

NAME: Austin Freeway.
Price: £1130 tax-paid.
Task: Crack our six-cylinder market for B.M.C.



modern
MOTOR
ROAD
TEST

MAKE WAY FOR FREEWAY

Long-awaited B.M.C. "six" offers real challenge to Holden and Falcon, reports tester Bill Daly

FIVE years of rumors and conjectures ended on May 21, when B.M.C. Australia released their long-awaited "Australian Six."

Called the Austin Freeway, it is B.M.C.'s first venture into the low-priced six-cylinder, six-seater, locally-produced family saloon field — the most lucrative section of the Australian car market.

How will it go against our perennial sales champion, the Holden, and the current runner-up, the Ford Falcon?

It's too early to gauge public re-

NEW "six" gets 80 sturdy horses from 2433c.c. Like the car itself, it's tagged "for Australia only."

action — but B.M.C. dealers are extremely enthusiastic about the new car: most of them placed large orders after attending a private preview last February and report that initial stocks are moving fast.

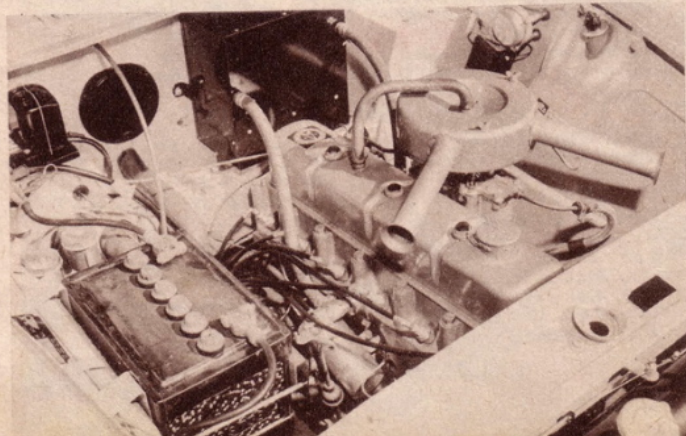
Certainly, both on paper and by the stopwatch, the Freeway's chances look good. As forecast over the past few months, it has:

● A handsome if somewhat angular

body, derived from the latest long-wheelbase version of the B.M.C. "Farina line" range and improved by cutting back the jutting tailfins and introducing a full-width stainless-steel grille;

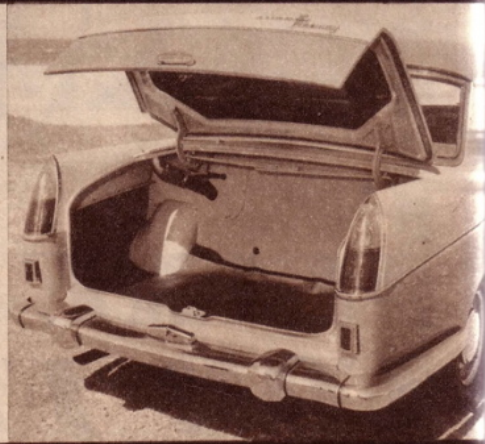
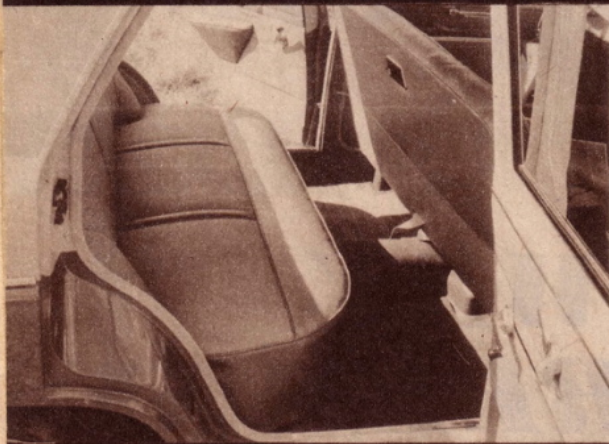
● A completely new six-cylinder, 2½-litre 80 b.h.p. engine, developed specially for Australia and used nowhere else;

● A three-speed gearbox operated





CLEANLY styled dash has padding on top and along parcels shelf; controls, instruments are well-placed.



ROOM for six inside, and all doors open wide. Boot holds 19 cu. ft. of luggage, has spare housed in tray below.

MAIN SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE: 6-cylinder, o.h.v.; bore 76.2mm., stroke 88.9mm., capacity 2433c.c.; compression ratio 7.7 to 1; maximum b.h.p., 80 at 4350 r.p.m.; maximum torque, 123lb./ft. at 1650 r.p.m.; Zenith downdraught carburettor; SU electric fuel pump; 12v. ignition.

TRANSMISSION: Single dry-plate clutch; 3-speed gearbox, synchromeshed on top two; overall ratios—1st, 12.08; 2nd, 6.33; top, 3.91 to 1; reverse, 14.35 to 1; final-drive ratio 3.91 to 1, giving 18.5 m.p.h. per 1000 r.p.m. in top.

SUSPENSION: Front independent, by coil springs and wishbones; semi-

elliptics at rear; hydraulic lever-type shock-absorbers all round.

STEERING: Cam-and-peg; 2.8 turns lock-to-lock, 36ft. 6in. turning circle.

BRAKES: Girling hydraulic, 2 l.s. front; 146.5 sq. in. lining area.

WHEELS: Pressed-steel discs, with 5.90 by 14in. tyres.

CONSTRUCTION: Unitary.

DIMENSIONS: Wheelbase, 8ft. 4½in.; track, front 4ft. 2½in., rear 4ft. 3½in.; length 14ft. 10½in., width 5ft. 3½in., height 4ft. 11½in.; ground clearance 6½in.

KERB WEIGHT: 22cwt. 11lb.

FUEL TANK: 10 gallons.

PERFORMANCE ON TEST

CONDITIONS: Fine, cool; no wind; smooth bitumen; two occupants, premium fuel.

BEST SPEED: 82.3 m.p.h.

STANDING quarter-mile: 21.4s.

MAXIMUM in indirect gears: 1st, 30 m.p.h.; 2nd, 60.

ACCELERATION from rest through gears: 0-30, 4.6s.; 0-40, 8.3s.; 0-50, 12.0s.; 0-60, 18.3s.; 0-70, 26.5s.

ACCELERATION in top (with second

in brackets: 20-30, 4.1s. (2.9), 30-40, 4.0s. (2.4); 40-50, 5.0s. (4.4); 50-60, 5.2s.; 60-70, 8.2s.

BRAKING: 28ft. 6in. to stop from 30 m.p.h.

FUEL CONSUMPTION: 25 m.p.g. overall on performance test; 29 m.p.g. for normal highway running.

SPEEDO: 3.5 m.p.h. fast at 30 m.p.h.; 5.2 m.p.h. fast at 60; 8 m.p.h. fast at 80.

by a steering-column lever — with the excellent Borg Warner 35 automatic transmission promised as an option by August;

● A variable-ratio steering box, which allows the wheel to be turned without undue effort, despite an incredibly direct 2.8 turns lock-to-lock;

● Heater-demister, screen-washers, twin horns, padded dash, cigarette lighter, and a host of other luxury features, all fitted as standard;

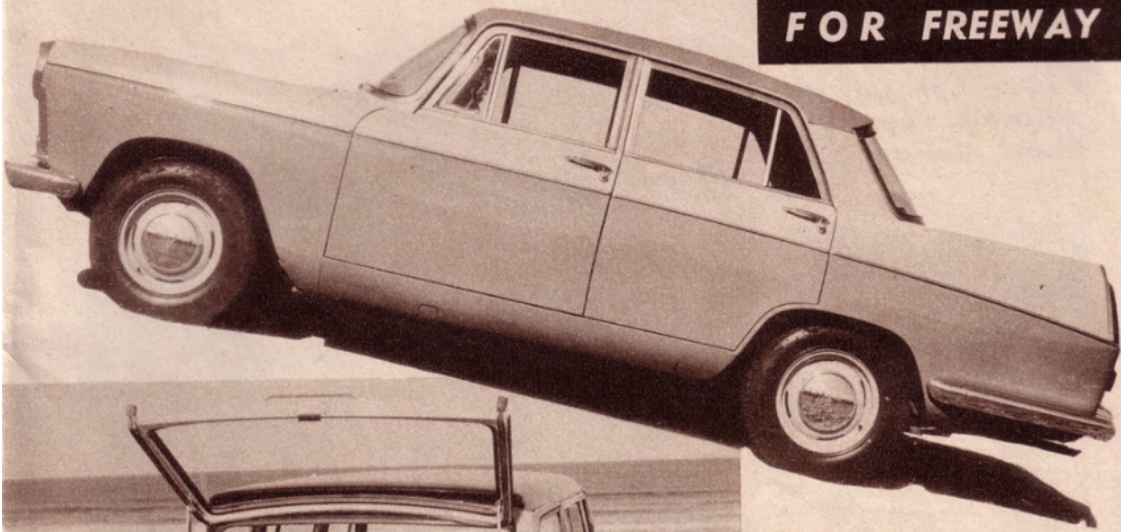
● A price tag of £1130 tax-paid — midway between the Holden Special and Ford Falcon de Luxe, which it leaves far dead in the matter of equipment (a similarly-equipped Holden would cost £1182, a Falcon £1204).

Despite its close family resemblance to the four-cylinder Austin A60 and Morris Oxford (both of which now go out of production in Australia), the Freeway is a good deal roomier and can fairly claim to be a six-seater. Wheelbase is 1in. longer, front track

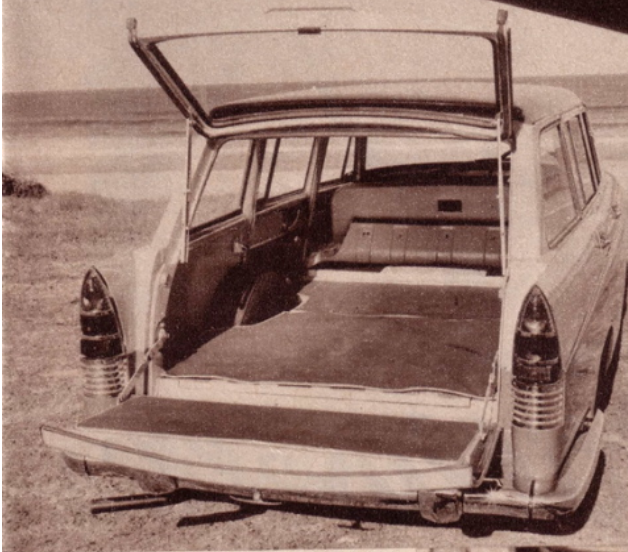
MODERN MOTOR — July 1962

PRICE: £1130 including tax

... MAKE WAY
FOR FREEWAY



BODY shows strong resemblance to previous B.M.C. "fours" but is longer, wider, sleeker; cut-back tailfins give much neater profile.



LEFT: Station-wagon version of Freeway can sleep two six-footers on long floor with rear seat down.

BELOW: Driving position is comfortable, handbrake reached easily by right hand. Heater, washers, many other "extras" are standard.

2in. wider, rear track 1½ in. wider, and the whole bodywork has been correspondingly enlarged.

It also has smaller wheels, shod with bigger-section tyres (5.90 by 14in.); this, too, makes for a roomier interior, by reducing the size of the wheel arches.

At present the Freeway is not quite as "Australian" as its smaller companion, the Morris Major Elite, having a local content of 80 percent as against 96 — but the proportion will increase as production develops.

Beefy New Engine

Suspension is of the conventional B.M.C. pattern, so let's go straight on to the car's most interesting single feature — the new "Blue Flash" six-cylinder engine.

Developed as a joint effort by B.M.C. Australia and the Austin plant at Longbridge, England, it is basically

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COSTLY COMPACT

(Continued from page 15)

26 cwt. to tote around in full test trim (kerb weight is 23½cwt.).

Zero to 50 m.p.h. came up in 9.9 seconds — almost as good as a stick-shift Valiant — and 70 was reached in just 22.2sec. True top speed was 90.2 m.p.h., standing quarter a snappy 20.3sec. Good going for any medium-sized auto.

The Chevy would cruise sweetly and quickly at up to 80 m.p.h. Above that she was sloppy and inclined to "float" on uneven surfaces. Crosswinds found out that back suspension again. Rather like having a back-seat driver with a steering wheel to himself (or herself?).

Brakes were light and true in action, and not inclined to fade unless brutally used. The 14-inch wheels, of course, allow better air-cooling than the 13-inches that are so popular these days.

Transmission is the standard two-speed Hydramatic fitted to all recent Chevrolets, big and small.

It's smooth, but doesn't seem to gobble up power by excessive slip. Makes no noise.

Low gear produced a useful 61 m.p.h. There's a fixed engagement for this gear in which it won't over-run and go into top. In the automatic drive range, a kickdown under the accelerator holds first till it runs out of revs.

I was surprised to get 20.2 m.p.g. over a short test of 150 miles. Considering the size, weight, power and automatic transmission — plus the fact that the car had less than 1200 miles on the clock — it was an excellent figure. Average running could be expected to return about 25 m.p.g.

Engine is accessible all round and has a bypass oil filter. Distributor, battery, fuel pump and all other service points are easy to get at.

Taken all round, the Chevy II is a comfortable, capacious car with sparkling performance, good fuel economy and more than reasonable handling.

Apart from price, I've only two complaints: turning circle is rather large at 38ft. (penalty of a long wheelbase) — and G.M.H. should have included a heater and screen-washers for the money instead of classing them as "extras." ●●●

ROVER TURBINE

(Continued from page 23)

terms), which is about the same as you'd get from a Detroit V8.

Chrysler have followed a different design path to Rover, merely dropping their turbines into the engine

bay of stock chassis—for this run, a Plymouth Fury and Dodge Polara.

For their current power unit, Chrysler engineers have evolved a device to give engine braking (gas turbines tend to free-wheel when load is reduced, whereas a piston engine slows under compression).

They have developed a variable-nozzle mechanism that directs the expanding gases on to the power-turbine blades. The angle is varied to accelerate or slow the turbine. The principle is similar to the reversible-pitch aircraft propeller, except that in this case the airflow angle is varied, instead of the turbine or propeller-blade angle.

Rover haven't worried about engine braking; they insist that disc brakes make engine braking unnecessary. In fact, they contend that all cars will be equipped with disc brakes before long—whether powered by turbines or piston engines.

Both the Chrysler and Rover units have a wide fuel tolerance. They can burn kerosene, diesel or furnace oil, jet fuel. I watched a Chrysler executive pour a quart of perfume

worth 700 dollars into the Plymouth's tank, just to amuse the spectators.

However, turbines don't run happily on leaded petrol, such as is now sold through service stations. Stocks of turbine fuel will have to be laid for service-station pumps before the cars reach the volume-distribution stage.

Almost the only other problem is servicing. Your favorite mechanic may be able to fit piston rings with his eyes shut, but a gas turbine would mystify him.

On the other hand, having few moving parts and being very simple in design, turbines should be less liable to trouble than the highly complex piston engines.

Rover's spokesmen forecast that turbine cars will be guaranteed for so many hours' running before an overhaul (or an engine swap) becomes necessary. Their experience with industrial gas-turbines suggests an interval of about 3000 hours between overhauls; at an average of 30-40 m.p.h., this would work out at more than 100,000 miles.

Ten years without a decoke — wouldn't that be nice? ●●●

AUSTIN FREEWAY TEST (Continued from page 29)

the well-proven 4-cylinder, 1622c.c. "B" series unit, with the addition of two extra "pots." Bore and stroke remain at 3in. by 3½in., allowing a cost-reducing interchangeability of parts between the two motors.

Existing transfer machinery at B.M.C.'s Sydney factory has been ingeniously modified to produce both 4- and 6-cylinder engine blocks — another cost-pruning feature; the changeover takes only six hours.

With a capacity of 2433c.c., the new B.M.C. "six" is bigger than either the Holden or the Falcon unit (2262 and 2365c.c. respectively). Low-stressed in the Holden manner, it stables five more horses than "Australia's own" (80 b.h.p. against 75), but gives away 10 horses to the harder-working Falcon engine.

Compression is a modest 7.7:1, and maximum output is developed at 4350 r.p.m. (both Holden and Falcon churn theirs out at 4200). The maximum torque of 123ft. lb. comes in at 1650 r.p.m. (Holden, 120 at 1400; Falcon, 138 at 2000).

This, together with a final-drive ratio of 3.91:1, gives a good compromise between nippy acceleration and the ability to cruise at high speeds—say around 65-70 m.p.h.

Carburation is by a single down-draught Zenith with a paper element air-cleaner, fed by an SU electric pump from a 10-gallon tank located behind the back seat.

The exhaust manifold is beautifully shaped for efficient gas flow, but the inlet manifold is of more conventional design. Competition-minded

owners will find there's ample scope for "hotting-up."

Cooling is by impeller pump and pressurised system with 8-blade fan. A full-flow oil filter allows quick-change filter removal every 6000 miles, while oil-changes are recommended at 3000-mile intervals.

On test, the engine propelled the Freeway to a maximum of 82.3 m.p.h., yet gave a normal-running fuel consumption of almost 29 m.p.g.; overall test average, with all fuel-wasting speed runs thrown in, was 25 m.p.g.

The "six" was so quiet and well-behaved at all times that stopwatch readings constantly surprised us. The Freeway just doesn't seem to rush about as quickly and effortlessly as it actually does!

Performance figures, in many instances, were better than Holden's or Falcon's. But before tackling these, let's take a look inside the car.

Comfort, Equipment

First thing you notice, on entering the car, is the ease with which the manoeuvre was carried out — no stoop, squirm or squiggle.

After adjusting the bench-type front seat to suit your size, you become aware of the thoughtful positioning of steering wheel, pendant pedals and minor controls, the generous array of instruments and the comfortable shaping of the seat itself.

The only control I could criticise on the test car was the column-mounted gearshift which had a rather stiff

movement into second — but this may have been due to newness.

I liked the well-padded, dark-trimmed dash top, the big lidded glovebox, the full-width parcels tray, roll-padded along the edge.

Instruments are grouped in two big dials, easily seen through the top of the wheel. Left dial contains a speedo with total-mileage recorder, graduated up to 100 m.p.h., plus warning lights for generator charge and high beam.

These are the only "fairy lights" you'll find on the Freeway — the right-hand dial contains genuine gauges for oil pressure, water temperature and fuel supply.

Dash controls include: ignition starter switch; 3-position heater-demister switch; cigarette lighter; choke; screen - washer control; switches for windscreen-wipers, headlights and instrument lighting. The twin flashers are operated by a column-mounted fingertip stalk.

The excellent lever-type handbrake is floor-mounted to the right of the driver, between the seat and the door.

With heater - demister, screen-washers, lighter, padded sun visors, lockable petrol cap and safety-belt anchorage points provided as standard, the only extras you can buy are a radio and a clock.

Each bench seat will hold three adults, though the big transmission hump in the front compartment could prove restrictive on long trips.

As on the Major Elite, the Freeway's seats are built of Pirelli rubber webbing, covered with polyurethane foam, and are very comfortable. There are armrests on the rear doors, and ashtrays in the dash top and the back of the front seat.

The only thing that invites criticism here is the wrinkly upholstery. B.M.C. should consider dividing the material into smaller panels, which are less liable to wrinkle.

Safety glass is used all round, and big curved screens front and rear give almost unrestricted visibility.

Attractively patterned two-tone Vynex trim, colored floor mats and "childproof" doorlocks complete the picture of the interior.

The big boot, with counterbalanced lid, offers 19 cu. ft. of unrestricted luggage space; the spare wheel is housed in a hinged tray under the boot floor, so you can get at it without unloading.

The mono-construction, four-door body is thoroughly rust-proofed by B.M.C.'s patent Rotodip process, and undersealing is a standard feature.

Technical Topics

A few more technical points must be mentioned before we set off:

● The Freeway's three-speed gearbox is a modified version of the unit which Austin originally developed for the Nash Metropolitan.

● The new Borg Warner 35 automatic transmission, which will be offered as an option later on, is an extremely efficient torque-converter unit, specially developed to suit medium-size cars. Described in *Modern Motor* last December, it weighs only 14lb. more than a conventional gearbox - clutch - flywheel assembly; though fully automatic, it can also be used like a manual gearbox if you prefer to do so.

● To cope with the widened track and 80 b.h.p. output, B.M.C. have introduced very fine splines on the rear axle shafts.

● Six of the normal greasing points on the car's suspension have been eliminated by using rubber bushes.

● Lining area of the Girling brakes is 146.5 sq. in.—larger than either Holden's (112.5) or Falcon's (114.3)—and stopping power in a forward direction is truly fantastic; but in reverse it's not so good—perhaps due to the use of two-leading-shoe layout on the front wheels, and one leading, one trailing at the rear.

● Steering, via cam and peg, is of variable ratio, changing from 14½ to 1 in the straight-ahead position to 17 to 1 on full lock. It responds immediately and accurately to the driver's slightest movement, but could not be classified as light in action.

Not that it calls for too much driver effort—but I feel that a longer drop-arm would bring it into the "light" class without destroying its responsiveness.

Minor improvements over most other B.M.C. models include an organ-pedal type accelerator, reduced pressure on the clutch pedal, and a new 8½in. Borg & Beck diaphragm-type clutch (hydraulically actuated).

On Road and Track

Over 200 miles of road-testing, the Freeway dropped not a single serious blot on its copybook.

It went through all tests in a workmanlike manner and recorded a set of acceleration and general-performance figures that are most impressive for an everyday family saloon.

They're all there in the data panel, for comparison with other vehicles of your choosing, but the outstanding examples are:

Standing quarter-mile, 21.4sec.; 0-50 m.p.h., 12 sec.; 0-70, 26.5sec. Try to match these times in a Holden or Falcon, and you'll see just how good they are.

The Freeway's handling ability is even more impressive. It's far in excess of the requirements of normal motoring, providing a wide margin of safety for weekend driver and expert alike. You'd think the car had been designed for trials work.

Cornering is almost neutral in character until the car is pushed hard, when it tends towards oversteer—the usual reaction for a car of this size and type.

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Freeway Saloon	80	1130	Flaminia	75	2173
Station Wagon	80	1225	Mercedes 190DC Saloon	55	2498
A59 Westminster Overdrive	108	1857	190C Saloon	60	2390
Automatic	108	1967	190SL Sports	120	3197
Austin-Healey 3000	124	**	220S Saloon	124	2886
Sprite	43	940	220SE Saloon (Fuel Injection)	134	3198
Bentley Saloon		8250	220SE Automatic	134	306
Borgward Isabella Saloon	66	**	220SE Coupe	134	5084
Isabella TS	82	**	220SE Automatic Coupe	134	**
Isabella Station Sedan	66	**	300D Saloon Automatic	180	6517
Coupe	82	**	Messerschmitt Hardtop	10	495
Bristol 407 Saloon	130	**	MG Magnette Saloon	66.5	1640
Chevrolet V8	170	2454	MG "A" (new model)	90	1313
Chrysler Royal Auto. Six	117	1737	Morris 850	34	740
V8 Automatic	220	1879	Morris Minor 2-door Saloon	37	834
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Citroen DS19	75	**	NSU Prinz	36	599
Safari Station Wagon	69	2145	Peugeot 403 Saloon	65	1918
ID19 Parisienne	69	1570	403 Special Deluxe Saloon	65	1347
Daimler Majestic Major	220	4990	403 Station Wagon	65	1355
SP250 Sports Hardtop	140	2576	403 Deluxe Station Wagon	65	1381
Datsun Bluebird Special	60	898	Pontiac V8	170	2619
Bluebird Deluxe	60	946	Porsche 1600 Coupe	75	2373
Station Sedan	60	1082	Super 1600 Coupe	88	**
Heavy-duty Station Wagon	60	1023	Super 90 Coupe	90	**
Dodge Phoenix	220	2652	Rambler Classic Custom 6	127	1999
Phoenix Luxury Liner	220	2705	Station Wagon	127	2296
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Station Wagon	16	694	Renault 750 Thriftmaster	26	718
Fiat 770	32	782	Dauphine	31	850
600 Multipla	32	894	Farlie Coupe	31	865
1100 Deluxe	55	952	Dauphine Gordini	40	970
1500 Saloon	80	1295	Florida	40	1495
2300 Saloon	117	1697	Rolls-Royce Saloon		8450
Ford Anglia	39	885	Rover 100 Saloon	100	2205
Prefect	39	885	3-litre Saloon	115	2615
Falcon Standard	90	1089	3-litre Automatic	115	2818
Automatic	90	1199	Land-Rover (Series II)	77	**
Deluxe	90	1146	Land-Rover, long wheelbase	77	**
Automatic	90	1259	Simca Aronde	52	999
Station Wagon	90	1185	Station Wagon	52	1169
Deluxe Wagon	90	1244	Etoile	52	906
Automatic Deluxe Wagon	90	1357	Skoda Octavia*	42	799
Zephyr Six	86	1242	Super Octavia*	47	859
Zephyr Automatic	80	1390	Felicia	55	1050
Ranch Wagon Automatic	264	**	Touring Sports Sedan	53	**
Fairlane 500 (new model)	145	2074	Studebaker Lark	180	1645
Fairlane 500 Auto. (new mod.)	145	2193	Lark Automatic	180	1799
Hillman Special Saloon	56.5	969	Lark Station Wagon	180	1885
Special Automatic	56.5	1059	Lark Automatic S.W.	180	1995
Australian Deluxe Saloon	56.5	1049	Hawk	225	2397
Australian Deluxe Auto.	56.5	1179	Sunbeam Alpine Coupe	78	1588
Special Deluxe Automatic	56.5	1130	Hardtop	78	1695
Super Minx	66	1169	Rapier	73	1470
Super Minx Automatic	66	1239	Convertible	73	1518
Husky Station Wagon	82	899	Triumph Herald 1300 Saloon	39	852
Holden EK Standard	75	1051	Triumph TR4	100	1627
EK Special	75	1110	Vanguard Six	80	1288
EK Special Automatic	75	1223	Vauxhall Victor 3-speed	56	1039
EK Station Sedan	75	1140	Vauxhall Victor 4-speed	56	1057
EK Special Station Sedan	75	1199	VX/490	81	1330
EK Special St. Sed. Autom.	75	1312	Velox Saloon	113	1318
Humber Hawk Automatic	78	1725	Automatic	113	1444
Super Snipe 3-litre Automatic	137	1969	Cresta Automatic	113	1515
Jaguar 2.4-litre Mk. II Saloon	120	2498	Volkswagen Saloon	40	953
Automatic	120	2680	VW Microbus	40	1330
3.4-litre Mk. II Overdrive	210	2834	Kombi	40	1190
Automatic	210	2921	Wolsley 6/110 (new model)	130	2100
3.8-litre Mark II Overdrive	220	2995	Automatic 6/110 (new model)	120	2210
Automatic	220	3078	24/80 Saloon (new model)	80	1225
E-type Roadster	265	3215			
Mark X Saloon (new model)	265	3890			
Karman-Ghia VW	40	1524			

Prices are quoted to the nearest pound, but may vary slightly from State to State. Sales tax is included. The publishers accept no responsibility for errors or omissions. * Heater/demister and electric fan now standard. ** Price on application.

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the Freeway rode like a luxury vehicle, retaining a high degree of passenger comfort while remaining directionally stable at high speed. This latter test is a critical one, in which many vehicles show up poorly at speed.

The Freeway more than matches Australia's two top-sellers in hill-climbing ability and is remarkably flexible in top gear, picking up without fuss or snatch from as low as 10 m.p.h.

Braking distance is incredibly short. I repeatedly stopped the car in less than 29 feet from 30 m.p.h. in neutral. However, very heavy pedal pressure is required to stop the car rolling backwards down a steep hill.

Overall fuel consumption, with all performance, acceleration and braking tests thrown in, worked out at 25 m.p.g., and a normal-driving test produced 29 m.p.g. On a long trip, she should cover at least 300 miles on one 10-gallon tankful.

The Freeway, then, offers ample performance, combined with excellent handling and economical fuel consumption. With all this, plus "luxuries" such as heater and screen-washers thrown in as standard equipment, it represents real value-for-money at £1130 tax-paid.

The only possible drawback, so far as the public is concerned, is its resemblance to the now-discontinued B.M.C. "fours" — Austin A60 and Morris Oxford.

Don't let the looks fool you — the resemblance is only skin-deep. This is an entirely different car in all other respects, and one that WAS designed for Australia.

FOOTNOTE: Station-wagon buyers aren't neglected either. In this form the Freeway costs £1225 including tax — again competitive with its "big two" counterparts (Holden, £1199; Falcon, £1247).

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