



Local talent

TIME TO
LOOK CLOSER
TO HOME



Geoff Gwilym VACC CEO

COVID-19 has thrown a curve ball at everybody, and business owners have been hit hard.

There are real challenges for the auto industry, particularly in skill supply.

Traditionally, the workforce of domestic labour and local apprentices in automotive businesses have been bolstered by international labour where there has been a gap.

Australia used to import about 160,000-190,000 workers per year, many of them skilled automotive technicians. This worked well in the past, but there is a problem — that number now sits at zero.

We must adapt accordingly to this new world and fill the jobs that are available.

So, with many people needing employment, it makes sense to turn our attention to the domestic workforce for our labour needs.

Basically, more apprentices need to be put on across all industries.

And for many young people, apprenticeships are a fantastic career choice. Trade apprentices get paid while they learn and graduate with transferable skills that are at little risk of becoming obsolete.

That's a great thing to rely upon, especially in times like these.

Australia's skill shortage is a problem that everybody can help mend. Business owners can liaise with local schools and apprentice networks, including VACC Automotive Apprenticeships, in a bid to employ and foster an apprentice. Parents and teachers can also help by promoting trades to young people.

For the record, all apprenticeships have a job entry point and a job destination. It's the best training model in the world. Let's embrace it.

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

Share your thoughts
ceo@vacc.com.au



BILL SHOCK

IAIN CURRY GETS ANSWERS

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

Last December I signed a contract to buy a new Suzuki Jimny, knowing there was a six-month waiting list. Recently the dealer told me the arrival date was June 20, but I was confronted with a manufacturer's price increase of \$1500 effective for post-March 1 deliveries. I've bought several vehicles before with long wait times and there's never been a price increase between contract and delivery. My enthusiasm for the Suzuki brand has dampened.

Mark Toll, email

Nasty bill. The sales manager said any manufacturer or government (rego, etc.) price increases are passed on to the buyer, but you can bet if the Jimny wasn't so in demand they'd have swallowed such costs. You are entitled to a full refund. Suzuki Queensland told me: "Given the extended delays for Jimny, just like any manufacturer, distributor or retailer in any industry, we cannot guarantee the recommended retail price will remain the same indefinitely. We understand the frustration of not only ordering a vehicle with such a long waiting period, but also the uncertainty of its actual price. Accordingly, we provide that the price will be available approximately three months before estimated delivery date."

TRADE DEAL

I'm looking to buy a new car if the dealer gives me a trade-in price for my old car. Can I ask for a trade-in price they'll stick to if the new model isn't delivered for three months? How can I guarantee this?

Paul Holmes, email

Sign a contract for a guaranteed trade-in price. The dealer may limit how many extra kilometres you can put on your old car, and insist the car remains in the same condition. But I wouldn't trade in

unless you really, really have to. The used-car market is so strong right now that if you price your used car competitively it should go in no time for a lot more than the dealer offers you.

SIMPLE SWAP

Re: cabin air/pollen filters, why are people being ripped off getting dealers to fit OEM ones? You can buy a known brand replacement instead and fit one yourself in five minutes after looking it up on YouTube. They cost about \$30 versus an OEM's \$150.

Peter Lion, email

I agree. They're normally easily accessed behind your glove box and usually a doddle to change. Some owner manuals give instructions how to do it, but if not, there'll be someone out there who has posted an online video of the job.

CARPET CHOICE

I've DIY constructed a storage box to fit snugly in my hatchback's boot. To finish it off I'd like to cover the lid with something similar to the black carpet in my car. Can I buy a metre of "car carpet"?

Ray Chapman, email

You could get easily available marine carpet, but for a more cohesive finish you can buy automotive grade cut pile carpet from Australian suppliers. It's typically used to cover wheel arches or speaker boxes, is flexible and can be applied with spray adhesive. A quick Google search ("automotive carpet") shows retailers charge about \$35 for a 1m by 2m section, available in various colours.

DARWIN AWARD

You suggested last week not all car dealers behave badly. In my 43 years of buying cars and having them serviced at dealers, the only ethical one I found was the previous owners of Darwin Honda. Do you really know others that exist?

Ross F, email

I left \$4.50 in loose change in my car's cup holder when it was last serviced. On collection, it was all still there! Now you and I both know at least one



My four-year-old Mazda BT-50's leather seat sides are starting to tear. The dealer says it's wear and tear, Mazda Australia doesn't want to know and the ACCC are useless and tell me to get legal advice. Last Mazda I buy.

Jate Soriero, email

We contacted Mazda but it is the only manufacturer we deal with that consistently refuses to comment on matters like this. Most would agree that's too young a vehicle to have such damage. If the tear is only starting, act quickly and find a trusted seat upholsterer.

honest car dealer. Seriously though, there are many out there. It's just a shame the dishonest ones drag the industry down.

WEARING DOWN

The steering wheel on my mum's 130,000km 2013 Suzuki Alto is deteriorating alarmingly. The dealership said it's wear and tear and costs \$567 to fit a new one. I escalated this with Suzuki Australia and was told my mum must have some cream on her hands that has caused the issue. I think it's clearly a manufacturing defect. Funds are tight and I think the charge is unacceptable.

Tim McCartney, email

Altos are typically reliable, frugal little things, but they were built to a budget. That steering wheel material isn't high quality, and I see similar aged Altos in the classifieds with steering wheel damage, but not to the extent of your mum's. It'd be near impossible to prove or disprove if hand cream was the main cause. Altos are at an age when many are being scrapped. I've found a very good condition Alto steering wheel at a wreckers for \$77 postage included, and a local mechanic could hopefully swap it for under \$100, saving you a few hundred dollars. This would look better than an auto store's slide-on steering wheel cover, although that's also an option.

GOT THE HUMP

Re: your reader with premature suspension damage, I put this down to the current craze of installing anti-speed humps instead of enforcing the speed limit. Decent motorists face these Neanderthal devices while my local police station has a dozen police cars parked out front, doing nothing. Speed legislation is useless if not enforced.

Nigel Parish, email

Speed humps cause more pollution as drivers slow down then speed up. They are also distracting, they damage cars and they force emergency vehicles to slow down (plus the poor patient gets a jolt). If you've watched drivers swerve to avoid speed humps it's clear they're not at all safe, though most accept they do slow cars down.

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