

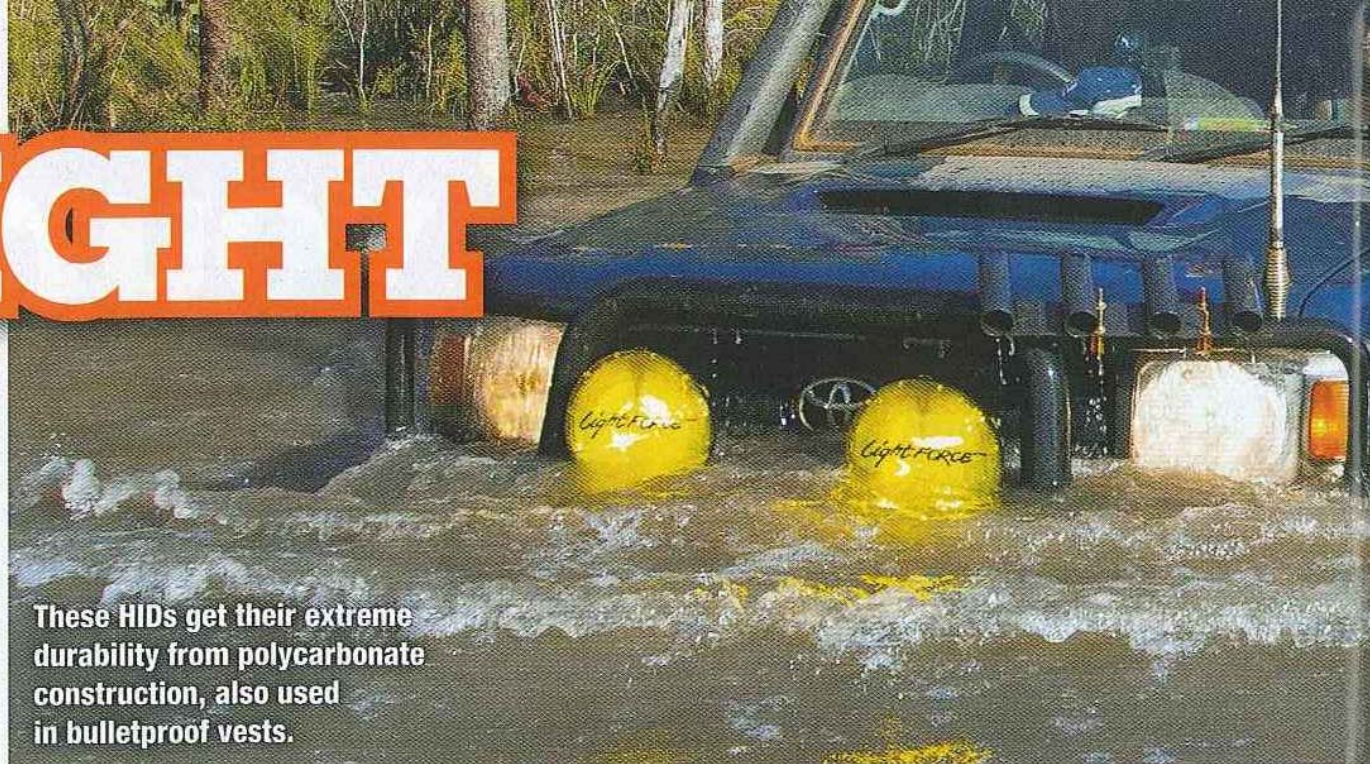
line of **SIGHT**

Attention seekers are lifesavers.

There are some aftermarket products that you linger on a little too long every time you see them in your local 4WD shop – things you know you can't afford, but still find yourself justifying to yourself. For the last couple of years it's been HID driving lights for me. The price was astronomical when the Lightforce HIDs first hit the market; they slowly slid down to opulent, then decadent, and finally to almost justifiably expensive, which is where we find them now, at \$960 each.

Just what exactly does \$1920 get you these days in a driving light? Well, as the bloke at ARB Maroochydore said when he wired them up for me, "Mate, if you were afraid of the dark, you won't be now!"

If you run them straight out of the box with their pencil beams, visibility is reportedly up to 1.5km. We didn't have anyone game to run up the road 1.5km to see if we could still see him (really, boss, we need an intern), but I'm not a big fan of those needles of light myself. I carried a couple of sets of clip-on combo filters in blue and yellow to test out, and they make



These HIDs get their extreme durability from polycarbonate construction, also used in bulletproof vests.

a huge difference. Partially fresnelled, they spread the light around the shoulders of the road by about 50 per cent, so that you still get the reach, but you also get good visibility where all that wildlife is waiting to jump out into you. The yellow lenses are supposed to improve visibility in the red dust. It makes sense, as blue light would be absorbed by all the red particles, so at night you're going to get more light reflected back from the roadside. But you can't see anything in thick dust...

Manufactured from polycarbonate, the same stuff they use in bulletproof vests, these lights are a favourite on the Baja circuit in the States. They don't break, are only 1.6kg each and are waterproof (rated

for 1m depth for 10 minutes).

At 50W, these lights only draw about 5A and put out the light of something like a 125W halogen globe, which would draw double the amperage. The reflectors in these babies are not only huge, they're polished up like one of those space telescopes, so you get the benefit of every little photon of light.

So am I afraid of the dark, now that I have these puppies bolted onto my rig? Honestly, I'm a lot more confident driving past sundown in the bush. They make the factory high beams look like a couple of flashlights strapped to the bullbar, and you wonder how you ever got by before without them.