

## **BODYWORK**

***All exterior panels, bumper bars, body kits, trim, mouldings, glass, lights, underbody and engine bay. The customising scope deals with enhancements such as bolt-on or moulded-in body kits and mods like scissor doors and removing door handles etc, but no substantial structural modifications like chopping or tubbing.***

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### **Meguiar's Australia**

The bodywork of a street or show car is often underestimated when planning and building a project, yet it covers such a wide range of areas and substrates. Substrates can include anything from steel and aluminium, to fibreglass, carbon fibre, numerous plastics and rubber. Condition and fitment of mouldings, handles, bumper bars, glass and rubbers are also areas that need to be addressed. Even standard cars can improve in these areas with refitting and adjustment. It is important to take as much time as necessary to ensure that all of these parts are installed perfectly if you are looking to maximise the quality of fit and finish.

### ***Planning***

There is a lot of difference between the bodywork of a daily driver and a purpose built showcar. From a judging perspective, as with paintwork, the extent and quality of customising throughout the undercar is what separates show from street, but the expectation of a standout street car is to have high quality bodywork on all the visible areas.

Before making the final decision on the extent of bodywork mods, consideration must be given to the intentions for your car, budget, who is doing the work, and the estimated time frame. The preference would be to have the same shop do the bodywork as well as the paintwork, as there needs to be consultation on the progression of work from body to paint. If you do have a separate shop handling the bodywork, or you are doing some of the work yourself, you will need to have any repairs finished off with 240 grade sanding paper and the body sanded ready for primer. At this stage you should ensure the body repairer hands over your car complete to this level so your painter doesn't have to spend another couple of days preparing for paint and blowing out your budget.

### ***Street use***

The three key areas to consider here are legal issues, practicality and reparability. However, the minimum expectation of any bodywork would be for the panels to be straight with consistent panel gaps. With clever planning and application you could fit a practical body kit (not too low for driveways and speed humps), but spend the time to trim and file edges for close fit before final assembly. This can take several hours or even days of trial fitting to get right, depending on the quality of the fibreglass body kit. There are also numerous off the shelf kits available for mods like scissor and suicide doors, carbon fibre panels, and better looking lights and lenses etc.

Bodywork customising for a streetcar could range from \$1600 for a bolt-on lower skirt kit up to \$8000 for basic repairs and a full moulded body kit. This is purely a guide and total costs will vary depending on condition of the body.



Excellent example of ultra clean bodywork for street



Example of a full moulded body kit



Example of a rad bolt on body kit

### ***Show quality***

The difference with show quality bodywork is usually the amount of customising carried out, especially to the undercar. There is less consideration given to practicality and reparability as the car wouldn't expect to see a lot of street use. This is where you may choose to take all the proof-coat off the floor, then weld and smooth all the seams and components. Alternatively you may plate the whole floor and finish off the underbody to the same level of quality as the main bodywork. This is a huge job but separates a serious showcar from a streeter.

Body kits can also be used but would definitely be moulded into the existing body. These could be made from fibreglass or steel. The amount of work in file finishing a body for paint is almost endless and not only will cost substantially more, but there are still only a small number of professionals capable of delivering such a finish. There is nothing more impressive than a completely file finished metal body, and if your showcar has been prepared this way make sure you have photos when displaying the vehicle for the judges to inspect.

There are no problems when a small amount of body filler has been used (called a skim), however when deep dents, or fibreglass panels joined to metal have been finished with excessive filler, problems are inevitable. Fibreglass or plastic panels expand and have different flexibility to metal. This leads to a scenario where cracks and delamination can occur. This is an area where it would be better to look around for suitable body parts from another car or make your own body panels or custom flares. Hot rodders and street machiners have been forming panels from steel for years.

Any customising must be done well and finished in all areas to achieve the quality of finish expected for a showcar. The cost of show quality bodywork could be anywhere from \$10,000 to \$20,000 depending on condition of body and amount of customising to be done.

