



Sellers beware

COVID SMART THIEVES

Geoff Gwilym VACC CEO



The media asked me to share my thoughts on a recent car theft. A private seller had allowed someone to test drive their \$50,000 vehicle, and the 'buyer' decided to just keep driving.

Before you ask, the vehicle the supposed buyer arrived in – and left outside the seller's driveway – was stolen. A great way to lull a seller into a false sense of security is to leave behind something valuable.

Not surprisingly, the thief insisted on driving the car alone and the vehicle owner, perhaps with Covid safe social distancing in mind, handed over the keys.

Given the circumstances, the owner's insurance company has now refused cover and they are forced to rely on images captured by their home security system to track down the crook.

It's likely the car model, year and colour were perfect for a rebirth of a similar vehicle, for part sales or to ship overseas.

We call this 'theft to order' and private sellers are vulnerable.

So, don't let anyone take a test drive without you being in the passenger seat.

This isn't just to ensure the 'buyer' won't flee. It guarantees their mates aren't hopping in around the corner to take your motor for the biggest spin of its life. Remember Ferris Bueller?

My advice? Use a licensed motor car trader (LMCT) as they are required to meet regulatory criteria in order to trade.

LMCTs check a car has a clear title, hasn't been rebirthed or has security registered against it, and you also benefit from a cooling-off period.

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ROADSIDE ASSIST



FORGOTTEN BRIT

Re: Alfa Romeo Giulia rivals, you said the BMW 3 Series and Mercedes C-Class were "probably the better choice" but once again fail to cite the Jaguar XE as an alternative in this category. Are you biased against Jaguars or simply can't see beyond certain German products?

Jerry Scott, email

Far from it. When I tested the XE I lauded its handling, engine and style, but did grumble about its small rear seats and boot. I listed the 3 Series and C-Class as they're familiar benchmarks. I could also say the Audi A4, Lexus IS300, Volvo S60 and Genesis G70 – there are no duffers in the prestige mid-size sedan class. The Jag XE's similar to the Alfa Giulia. A great sedan that sells in too-few numbers thanks to our silly obsession with SUVs.

FROZEN SCREEN

My parents' 2017 VW Golf 7.5's infotainment screen has gone blank. It's out of the three-year warranty. The dealer contacted VW's head office and they've taken no responsibility. He was quoted \$4250 for a replacement. On many internet forums I see this is a commonly reported problem. Surely VW should pay the cost of what appears to be an ongoing production issue?

Neale Johnston, email

That's a frightening quote for an infotainment screen. A Volkswagen spokesman said the claim form for your problem was incorrectly submitted. "We've contacted the customer and the matter is being resolved at no cost to him," he said. A great outcome for your parents and a lesson for everyone to pursue these matters. Frozen or unresponsive screens are a common owner complaint for this model. I have one and it's happened to me. I did a hard reset by holding the power button for 10 seconds, which appears to have remedied it.

STOCK SHORTAGES

I can't believe I'm feeling sorry for new car dealers. I've tried buying a new Mitsubishi Pajero Sport at Brisbane dealers, but there's no stock until April 2022. They have pages of clients waiting for cars. I then aimed for an Isuzu MU-X. Same deal. No stock until April.

IAIN CURRY GETS ANSWERS

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

How will dealers survive?

Glen Stenner, email

Don't shed too many tears Glen. Many dealers have limited floor stock, but they're still selling cars. They're just going straight to customers on dealer waiting lists. Year-to-date sales aren't far off 2018's record high, and new car prices have surged. Most dealers are coping just fine. Get a deposit down on the car you want now. You may get lucky and jump the queue if there are cancelled orders or if stock arrives sooner.

MOVING UP

My wife wants to replace her 45,000km 2016 Toyota Corolla Ascent Sport for an SUV so she can sit higher. We're thinking a Suzuki Vitara Turbo, Mitsubishi ASX Exceed or Haval Jolion Ultra. What could we get for the Corolla?

Stephen Harrington, email

List your Corolla for a little less than \$20,000 and it should sell quickly. Used prices are daft at the moment and a low-kilometre Corolla will command a premium. As for your SUV picks, the Mitsubishi ASX is an old model but has a high ride height, strong features and a 10-year warranty.

They're sold out now, so you're in for a long wait. The Suzuki could work well, but I'd favour a Kia Seltos Sport at \$31,790 drive away. Its size should suit, it's a better drive than those on your list and has a seven-year warranty. Again, supply will be an issue, though.

PRESSURE TEST

Re: under pressure, the query on tyre pressures makes me wonder how accurate service station tyre inflation pumps are?

David Whitney, email

It depends on how they're used and maintained. I've seen many damaged ones. I bought a good quality glovebox tyre gauge for about \$30 from an auto store. Use one to corroborate the service station's readout.

FREQUENT VISITOR

My 2020 Honda Jazz's handbook says recommended services are every 10,000km or 12 months. It then says this doesn't apply in Australia and that services are every six months. I've had the car 18 months and been unable to do the first service due to Covid-19.

David Isherwood, email

Not servicing on schedule jeopardises your car's factory warranty. You must speak to Honda Australia about your extenuating circumstances (lockdown) and ensure your warranty remains intact. For Hondas bought after July 1, 2021, services intervals are every 12 months. Older generation Hondas such as your Jazz need them every six months. An independent mechanic can logbook service your car if Honda is fully booked post-lockdown.

SHORT-TERM THINKING

I read about generous car warranties such as Kia's seven years and Mitsubishi's ten years, but my Mercedes GLC 250's one is about to end after three years. I've had my fair share of problems with the car, all covered under warranty, but with it ending I'm concerned. I can't understand why cheaper manufacturers have generous warranties backing their products but some luxury brands don't?

Wayne Marshall, email

We can't understand either and none have provided an adequate explanation, other than "it's not something our customers are asking for". Mercedes moved to five years in 2020, but other prestige makers persist with sub-par coverage. They include Alfa Romeo, Audi, Bentley, BMW, Mini and Porsche.



FOUR-DOOR FAN

Can you recommend the best new sedan? Hyundai i30, Kia Cerato, Toyota Corolla or something else?

John Maver, email

Sedans are about as popular as lockdowns at the moment, but they're all good cars so test each on your list. For an excellent drive, great economy and rock bottom service costs, go a Corolla Hybrid. The best looker – to my eyes anyway – is the i30 Sedan. It's well equipped in \$25,190 Active guise, but its engine lacks verve. The Cerato sedan's just been updated and the Sport+ with comprehensive safety and heated leather seats looks good buying at \$31,690 drive-away. It has the longest warranty too. A Mazda3 sedan will out-style all inside and out, so add it to your list.

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