



## Innovative industry

WE'VE STILL GOT IT

Geoff Gwilym VACC CEO



I had a ripper evening recently at the Victorian Automotive Chamber of Commerce (VACC) open night.

VACC members, politicians, and industry figures embraced the opportunity to talk shop, network and tour the Chamber's impressive new abode in North Melbourne.

Lord Mayor of Melbourne Sally Capp addressed attendees and was among the captivated audience watching as ex- Holden Special Vehicles (HSV) designer Adam Dean Smith and clay modeller Peter Watson created a new car.

The night was great fun, but Victoria's peak automotive body also made a statement: automotive is evolving and it's an exciting time for the industry.

Now, HSV may have wrapped up, but we still have top-notch auto skills. Australia has a lot to offer and there are still opportunities to showcase our talent and entrepreneurial spirit.

And I am not the only one who thinks so. The Australian Government's Automotive Transformation Scheme aimed to encourage competitive investment, innovation and economic sustainability through financial assistance. Grants covered up to 15 per cent of the cost of eligible plant and equipment, and 50 per cent of eligible research and development investments.

The initiative closed recently but we need more of this type of thinking.

Such support bolsters the industry as Australia transitions to a lower emissions future.

Think about it. Maybe Australia could become a world leader in creating affordable and scalable low-emissions technology.

Investment will help Australians grow their businesses and throws support behind innovators.

Both aspects are key ingredients for a thriving economy.

Thoughts?

Prepared by Victorian Automotive Chamber of Commerce



# PLUG-IN BABY

[ **ROADSIDE ASSIST** ]

### IAIN CURRY GETS ANSWERS

WRITE TO MOTORING AT [CARS@NEWS.COM.AU](mailto:CARS@NEWS.COM.AU) OR PO BOX 2808, GPO SYDNEY, 2001

**Do you know when the new electric Fiat 500 Convertible will be available in Australia, and its cost?**

**John Dobinson, email**  
Stellantis Australia recently confirmed we'd receive the Fiat 500e electric city car "in the first half of 2023." No word if we'll get the convertible as well as hatchback, but you'd think there's a sound business case for both. Pricing? Not announced. Judging by its cost overseas I'd suggest a little less than \$50,000 is a fair bet, making it one of the cheapest EVs available. It's tiny but it's a gorgeous looking thing.

### GREED IS GOOD

**RAM's new TRX has a 523kW supercharged V8 and costs \$200,000. It may be useful if you want to tow a house, but who buys these big boys' toys and why?**

**Peter Penglis, email**  
Because it's the fastest and most powerful truck available. Much like buying the fastest supercar, bragging rights are a huge motivator for some. Who buys them? Interestingly, our local doctor has. His reason? He says it's his last chance to buy a mad performance vehicle before he settles into a life of electric vehicles. He already owns an EV to offset the 17.5L/100km ills committed with his RAM. I drove his TRX and it's nonsensical, ludicrous and disgraceful... and I absolutely loved it.

### DOUBLE DIPPING

**I own a plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV) and as it's registered in Victoria I'm required to pay a distance-based road user charge each year. The current charge is 2.1c/km for PHEVs and 2.6c/km for EVs, and while I understand the government's rationale for this charge, the amounts are unfair and inappropriate for PHEVs. The car can't differentiate on the odometer how many kilometres were travelled using electric or petrol, so it feels I'm**

**paying road tax twice as well as higher electricity costs. It's unfair and a deterrent to those trying to help the environment.**

**Gail Farmer, Traralgon, Vic**  
You're spot on. Governments need to collect tax from road users - we understand that - and in lieu of EV drivers paying duty on petrol or diesel, this road use charge is a method. The rest of the world has seen fit to delay such charges to attract more buyers into EVs, but not some Australian states. South Australia's new Labor government is moving to repeal its EV mileage charge, while NSW and WA are now delaying until 2027 or until EVs make up 30 per cent of the new-car market. Victoria is proving the stubborn state. At the very least, a smarter approach better tailored to PHEV owners is needed. Disincentivising PHEVs and EVs makes Australia a global laughing stock.

### TAKE CONTROL

**I have a 2021 Isuzu MU-X auto and plan to start using it to tow our caravan. My mechanic said I should tow with the gearbox in manual mode. The dealership said no, use auto mode. A guy with the same MU-X and a caravan told me he uses auto on flats and manual on the hills. What do you advise because I'm bloody confused?**

**Jeff Wilson, email**  
I'm not surprised the dealer's line is leave it in D and let the transmission sort it out, so I contacted David Wilson at Adventure 4WD driver training. "If you leave it in auto you'll have moments, like gradients, when it'll hunt between 4th, 5th and 6th gears," he said. "It's smarter to go into manual on gradients, get into 4th gear and let your speed drop rather than over-revving." Wilson also suggested fitting a transmission cooler if you're doing lots of towing, and have the oil serviced more regularly as it'll be working hard.

### YOUR EVERY MOVE?

**You recommended a BMW owner fit a dashcam device to obtain evidence should he be reversed into again. Shouldn't manufacturers be incorporating them as factory fit? Why not use one of the many cameras already on modern vehicles? The**



### DRINKING PROBLEM

**I read with interest you saying a Toyota RAV4 Cruiser Hybrid uses 4.7L/100km. I own one and am a very careful, light-footed driver and my consumption is 6.6L/100km over 3500km. I'm constantly amazed by manufacturer claims, why don't they publish real-world figures?**

**Geoffrey Richardson, email**  
We always take "official" economy figures with a pinch of salt, even though current testing is far more real world than a few years ago. I can only report as I find and Toyota's current hybrids consistently score very close to quoted figures, which is rarely the case in other cars. My RAV4 Cruiser Hybrid test saw 5.3L/100km combined and 5.4L/100km when highway cruising. Your numbers do seem a bit high. The weight of two or three passengers will have an impact and if you're using E10 fuel, try normal unleaded or even 95 to see if this improves things. Check tyre pressures too.

**public and insurance industry would benefit greatly.**

**Michel Boucher, email**  
It's a tough one. Do we really want our cars recording our every move? It feels acceptable if we're in control, such as fitting our own aftermarket dashcams, but if it's built-in who gets to see, operate and have access to footage? Car companies? Governments? Police? You see how Big Brother it may get. Car companies fitting a USB port for an aftermarket dashcam beside the rear view mirror is a smart move - Ford has in its Ranger and Everest.

### MORE THAN DISHES

**Re: cleaning alloy wheels, I've found good old Palmolive dishwashing liquid and a quality car washing brush easily does the job. It works wonders.**

**Peter Mackay, email**  
The old methods - and a bit of elbow grease - are often the best.

### EURO BASHING

**Re: cleaning alloy wheels, in my experience there's only one method of preventing brake dust build-up on alloy wheels and that's to avoid owning European-made cars.**

**Ross Finocchiaro, email**  
With your wonderful Italian surname, please forgive me for saying the 2002 Ferrari Enzo was the first car to use carbon ceramic brakes, which produce no brake dust at all. Otherwise, yes, Euro cars do tend to use softer brake pad materials, hence the front wheels often being coated in the caked-on black dust.

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