

ADVERTISING FEATURE



Haulin' class

TOWING CAN BE GREAT FUN, AS LONG AS YOU'RE PREPARED



Geoff Gwilym VACC CEO

Holiday time. For many motorists it means cruising the roads and highways with a caravan, boat or trailer in tow. Its economical and fun. But you need to know what you're doing to have a stress-free trip.

First up, read your owners' manual to find your vehicle's towing capacity. Don't go over the limit.

Make sure the tow-ball and trailer-hitch fit well. Check the lights and indicators work once you've connected the light cable from the caravan/trailer to your vehicle.

After you've packed your caravan/trailer, check the load to ensure there is nothing overhanging — this is dangerous and could see you copping a fine. Cover the load with a secure tarp if you're towing a trailer.

Finally, check your vehicle and caravan/trailer tyres to ensure they're all at the recommended pressures.

Pay attention to weather conditions when on the road — particularly strong winds and rain — and adjust your driving style accordingly. Pull over and take a break if conditions are poor.

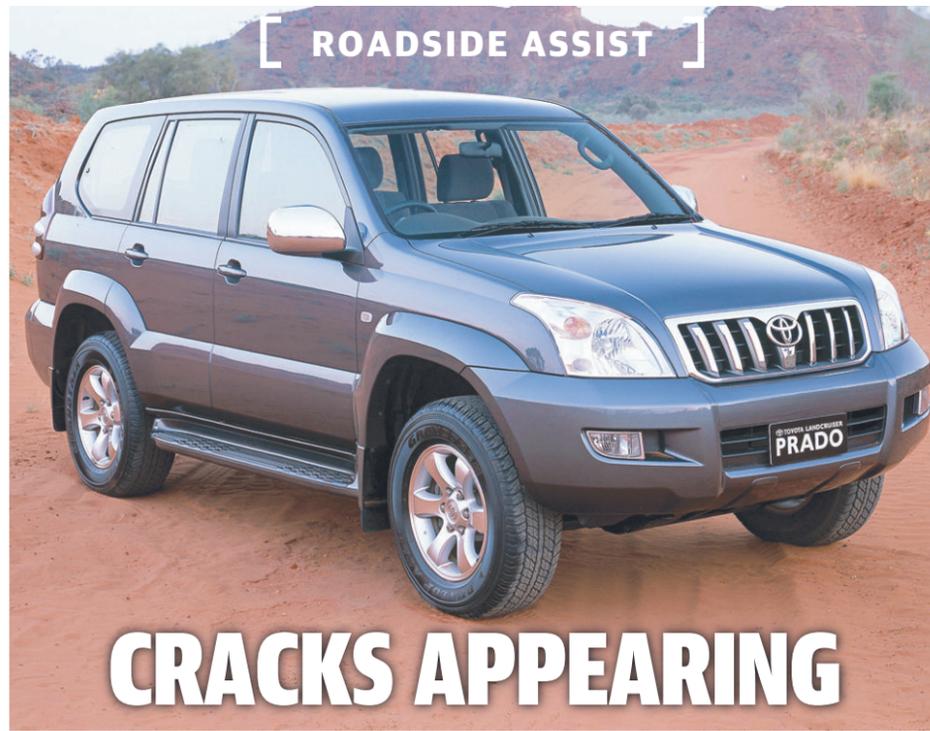
Monitor vehicles ahead and allow additional room to compensate for extra braking and acceleration times. Choose a lower gear when descending hills to save the brakes.

Reversing a trailer into position can be hard. It's best to begin with the trailer and vehicle in a straight line then slowly ease back. Remember, if you need to move the trailer to the left then you need to turn right. It takes practice. Do that before you leave home, not when you arrive at the caravan park and have an audience watching.

Most importantly, drive safely.

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

Share your thoughts
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IAIN CURRY GETS ANSWERS

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

My 2003 Toyota Prado is in otherwise perfect condition but its dashboard is totally cracked. Toyota has brushed off the problem saying it must have been parked in the sun. Looking at other Prados of this era I see it's a common problem. Is this a manufacturing fault or do I have to suck it up and pay thousands for a complete dash replacement?

Gary McNeil, email

You're right, your generation Prado has well documented dash cracking issues. Sadly, Australia's harsh sunshine is the cause, and it's seen across many car brands. Your Prado is 18 years old so we can't expect any help from Toyota. You can source a used dashboard, but I've been told dash replacements are not only expensive but often lead to incurable, annoying squeaks and rattles. Re-skinning is an option, but not cheap. The dash in my 1989 Peugeot also looks like a dried up river bed, so I've fitted a dashboard mat. You can buy them for about \$50 from auto stores, but they won't cover the cracks on the lower parts of your dash.

FINE PRINT FRUSTRATION

I recently ordered a Kia Cerato GT and on checking the seven-year warranty's fine print, was shocked and disappointed to learn Kia only covers its audio system for three years. Modern vehicles have fully integrated sound systems that are not easily replaced. Dealers should tell customers of warranty exclusions rather than hiding them in fine print.

Craig McDougall, email

I agree. Transparency is required. While Kia has a seven-year warranty and sister company Hyundai five years, both give only a three-year audio warranty. As you note, these are not "bumper to bumper" warranties, as many buyers expect. The usual reason given is they use third-party

providers for audio systems. In audio land, three years is a standard warranty. However, I've heard of some brands — Kia included — doing goodwill fixes for loyal customers outside of warranty.

TIME TO SCRAP?

My wife wants me to get rid of my Holden VT Commodore wagon. She reckons it should be sold for scrap. It's done 170,000km, runs well and has only minor damage. Is it worth trying to sell? What's a fair price?

Bob Green, email

Nostalgic buyers seem to want any Holden these days, so let the market decide. It's low mileage, wagons are always in demand and if you get a roadworthy certificate, \$3-4000 is attainable. There are websites where you can list it for free and see what interest you get. Used cars are in huge demand right now so it's a good time to sell.

RARE SPARES

I need a new differential for my 1993 Mitsubishi commercial van. My mechanic says he's tried all the sources he knows but they tell him they have no spares for vehicles before 2000. Do you know any sources that could help?

Alan Baker, email

I'm not sure your mechanic's tried that hard. If you simply type "Mitsubishi Express differential spare parts" into Google, options come up. You can do the same on eBay and Gumtree, and numerous places list as wrecking your type of van. Give each a call with your VIN and they'll be able to check the part is suitable and can post it to your mechanic for fitting. It will be a used part, so check the seller's warranty terms.



LONG LIVE THE WAGON

Re Mazda fuel consumption, I have a 2017 Mazda6 wagon. After a 400km trip to Albany I compared economy with a chap driving the same age Mazda CX-5 with same 2.5-litre engine. I averaged 7L/100km, he did 10L/100km. Weight and wind resistance didn't help him, so I don't understand why people pick the CX-5 over a Mazda6 wagon? Mine is similarly priced, has more interior space — except headroom — and is much more economical.

Peter Tripoli, email

The default pick for so many these days is SUV. Nothing else matters. You're right, I find wagons such as your Mazda6 more practical, more economical and better to drive. If higher ride height and ease of entry and exit are non-negotiable the CX-5's a good choice. Otherwise, it's a wagon every time for me.

NASTY BUMPS

Re annoying speed humps, our local council placed them wide enough apart so I can negotiate my Mitsubishi Lancer through without touching the sides. Hence the hump without the bump.

Norm Warren, email

Ah, the speed hump slalom. Those gaps are to help emergency vehicles (with wider axles) by not forcing them to slow down. Of course, car drivers exploit this by swerving through them to avoid the bump. All a bit comical, isn't it?

COVID VICTIM

Re Wearing Down, we just had our 2016 Forester's steering wheel replaced free of charge, out of warranty, by Subaru. Its leather was badly deteriorating. After some research I suspect the increased use of hand sanitiser could be related and we'll see more such issues.

Nick Page, email

Interesting. Your steering wheel may be COVID safe, but yes, alcohol-based hand sanitisers and steering wheel leather's protective top coat aren't happy bedfellows. Invest in a good leather cleaner or leather wipes for these hand sanitiser times. Or, better still, I think it's time driving gloves made a comeback.



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Motoring

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