

The 1932 Chevrolet Moonlight Speedster

This updated account is extracted from an article written in 2013 by and with Murray Hubbard's permission, Murray stated that the Moonlight Speedster built by Holden Motor Body Builders was in the top ten of the best cars ever built in Australia.



1932 Chevrolet Moonlight Speedster body by Holden.





BRILLIANT DISPLAY OF
NEW MODEL CARS.

1932 Model
CHEVROLET
Makes Its Debut.

Chevrolet's new car for 1932 is heralded as "the great Australian Value for 1932."

Embodying silent synchro-mesh transmission in combination with selective free-wheeling, a 20 per cent. increase in power, top speed of 60 to 70 miles per hour, streamlined bodies and a wealth of new features, the new car furnishes a striking example of what a 1932 car buyer can obtain for £2,300 compared with the value secured for £2,000 in 1931. It can claim more extensive changes than any model since the change over to a six in 1928.

Practically every proved automotive feature of recent years is incorporated in the new 1932 Chevrolet as well as a new "stabilised" front end construction embodied for the first time on any car.

This remarkable car is now on view at the Show-rooms of the distributors.

Distributors:

**City Motors
Ltd.**

95 Waymouth Street.

Release of the 1932 Chevrolet models in Adelaide

The Chevrolet Moonlight Speedster design was copied from the 1929/30 Vauxhall Hurlingham. Vauxhall is a GM company as was General Motors Australia, changing to General Motors Holden in 1931. Vauxhall took out a registered design on the Hurlingham shape #74777 - and why not as it is quite stunning. The Vauxhall Hurlingham was also being sold in Australia in 1929/30.

VAUXHALL
"EIGHTY"



The Hurlingham Roadster £650
(on Special Sports Chassis)

The chassis and engine of this sports model have been designed to give a special high speed road performance. It is guaranteed to attain a minimum top speed of 80 m.p.h. The body is specially hand built and paneled, and is of very stream-line design. The separate bucket front seats are placed low in the body and upholstered in best quality

furniture hide. There is a dickey seat for one. A detachable folding hood is provided which is supported on two metal pillars; when not in use this is carried in the dickey. Standard colour schemes are two blues, aluminium and red, black and green, or to customer's choice, with upholstery to match. Both windcreens are of safety glass.

Copy of page from a 1929 Vauxhall sales brochure.

While GM Holden refers to the car as the Chevrolet Moonlight Speedster, a Holden body tag nailed to the floor of the Speedster has 'CHEV HURL RDSTR' stamped



into it. Both the printed GMH Technical Specification and the body plate refer to the Chevrolet as a 'Hurlingham' in what could be construed as acknowledgment of Vauxhall's registered design.



Vauxhall Hurlingham Speedster 1929

On June 4, 1931 as the new Chevrolet range was being released, the Perth Daily News correspondent 'Servo' referred to the fact that the Chevrolet Moonlight Speedster ... " shows very sporting and attractive lines which reflect the influence of the Hurlingham Vauxhall sports model seen several times at shows in other parts of the metropolis."

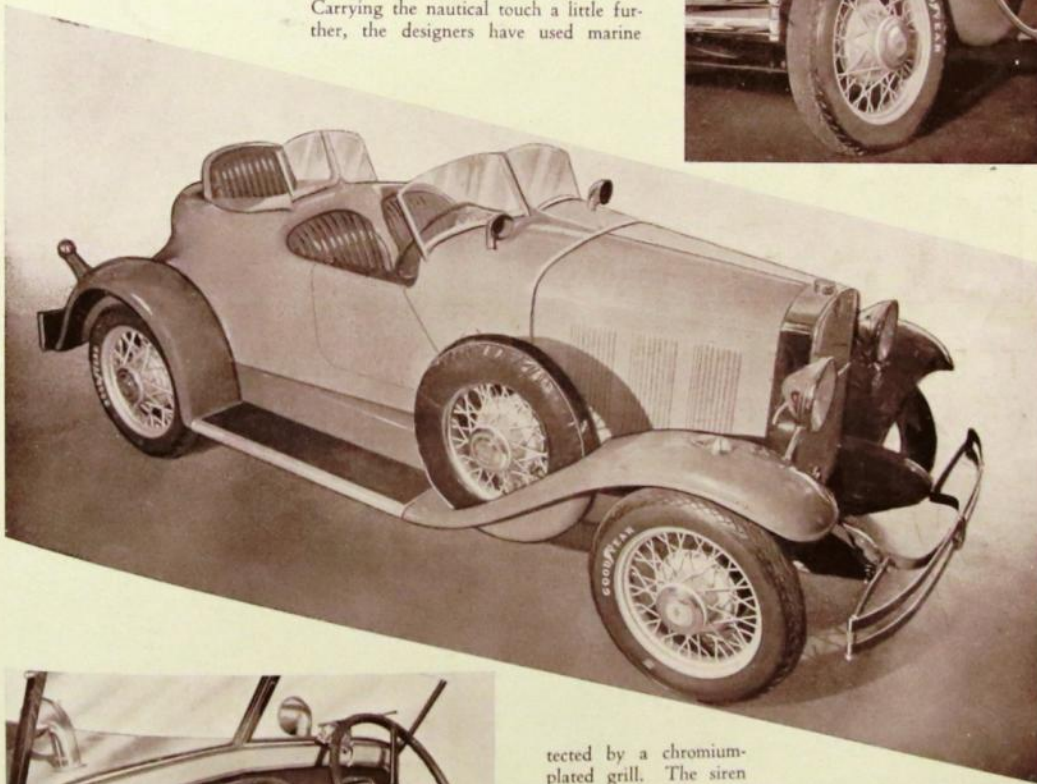
"MOONLIGHT—SPEED—A CAR—AND YOU"

EVE DECIDES WHAT THE NEW CAR SHALL WEAR

Most car salesmen will admit, strictly in private, of course, that the sale of a car is finally clinched when the approval of the lady in the case is secured. Eve must still be satisfied. Designers, therefore, strive to dress their mechanically perfect car in an artistically perfect dress. The colour scheme must be right—the accessories must have a feminine appeal and there must be an opportunity to express one's characteristic tastes in the car one buys, and so we see a more pleasing array in the style and colouring of the new cars.

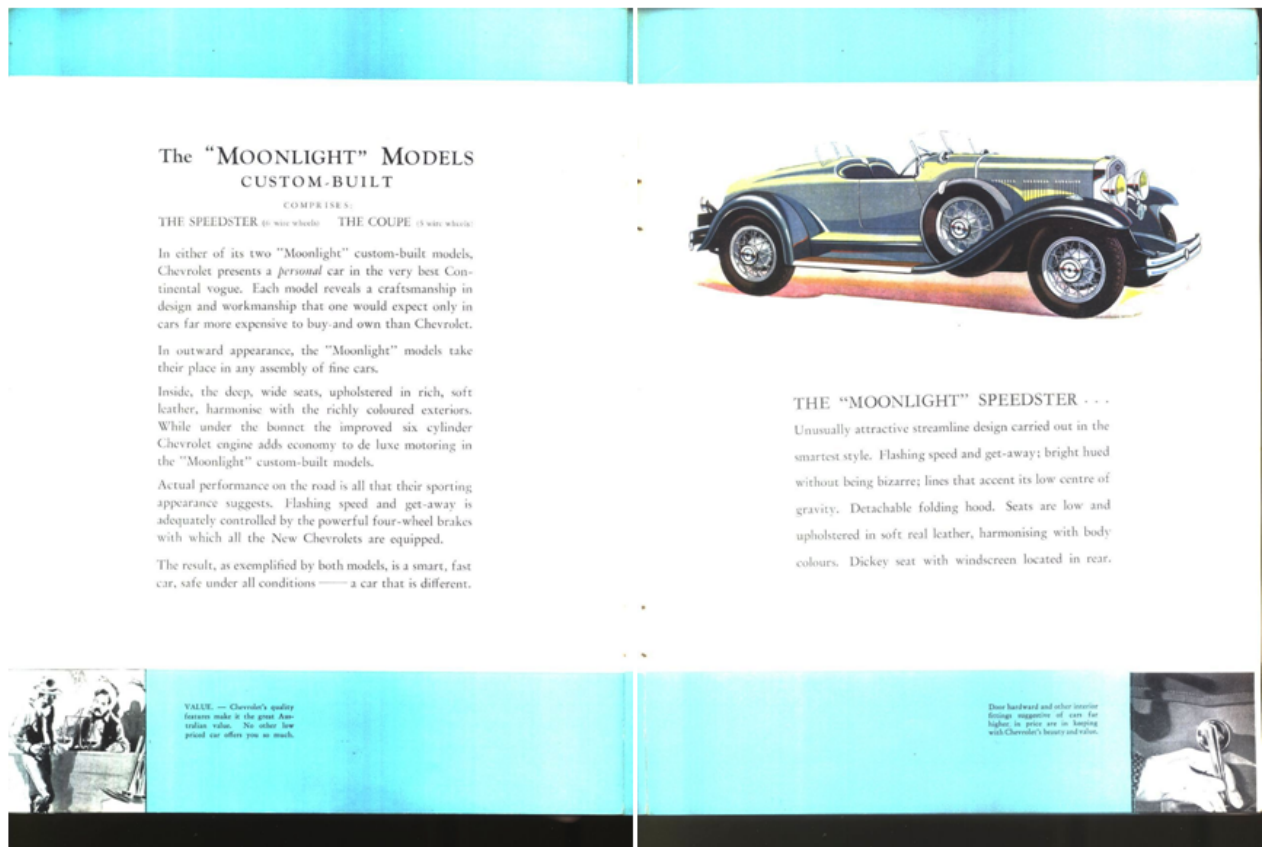
This is all to the good, for although we admit the foolishness of over-looking the under-the-bonnet virtues of a car when appreciating its pleasing appearance, we should also admit that in meeting the desires of car owners, designers have vastly improved the aesthetic value of their work during the past decade. Recent exhibits of "post-depression" cars reveal a buoyant and progressive character that will help us to forget the period through which we sincerely hope we have passed. We illustrate a racy six-cylinder car exhibited at the Chevrolet show held in Adelaide last month. It is known as the "Moonlight Speedster," taking its names from its colouring as well as from its graceful lines. If one imagines the hull of a yacht inverted, with its stern over the radiator and its bows over the differential, one may visualise the lines of this joy bus." Carrying the nautical touch a little further, the designers have used marine

type ventilator cowls to cool the under-the-dash position, and the park lamps are cabin lights set in the front mudguards. The dickey seat is a comfortable arrangement and is shown open in the illustration, ready for use if a chaperon accompanies or should an unexpected third party turn up. Another eventuality is provided for by two spare wheels, one mounted on either front mudguard, whilst the radiator honeycomb is pro-



tected by a chromium-plated grill. The siren is fitted out in front of the radiator—quite an English touch, which is appreciated nearly as much as the two cubby holes in the dash. Those of us above the average in height will applaud the cut of the door openings which, as one of the smaller photographs show, allows considerably freer action than the square cut door. The three spoke driving wheel is just another little help which motor science has unearthed to assist the enjoyment of motoring. All these and other improvements are being made by car designers, urged on by the ever-growing list of lady owner-drivers.

Australian Homes and Gardens advert July 1 1931 this Speedster would have been two tone blue with silver wheels, the only other option in 1931 was the Glamour Red scheme also used in 1932.



1931 Australian Chevrolet Sales brochure

The Vauxhall Hurlingham was a slightly larger car, sitting on a 123" wheelbase compared to the Chevrolet Moonlight Speedster's 109" wheelbase. Opel also produced a similar shaped car in 1932 & 1933, the Opel Moonlight Roadster with a 1.8 litre 6-cylinder engine.



1933 Opel
Moonlight
Roadster

While the Chevrolet Moonlight Speedster is a simply beautiful car, they were not user -friendly for taller or larger drivers. The doors are small and do not open wide and the floor is lower than the door opening.

The seats tilt forward to access the rear compartment but are not adjustable and the pedals are very close to the driver, creating a cramped driving position for taller or larger people.



For those of shorter and smaller stature, the car is a delight to drive. The yacht-like air vents (dorades) on the cowl funnel air to the cabin's footwell, but if it's rainy they can be turned around to stop the air flow and keep your toes dry.



Cowl vents

We think that the vents add significantly to the beauty of the Speedster, adding a 'Great Gatsby era' appeal. The dicky seat could also be called the “tricky” seat as it is difficult to get into and out of, and when in there the passenger's face gains no protection from the small windscreen.



Dickey seat and step

Once again though, it adds character to the car, as do the twin spare wheels mounted in the front mudguards. The generous use of chrome on the Speedster's fittings gives the Chevrolet more of an Auburn, Stutz or Packard look.



W-1 Carter Downdraft Carburettor



The cockpit



Unique to Australian Chevrolets were 2 chrome half-domes on each side of the bonnet which meet when the bonnet is opened.



Genuine factory shroud to insulate the starter motor switch.



The Moonlight Speedster shared mechanicals with the other models in the 1932 Chevrolet range, namely the Stove-bolt Six, a straight-six OHV engine displacing 194.6 cubic inches.



Driver's side engine compartment



Passenger's side engine compartment

This is the family of engines that replaced the four-cylinder engine used in Chevrolet cars until 1928. The 1932 model also took on board a new 3-speed gearbox with synchromesh on second and third gears also the short-lived freewheeling device. The 1932 Chevrolet range has semi-elliptic leaf springs on each corner while the brakes are 4-wheel mechanical.

The 1932 model had heavier rear axles than earlier models and rode on 18 inch, 6-stud wire spoke wheels. The spare wheels on this car are fitted with genuine GMA tyre locks a standard fitting on this model.



Other standard equipment included leather upholstery, carpet, step for dickey seat, 6 wire wheels, full front and rear bumpers, black top bows and grey fabric for the top. And a tool kit which included:

Alemite Grease Gun

Hand Tyre Pump

Jack and Handle

Hammer

Screw Driver

Spark Plug Wrench

Oil Can

Combination Pliers

Adjustable Auto Wrench

Open End Wrenches.

Combination Starting Crank and Wheel Nut Wrench



Holden Body Badge

HISTORY

While it is believed that this car spent its early years in Sydney, nothing certain is known prior to late 1952 or early 1953. This is when Dale Fisher purchased the car from McConnell Motors Pty Ltd of 164 Parramatta Road, Ashfield. It was advertised in the Sydney Morning Herald on October 11, 1952 for £195. Soon after the purchase the car broke down and was re-sold to the same car yard. The car's history for the next few years is unknown. In 1955 it was discovered in a Hurstville timber yard and rescued by well-known Sydney motor trimmer, George Lane and his apprentice panel beater son, Dennis.

They painted the car white with red 16" 1939 Chevrolet wheels and hub caps. This was to be the first car for Dennis. In reality it is likely this Moonlight Speedster would not have survived without this family getting it back on the road. Dennis Lane and Dale Fisher actually worked together at one stage and the car was lent to Dale for a weekend.

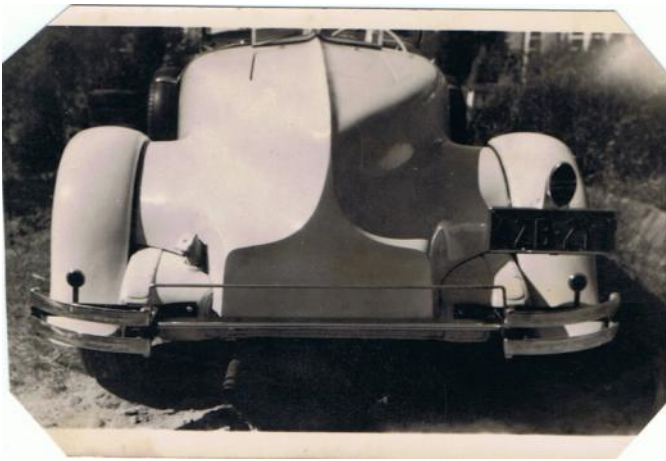


Photo taken by Dale Fisher in 1956 whilst on loan from Dennis Lane.

In 1957 the car was again sold and its history between 1957 and 1959 is unknown. That is when it was seen one weekend in a holding yard in the Dandenongs in Victoria by Darryl Griffiths and his father. They approached the owner of the yard on the Monday and subsequently Darryl bought it keeping it until 1962 when he traded it. The car then resurfaced in Sydney, NSW in 1965 when Ron McCann purchased the Speedster from Atom Motors of Victoria Road, Gladesville in Sydney. By now the car had deteriorated, but still wore the white paint job applied by the Lanes. Ron kept the car for several years, gradually upgrading it, before selling it to Nick Nalywajko who painted the Speedster red while also making some upgrades.

In 1977 Darryl Stark traded a 1934 supercharged Graham Sedan and some cash in exchange for what is still believed to be the only surviving Moonlight Speedster. Darryl did a meticulous total ground up restoration and it is obvious that Darryl was the right person at the right time to rescue this truly unique Chevrolet.

Much uncertainty surrounds the number of Moonlight Speedsters actually produced by GM Holden since all the relevant records have been lost. The windscreen frame and posts from car number 6 were used to replace the screen on Darryl's car body number 10,

damaged prior to the mid 1950s. There is some significance in the fact that this car is number 10. Darryl owned the car for 37 years and 10 is the highest number Speedster body he was able to locate.

This begs the question: Were there only 10 Chevrolet Moonlight Speedsters built by GM Holden in 1931/ 1932? We know from newspaper 'for sale' advertisements there were only four Moonlight Speedsters in NSW in 1934. In a 1943 advertisement there are claimed to be three in NSW. These low figures support the view that few Chevrolet Moonlight Speedsters were built.

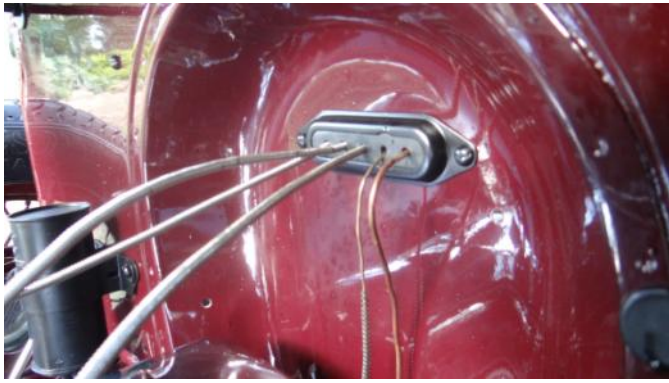
Moonlight Speedster body numbers were believed to date from 1931 and it was thought that - GM Holden did not start the count again in 1932 and simply continued the count from 1931 and placed the number 2 to indicate the model year before the body number. There is now new evidence that in 1932 Moonlight Speedsters came with a choice of two colour schemes -

#1 being Black and #2 being Glamour Red and it is possible that the 2 before the body number refers to the colour combination.

It is thought that all the Moonlight Speedster bodies were probably built in 1931. We know from 1931 newspaper reports that five Moonlight Speedster cars were built for the 1931 Chevrolet launch with one Moonlight Speedster on display around the same June day in the five major capital cities: Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Perth and Brisbane. This means there were at least five Moonlight Speedsters in storage at GM Holden's Woodville factory in South Australia awaiting new buyer orders.

With Moonlight Speedster sales stalled - we believe the car was never going to be a huge seller - as the car's primary role was to highlight the 1931 Chevrolet range under the new GM Holden merged company. Its role was simple: get buyers into Chevrolet showrooms. It achieved this by its dramatic and sporty design. It seems likely there were five Moonlight Speedsters sold in 1931 and the remaining bodies were used to continue the model range in 1932.

It is probable the Speedsters not sold in 1931 were upgraded with the 1932 Chevrolet grille, bonnet and headlights ... the key identifying changes between the 1931 and 1932 models. Supporting this view is the fact that this featured 1932 Moonlight Speedster was found by Darryl to have a 1931 firewall with a 1932 grommet fitted in a hand cut opening. The two firewalls are easy to identify: the 1931 firewall has individual holes for the choke, hand throttle, oil pressure line and the temperature gauge while the 1932 has one large elongated grommet for routing the cables and copper temperature and oil pressure lines.



1932 Firewall



1931 Firewall

From the firewall back the Moonlight Speedster bodies are aluminium with the standard firewall steel pressing bolted to the cowl by two timber frames. Moving back, the boat tail is constructed of 17 pieces of welded aluminium formed and fitted over a timber frame. The small ridge in the centre of the boat tail continues down between the seats as shown below.



If you know anything of the car's history in the missing years, we would love to hear from you. We would also like to hear from anyone who has any other Moonlight Speedster information sales literature or associated history.



Owners of this 1932 Chevrolet Moonlight Speedster have been:

1932 - 1952 Unknown, but most likely in Sydney

1952 - 1953 Dale Fisher, Sydney



Photo taken by Dale Fisher when Dennis Lane lent it to him for the weekend in 1956 in Pembroke Street, Epping.



Dale Fisher bought this 1931 Moonlight Speedster in 1957 and repainted it. There are no known surviving 1931 Moonlight Speedsters, there is however a hand built replica in New Zealand.

1953 – 1955 Unknown

1955 - 1957 Dennis Lane, Sydney



Elizabeth Raffin, Dennis Lane, Ken Pearce and unknown girl
with the Moonlight Speedster at Culburra, NSW 1956



Dennis Lane sitting in the same car in
2014 nearly 60 years later.

1958 - 1961 Darryl Griffiths, Melbourne





Darryl Griffiths in 2014

1961 - 1965 Unknown

1965 -1971 Ron McCann, Sydney/Brisbane



Ron McCann (in the driver's seat) with Ken Moss.

1971 - 1977 The late - Nick Nalywajko (driving), Sydney/Brisbane
Paul Race in passenger seat.



1977 - 2014 The late - Darryl Stark, Ipswich





The above dates are approximations, so may differ slightly from the actual dates.

Much of the information contained in this report has been generously provided by the Moonlight Speedster's previous owner Darryl Stark and Michael Ferguson a member of the Vintage Chevrolet Association of Queensland Inc.

Since this article was originally written the Moonlight Speedster has undergone a bare metal body off restoration in 2019 taking it back to its original “Glamour Red” colour scheme in two tone maroon that it originally sported in 1932.

The paint work was done by Robert Guthrie, possibly the most meticulous and best in the game. He went the extra mile with preparation and matching the original colour scheme, it is now riding on black wall tyres and is as close as possible in appearance to how it would have been delivered new. The only other Speedster colour option in 1932 would have been all black with “Glamour Red” wheels and red leather upholstery.



1932 sales brochure copy

In this strikingly handsome sports model, there is an unmistakable note of dignified individuality which is rarely found in any but the most expensive custom built models. The unusually high standard of quality, tasteful colour treatment and graceful streamline contour combines to make this speedster the smartest on the road. Six wire wheels are standard equipment.



Moonlight Speedster photo shopped to show how it would look in black.

All of the 1932 Speedster photos in this article are one and the same car during different stages of its existence.

Links

<https://vvcaa.com.au/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLcZTAk7I44>

<https://hurlinghamweb.wordpress.com/vauxhall-hurlinghams-in-existence/>

1931 price list for Australian Chevrolets. Note that the 107" wheelbase models were unsold 1930 model Chevrolets dressed up to try and clear the previous year models.



The NEW CHEVROLET

PRICE LIST

Series 1A—Suburban Model - - - 107 inch wheelbase

Five wire wheels, spare at rear.

TOURER, 1AT - £235 SEDAN, 1AS - £329

Series 1—Suburban Model - - - 109 inch wheelbase

Five wire wheels, spare at rear.

ROADSTER, 1R - - - - - £235

Large rear deck for luggage.

Series 2—Club Model - - - 109 inch wheelbase

Five wire wheels, spare at rear. Front bumper and rear bumperettes.

TOURER, 2T - £259 SEDAN, 2S - £355

ROADSTER, 2R £262 COUPE, 2C - £368

Extra for leather in Sedan £9, Coupe £3. Extra for luggage carrier £2.
Dickey seat included in Roadster and Coupe.

Series 3—De Luxe Model - - - 109 inch wheelbase

Six wire wheels, spares in front fenderwells.

Full bumpers front and rear, luggage carrier.

TOURER, 3T - - £274 SEDAN, 3S - £370

ROADSTER, 3R - £277 COUPE, 3C - £383

Extra for leather in Sedan £9, Coupe £3. Dickey seat included in Roadster and Coupe.

Series 4—Moonlight Custom-built Models—109 inch wheelbase

MOONLIGHT SPEEDSTER, 4R - - - £365

Six wire wheels, spares in front fenderwells. Full bumpers front and rear.

MOONLIGHT COUPE, 4C - - - £375

Five wire wheels, spare at rear. Front bumper and rear bumperettes.

*All prices subject to Sales Tax. Prices, specifications,
colour, and equipment subject to change without notice.*

GENERAL MOTORS - HOLDENS LIMITED

isbane - Sydney - Melbourne - Adelaide - R

