   |       |

### 3. Advanced Mechanical & Under-the-Hood

Catch the faults that warm engines and polished paint can hide

| CHECK                    | ITEM                            | WHY IT MATTERS / HOW TO CHECK   | NOTES |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|---|-------|
|                          | Cold start test                 | Always start the engine from genuinely cold if possible. Listen for timing-chain rattle, injector knock, belt noise, excessive smoke or unstable idle during the first minute.    |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | OBD2 scanner check              | Scan the ECU for active, pending and recently cleared codes. A cleared MIL with incomplete readiness monitors can signal that faults were recently hidden.                        |       |
|                          | Engine oil condition            | Oil should look serviceable for its age and not show metallic glitter, gritty feel, sludge or heavy fuel dilution. Remove the filler cap and inspect for mayonnaise-like residue. |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Coolant condition               | Coolant should be clean and appropriately coloured rather than muddy, rusty or oily. Contaminated coolant can point to neglected maintenance or internal engine problems.         |       |
|                          | Belts, hoses & plastic fittings | Check for fraying, glazing, swelling, softness and age-hardening. Australian heat punishes cooling hoses, thermostat housings and plastic fittings.                               |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Battery & charging              | Inspect terminal security, corrosion, battery date and charging behaviour. Weak batteries often trigger no-start complaints and electronic faults in fleet use.                   |       |
|                          | Brake pad thickness             | Pads below roughly 3 mm should be treated as end-of-life planning or immediate attention depending on use case. Always compare inner and outer pad wear where visible.            |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Rotor condition                 | Look for scoring, heat cracks, blueing and aggressive outer lips. A heavy rotor lip or uneven surface often means the braking system needs more than just pads.                   |       |
|                          | Suspension & steering play      | Check bushes, ball joints, tie-rod ends, shocks and mounts for leaks, tearing, looseness or clunks over bumps and steering input.   |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Transmission behaviour          | Confirm smooth engagement, no abnormal flare or harsh shift, and no burnt-smelling fluid. For manuals, note clutch take-up, slip and pedal feel.                                  |       |
|                          | Exhaust smoke & emissions clues | Blue smoke suggests oil burning, white vapour that persists can point to coolant ingress, and black smoke suggests over-fuelling or intake issues.                                |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Underbody leaks & seals         | Inspect sump, gearbox, diff, transfer case, steering rack and axle seals. Dampness can be monitor-only; active drips require escalation.  |       |
|                          | Road-test brake & tracking feel | On test, the vehicle should brake straight, track predictably and avoid steering vibration. Pulling, pulsation or noise should be documented immediately.                         |       |

## 4. Fleet & Rental Turnaround

Fast, repeatable checks that protect utilisation and customer experience

| CHECK                    | ITEM                                   | WHY IT MATTERS / HOW TO CHECK   | NOTES |
|--------------------------|--|---|-------|
|                          | Rapid 360° exterior walkaround         | Use the same clockwise or anti-clockwise routine every time to catch new scratches, dents, rim rash, cracked trims and lighting faults.                                     |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Interior odour & upholstery            | Deep-set smoke, mould or pet odours are hard to remove and often require ozone treatment. Also inspect bolsters, seat bases, carpets and cargo areas for staining or tears. |       |
|                          | Telematics, GPS & dashcam verification | Confirm hardwired units are powered, connected and transmitting. A dead tracker or offline dashcam can undermine security, billing and incident management.                 |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Keys, remotes & immobiliser function   | Test every supplied key, remote battery and immobiliser response. Missing or dead keys become avoidable downtime in fleet operation.  |       |
|                          | Safety equipment inventory             | Confirm spare tyre condition and pressure, jack, wheel brace, lock-nut key, warning triangle and high-vis gear are present and usable.                                      |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Consumables & presentation             | Check washer fluid, fuel level / EV charge level, registration label requirements where applicable, and overall customer-ready presentation.                                |       |
|                          | Damage capture photos                  | Photograph the four corners, wheels, cabin, odometer and any defects before dispatch or return. This reduces damage disputes and speeds turnaround decisions.               |       |

## 5. Outback & Regional Add-On

For heat, dust, corrugations, towing and water-crossing work

| CHE<br>CK                | ITEM                                       | WHY IT MATTERS / HOW TO CHECK  | NOTES |
|--------------------------|--|--|-------|
|                          | Dust sealing                               | Inspect door seals, tailgate sealing points, cabin filter housing and rear vents for fine dust ingress. Red dust inside trim lines is a strong clue that sealing is compromised.       |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Cooling-system pressure resilience         | Look carefully at radiator plastic end tanks, hose joints and expansion bottles for staining or micro-cracks. Australian summer load can turn a tiny weakness into a roadside failure. |       |
|                          | Air filtration & snorkel / intake path     | Check air filter loading, housing clips and intake path integrity. Dusty regional routes can quickly overwhelm neglected filtration.   |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 4x4 transfer case & range engagement       | If fitted, test high/low range engagement and look for transfer-case leaks. A selector that has not been exercised can stick or fail when finally needed.                              |       |
|                          | Diff breathers & water-crossing signs      | Inspect diff breathers, axle seals and fluid condition if the vehicle is marketed for off-road use or shows evidence of creek crossings.   |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Chassis, bash plates & tow points          | Look for bent protection plates, damaged recovery points and impacts to the underbody consistent with hard off-road use.   |       |
|                          | Tyre type, sidewall strength & spare match | Verify the spare is serviceable and of a suitable size/load class. Regional travel exposes the weakness of poor-quality or mismatched tyres quickly.                                   |       |



# Issue Log & Escalation

Separate non-critical defects from roadworthiness / no-dispatch faults

|   |  |       |  |
|---|--|-------|--|
| For non-critical faults<br>Maintenance contact                        |  | Phone |  |
| For critical / roadworthiness faults<br>Manager / workshop controller |  | Phone |  |

| DATE | ISSUE | NON-CRITICAL | CRITICAL / ROADWORTHINESS | RESOLUTION DATE |
|------|-------|--------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
|      |       |              |                           |                 |
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|--|--|------|--|
| <b>Inspector declaration</b><br>I confirm that I completed the inspection, recorded any faults identified, and escalated any no-dispatch or roadworthiness risks before vehicle release. |  | Date |  |
|--|--|------|--|

Guidance note: this checklist is a practical inspection aid. Operators should still follow the manufacturer maintenance schedule, workplace procedures, and any applicable state or territory inspection requirements before sale, registration, dispatch or return-to-service.