



## Endless opportunity

### AUTO SECTOR

Geoff Gwilym VACC CEO



Recently I was at a careers expo – it was National Careers Week after all, and VACC runs an apprenticeship scheme.

This wasn't just your average event, the focus was purely on the trades and tech disciplines. Two booming, cutting-edge industries.

Specifically, the event aimed to give young women an opportunity to connect with employers and key industry organisations.

Attendees experienced hands-on activities and learnt about well-paid careers in traditionally male-dominated industries.

It wasn't just full steam ahead at VACC's Accelerating Women into Automotive (AWIA) section, every stall was buzzing.

And why not?

It's an exciting time in automotive and, clearly, I'm not the only one who thinks so.

We are on the verge of an electric revolution and automotive is moving with the times. And with change comes great opportunity for all Australians.

Now, I am not saying automotive is for everyone. That is why places like VACC develop programs like AWIA – so curious students can give it a test drive first.

AWIA is a venture from VACC, the Victorian Department of Education and Training, and Women in Automotive, that supports young females interested in the industry.

Over four weeks, participants receive coaching at a registered training provider and experience interesting and varied work placements. If they decide it's a good fit, facilitators help them secure an apprenticeship and provide ongoing support.

Automotive can really take people places. I started out as a body making apprentice before switching gears to eventually become an industry body CEO.

So, if automotive piques your interest – come and give it a try.

Prepared by Victorian Automotive Chamber of Commerce



## ROADSIDE ASSIST

# TIME TO DOWNSIZE



I own a Hyundai ix35 but want a smaller SUV or a hatchback. I tested a Hyundai i30 but as I'm tall, found it difficult to get in and out. Is there something in between?

Sue Jones, email

You need a small hatchback with higher ride height. Ford's Focus Active owned this niche, but poor sales saw this 34mm-raised Focus pulled from sale last year. Low kilometre 2020 versions can be had for less than \$30,000 and it's a cracking car. For something new, a city SUV is your best fit. The Mazda CX-3's an enduring favourite – lovely to drive but very small inside. The Toyota Yaris Cross and Ford Puma are decent drives too but their cabins don't reflect their high prices. I'd favour the slightly larger Hyundai Kona or, if you don't mind a waiting list, the Skoda Kamiq.

### NOT GOOD VIBRATIONS

Our much-loved 2013 Honda CR-V has a shudder at around 40-50km/h, coming from the gearbox or differential. I've researched the problem and it appears common. Do you know a fix? Has Honda issued a recall for it?

Rex Blundell, email

It'd need to be properly diagnosed by a mechanic, but your generation CR-V's shudder under light load is oft reported by owners. There's been no recall for it. Honda USA released a service bulletin for the vibration/judder in 2017, advising service centres to update the auto transmission's software and replace its fluid to try to remedy it. It's a quick, straightforward job; a Honda Centre or Japanese car specialist are your best bet. If this doesn't work, you may have to replace the torque converter, which is a substantial job.

### BRAND LOYALTY

I want to update my 2010 Toyota Corolla with a new petrol hybrid version. I went to Kia and Hyundai to compare but their hatchbacks have no hybrid options. Why does Toyota have a hybrid hatchback but rivals don't? Are they worth the extra money?

Jenny Sinclair, email

Toyota's the only game in town for a brilliantly efficient "series-parallel" hybrid small car. There's the Mazda3 G20e mild hybrid, but its 6.0L/100km economy makes it a petrolaholic compared to the Corolla Hybrid's 4.2L/100km. As petrol/diesel small cars are quite economical there's not the

### IAIN CURRY GETS ANSWERS

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demand for hybrid versions, unlike thirstier SUVs. Is a hybrid Corolla worth it? I'd get one. Most have a \$2000 premium over petrol equivalents, but urban fuel economy drops from 7.5L/100km to only 4.0L/100km. They'll have strong resale too.

### YOU'RE THE EXCEPTION

I want to replace my 2009 Holden Commodore with a Toyota Camry. My average annual kilometres are about 3500km, so would it be better to get the hybrid or normal petrol Camry?

Len Mansfield, email

You're one of the rare cases where I'd suggest the four-cylinder petrol, not the hybrid. With your low mileage, the hybrid's \$2500 premium won't be paid off in fuel savings for a very long time. Combined economy is 6.8L/100km for the petrol and 4.2L/100km for the hybrid. The hybrid's a slightly better drive and resale will be better, but the normal Camry Ascent at \$30,990 plus on-roads is a lot of car for the money.

### KEEP IT OFF-TRACK

David McCowen's Subaru WRX review seemed to focus on a track test drive. Only a fraction of people track their cars. I want his opinion on the CVT auto's performance when testing in normal conditions.

Ross S. Finocchiaro, Darwin

David responded: "If people want to stick it in Drive and trundle along to work the CVT might be sufficient. It's a good CVT, but isn't very "WRX". The CVT failed to impress on a spirited drive on winding roads, which is the sort of real world driving WRX owners might do. The auto WRX is an extra \$4000 over the manual; I'm not super convinced by that." There you have it. Buy a manual version. As all WRX owners should.

### TIME SENSOR-TIVE

My Mazda CX-9's passenger seat belt warning triggers even when the seat's empty. In February 2021 I alerted my Mazda dealer and was told it needed a replacement sensor. They



### DASHBOARD DISASTER

My daughter's 2013 Mazda3 has a dashboard gap developing above the instrument cluster. The vinyl is rising up. She's contacted Mazda Australia but has had no success in rectifying it. It appears Mazda recalled some earlier models and replaced the dash. A replacement would be around \$1100. What can she do?

Richard Healy, email

We approached Mazda Australia about this one too, but again, no comment. Mazda3 owners have suffered this dash drama in Australia and overseas but there's been no recall. In the US there's been a service bulletin for dashboards getting sticky, warping or generating a gap. Mazda US extended its warranty to 10 years for the issue, but no such luck here. Numerous Australian owners have been given goodwill assistance according to forums. Keep hassling Mazda Australia, at least to cover the cost of the new dashboard.

said they'd contact me when the part arrived. I never heard back. On my next service in February 2022 I was told it wasn't the sensor – they'd replaced one on another CX-9 and the problem wasn't fixed. The service manager said they were waiting on an answer from head office. To date, I've still not heard anything. I love the car but bad customer service for this issue and others has me reconsidering where I'll service in future.

Jesse Gibson, email

I'd take your business elsewhere immediately. The service centre's lack of willingness to address the sensor problem is a big issue, not least from a safety perspective. We approached Mazda Australia for comment but – unlike every other manufacturer we deal with – it refuses to comment on individual cases.

### NOT THE MESSIAH

Electric vehicles are not the future. To run a Tesla Model S requires 8960 "C" cell size batteries. Transitioning to an EV requires six times the dirty sulphur mining to extract the 77kg of minerals required for one vehicle. This mining produces acid rain which contaminates the crops we eat and damages rivers, lakes, bushland, native forest and wildlife. People must enlighten themselves.

Paul Anastasios, email

I can't vouch for your figures, but you're right, the environmental impact of lithium (and other) mining must be considered. Electric cars are far from zero emission when "well to wheel" analysis is applied, including extraction, processing and distribution. The electricity source (coal-fired power station?) is also key. There's no perfect answer, but surely it's a preferable alternative to burning fossil fuels forever, if only for the better air quality in our cities?

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