



Wiring it . . . Nick Bourbaniotis checks a car at his Randwick workshop. *Picture: JOHN FOTIADIS*

# Finding that special spark

**W**hen he started as an apprentice auto electrician almost 20 years ago, Nick Bourbaniotis couldn't have imagined the impact that advancing technology would soon come to have on the trade. "The industry has gone ahead in quantum leaps," he says. "When I was an apprentice, electric fuel injection had just started. You didn't need a computer to talk to cars as such, you didn't need any kind of scanning equipment. These days if you don't have all that you can't work on the new cars."

As an auto electrician, the bulk of Bourbaniotis's work involves maintaining and repairing electrical wiring, electrical parts and computer-based equipment in cars. This includes parts such as the alternator, battery, starter motor, cruise control, ABS, locking systems and air bags. He says the workload doubles during summer because of problems with car airconditioning systems.

"Because of the heat, people are using the airconditioning more," he says. "Most people know they've got to get their car serviced, but don't know they need the airconditioning serviced as well. It's like an engine, if it isn't maintained, there can be problems."

The owner of Randwick Auto Electricians says it is imperative to keep up with the rapidly evolving technology. "Once a year I'll go to Melbourne to do workshops with [automotive product manufacturer] Bosch," he says. "They tell us what they did to make a car run, so we can understand what needs to be done if there's a problem."

But Bourbaniotis says auto electricians have time to familiarise themselves with new developments in cars' electrical systems, thanks to their warranty periods.

"When something new comes out, we'll get a report about it, but we have to wait until those new cars go out of warranty until we see them,

## Love your work

**How did you get into your job?** I wanted to be an electrician, but my mum thought it was dangerous. Auto electricians don't deal with such high-voltage electricity.

**Upside:** I'm always learning something new and it combines my two passions, cars and electrics.

**Downside:** Some people have no idea how complex car electrics have become. They want their cars fixed yesterday.

because if there's a problem, owners will take their car to the dealer," he says.

Japanese cars are easiest to work on and European cars the most difficult, he says.

"The Japanese cars are built in a way that means they are easily serviceable and maintained," Bourbaniotis says. "European cars tend to have all the latest electric gadgets, which make them harder to service."

But he enjoys the challenge of being faced with detailed and complex electrical systems. "I love it, but it's not a job for everyone," he says. "You have to have a lot of patience and you also have to be willing to constantly learn new things."

Electrics are different in each model and make of car, which adds to the challenge.

"It's hard to specialise in everything because they're so different," Bourbaniotis says. "You have to know so much for each car and keep up to date with [new cars]."

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