



The new normal?

COULDN'T BE BETTER



Geoff Gwilym VACC CEO

How many Zoom meetings have you been in lately?

The current coronavirus situation certainly has changed the way we conduct business and operate as a society. This is a difficult time, for sure, but I think a lot of the 'new normal' is good.

Take the way we have all adapted to different conditions with technology, for instance.

COVID-19 has made people think twice about the need to fly interstate for a one-hour meeting, the absolute necessity of having a boardroom full of physical bodies, and even the way we buy and sell goods and services.

Small businesses were amongst the first to adapt, with restaurants offering takeaway and deliveries, florists bumping up their online offerings and providing improved e-commerce solutions, and hairdressers extending their opening hours or visiting vulnerable customers in their homes.

The auto industry has adapted very well too. Your local automotive business is possibly offering contactless vehicle pick-up and delivery, SMS repair authorisation, and complete vehicle sanitisation.

It's great to see how businesses are changing with the times and providing value-add services.

Some of my favourites include contactless key drop boxes, alternative payment options, and e-receipts and worksheets.

The provision of hand sanitiser in waiting rooms, offering disposable gloves at service stations, and conducting online virtual test drives is innovative and also great to see.

So, the next time you sit down to yet another Zoom meeting, why not take a moment to appreciate some aspects your new normal?

Prepared by Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce in the interest of better motoring.

Share your thoughts
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IAIN CURRY GETS ANSWERS

WRITE TO MOTORING AT
CARS@NEWS.COM.AU OR
 PO BOX 2808, GPO SYDNEY, 2001

We want to update our current Toyota RAV4 for a hybrid SUV. What are the benefits of a hybrid versus petrol engine? Which Toyota RAV4 Hybrid grade would you recommend? We're considering the GXL.

Steve Maxwell, email

Your choice of mid-sized hybrid SUVs is between the RAV4 and Subaru Forester Hybrid. The Toyota's better. The hybrid benefit is fuel economy, pure and simple, and the battery self-charges so there's no need to plug it in. On paper, the RAV4 Hybrid manages 4.7L/100km versus the 2.0-litre petrol's 6.5L/100km. If you spend a lot of time in town or traffic, the Hybrid's economy is better still. You pay \$2600 extra for the Hybrid, but you have 160kW/221Nm against the petrol's 127kW/203Nm, so it's a better thing to drive. The GXL's a great choice of grade, and, unless you plan to tow, I'd save \$3000 by going 2WD and not AWD.

OLD FAITHFULS

Re: indestructible cars, my 2002 Peugeot 406 still runs perfectly after 426,000km. I think it'll reach half-a-million without too much concern.

Doug Brockfield, email

Re: high kilometre cars, my 1999 HSV VT Senator with 5.7-litre V8 has 420,000km on the clock. It's as reliable as the day I bought it.

Lindsay Watkins, email

Wow. If we conservatively say that V8 has averaged 13L/100km over that time, with fuel averaging \$1, it's drunk about \$55,000-worth of unleaded. Totally worth it, I'd say.

TIME FOR CHANGE?

When I moved from NSW to Queensland I was shocked to see so many defective vehicles on the road. One headlight working and sometimes no tail lights. Having to get a pink slip in NSW each year at least keeps vehicles roadworthy, unlike in Queensland.

Ian Sutton, email

NSW's annual eSafety inspection (pink slip in old money) is unique in Australia: most states only require a roadworthy check when transferring registration, including Queensland. It means leaving roadworthiness in the hands of the owner — not a great idea as you've discovered. Fines are dished out for things such as bald tyres and defective lights, but like you, I see far too many cars that wouldn't get close to passing a NSW inspection. Annual inspections cost you time and money, but most of us see the sense in them.

ANTI-VOLVO

You wrote 1970s and 1980s Volvos are "near unbreakable and ooze Scandinavian cool". That's not how most people remember them. Back then any slow-moving trail of cars was being held up by a Kombi or Volvo with a bloke with a sinister look and ridiculous hat. Most would rather be seen in a paddy wagon than an old Volvo.

Ian Gregory, email

How times and trends change. Go to any surf town or university campus today and old Volvos are a popular choice. I'm sure they'd all love to be driving Kombis instead, but you'd need \$50,000 for a good one.

PRICE CAP

In 2018 I bought a replacement radiator cap for my 2014 Mitsubishi Triton. I was told this specific cap could only be bought through Mitsubishi dealers as it helped with overheating problems. It cost \$11 from a Mornington Peninsula dealer. Last month I needed another and was charged \$52.35 at a



AUTOMATIC CHOICES

My granddaughter's looking for her first car, ideally a four-door automatic between \$7000 and \$10,000. What are the best choices, and what should she avoid? I see 2010-2013 Toyota Corollas, Mazda3s and Kia Ceratos are in budget.

Alan Billing, email

The pandemic has seen wholesale used car prices increase, so bargains are thin on the ground. All on your list are sound — add to it the Hyundai i30 — but these are the used models many have swarmed to in tough times, driving up prices. Better value's found with less obvious choices. Check out a VW Golf or Polo (pre-DSG auto gearbox variants) and Ford Focus: for the same price they're better to drive and more refined than those on your list, although reliability remains a question mark and parts can be pricey. A Suzuki Swift makes a decent first car too, but stay away from Holden Cruzes and Barinas. Look for perfect service histories and it's worth investing in a pre-purchase inspection.

Sunshine Coast dealership. I questioned this huge price increase over two years, and Mitsubishi Australia told me "all our dealerships are independently franchised and we are unable to become involved in the prices they charge for parts. The price you have been charged is within Mitsubishi Australia's recommended price range." I'd hate to think what I'll be stung with next time.

Brian Kennedy, email

The feedback you received was right: dealers can charge what they like for spare parts. Just what these mysterious "recommended price ranges" are is anyone's guess, or what is deemed an acceptable profit margin. Yours is a 375 per cent price increase. Most sane people would deem this unacceptable. If it's practical, take your business away from the second dealership if they can't reasonably explain their price difference.

JUST TRY IT

Re your response about governments legislating classic cars off our roads, methinks they'd have a multibillion-dollar class action lawsuit on their hands from thousands of classic car owners if they tried.

Belinda Rowley, email

Yes they would, and I for one would be standing near the front. But never underestimate the ways politicians could stop us driving our classics in decades to come, from massive petrol tax to banning their use in cities. See how taxes have surged on tobacco? Pollies have the power to force us to quit — be it smoking or driving old cars.

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