



Two-wheeler life

MOTORISTS ARE MAKING THE MOVE



Geoff Gwilym VACC CEO

Working in the automotive industry, I rely heavily on data to inform decision-making. The 2020 motorcycle sales figures published by the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries, for example, clearly show that motorists have embraced two wheels.

I'm not surprised. With many Victorians still choosing to hit the road in private vehicles, motorcycle sales spiked in COVID-affected 2020. New-bike sales were up 22.1 per cent compared to 2019.

And, while it's reassuring to see a sector performing well — particularly during such a difficult time — we must keep our eyes on the 2021 road ahead.

Clearly, motorcycles have become an attractive option — for commuting and recreational use. But it's not black and white. While off-highway vehicles and road bikes were up 38.8 per cent and 9.2 per cent respectively, scooter sales slumped by 11 per cent.

As a result, industry has and will continue to adapt to demand, ensuring stock and customer service offerings align with consumer values.

There's a place for policy here too. Motorcycles contribute to easing road and parking congestion, but there are barriers to getting a leg over.

The Federal Government should include motorcycles in its 2021-2030 Road Safety Strategy.

Junior licensing fees should go to encourage higher usage and, if the State Government is serious about Melbourne's grid-locked traffic, it should promote powered two-wheelers as part of the solution.

COVID-19 has impacted almost every aspect of life, and it's not over. Freedom and autonomy have never been more highly valued, and automotive will continue to cater accordingly. But governments need to come to the party too.

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

Share your thoughts
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IAIN CURRY GETS ANSWERS

WRITE TO MOTORING AT
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I've recently purchased a VW Amarok V6 and have seen lots of advice about installing an oil catch can. Are they a good idea?

Ryan Stirling, email

Popular question from ute owners. I spoke — on condition of anonymity — with an expert from a car company selling diesel utes. He said personally he would fit an aftermarket oil catch can. These trap oil vapours that would ultimately clog your engine intake, reducing efficiency and life. Will one void your warranty? That's a grey area. I struggle to see how something beneficial to the engine could ever be accused of causing problems, but some may find any excuse to reject a warranty claim. If you fit one, use a creditable company that will guarantee its work, and drain your catch can often.

KOREAN MENU

We're looking at buying our daughter her first car and are considering a Hyundai i30 or Kia Rio. Would you suggest one over the other?

Dave High, email

Both great choices, and both have recently been gifted improved styling and equipment. It really comes down to your budget and required space. The i30 is more grown up inside, and is the bigger car, so is preferable if your daughter will regularly have rear seat passengers. The entry-level model is \$25,490 drive-away (\$2000 more with auto), but the Rio's a good whack cheaper thanks to Kia's drive-away offers, plus its seven-year warranty trumps Hyundai's five. I'd insist on the Rio Sport grade for advanced safety gear. It's \$21,490 (manual) or \$22,490 (auto) drive-away. The Rio's more economical (5.6L/100km vs 7.3L/100km), but the i30 has way more performance — 120kW versus the Kia's 74kW. Ask both dealers for an extended test drive (ideally overnight) before making a final decision.

OVER-PRICED BOXES?

Can you explain the high price of commercial

vans such as the Toyota HiAce, VW Transporter, Mercedes Vito, etc? Most start over \$40,000 and climb steeply. For that you get a shell, two or three seats (not leather), basic entertainment, no technology and steel wheels. A similarly priced car gets the works. Please don't tell me there's more metal used as one dealer did.

Adam Wood, email

Good question. I've seen huge leaps in commercial van safety and features in recent years, better justifying their price. The Toyota HiAce — runaway market leader — was all-new for 2019 and all now have advanced Toyota Safety Sense driver assistance and Apple CarPlay/Android Auto, mirroring its car range. A facelifted Mercedes-Benz Vito's just launched too, so I put your question to Benz's Blake Vincent. He said expense came from the heavy-duty chassis and high strength steels needed for the payload and expected long work life, 5.5 million testing kilometres globally, a fully galvanised body and seam sealing to protect against penetrating moisture. I know some van cabins and steel wheels look cheap, but positively, are hard wearing and cheap to replace.

TOO-GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Re. Jim Stanfield's complaint about his Toyota RAV4's shock absorbers failing at 130,000km, these are a hydraulic unit and at every stroke there is wear. Over that distance the shocks would have operated over millions of strokes. Around the 80,000km mark they start to deteriorate. I worked in the parts industry for 48 years and lost count of people complaining about components wearing out. Cars are made of moving components and worn items ultimately need replacing.

Kevin Larkin, email

Kevin, you and I could share stories over a beer. I've heard complaints about rust on a 23-year-old car, tyres on heavy SUVs wearing out after 'only' 60,000km and how it's unacceptable a car company wouldn't replace a blown engine despite it not having had an oil change in four years!

GOING BIG

I have a growing family and am looking for a



I'm 13, my mum has four kids including me and she says she wants an SUV like a Toyota Fortuner. What do you recommend?

Carcreeps18, email

First, help your mum out with some chores. She sounds busy. If you aren't going off-roading, you don't need the HiLux-based Fortuner. The ride is too bouncy around town. I'd recommend on-road specific seven-seaters such as a Hyundai Santa Fe, Kia Sorento, VW Tiguan Allspace, Mitsubishi Outlander or Mazda CX-9. If budget allows (they're from \$51,290 drive away) the Sorento is my class leader. If your weekends are spent off-roading, best value is Mitsubishi's Pajero Sport, or wait a few months for the all-new Isuzu MU-X — it should follow the brand's new D-Max ute in being well received and in demand.

car bigger than my Hyundai Accent.

Suggestions for between \$20-30,000?

Riley Cowling, email

I'm in the same boat as you. For our ever-growing two kids I'm considering the Skoda Octavia wagon due around May. It should start about \$30,000, I hope. Huge boot space, decent engine, good safety and practical features. A hatchback Kia Cerato Sport with safety pack's good value at \$25,990 on the road, or a Kia Seltos S SUV with safety pack is \$28,290 drive-away. Solid family offerings.

HOW'S THE VIEW?

Which small SUV has the highest seating position and best visibility from the Kia Seltos, Mitsubishi ASX, Nissan Qashqai, Suzuki Vitara and Skoda Kamiq? Also, which Suzuki Jimny is the best around-town daily driver, the new model or the previous one?

Craig Gent, email

On the Jimny front, neither would be my favoured daily drive pick — ride's bumpy, cabin's noisy and there's massive body roll. The new one probably edges it. Both are easy to manoeuvre, but the new Jimny smashes the old one for looks and desirability — which is why the wait list is so long. Checking my road test notes, from your list the Seltos and ASX were the only ones I praised for decent driver visibility due to a higher seat position. Seltos is the better buy.

POOR VIEW

The infotainment screen in my Toyota Kluger has terrible glare in sunlight. Sometimes I can't see the screen when reversing. I was thinking of applying some anti-glare tint?

Mark Queenan, email

Other Kluger owners have reported the same. I've heard of success with anti-glare screen protectors — 3M and NuShield in Australia offer a range of sizes. I've found polarised sunglasses can also help in some instances.

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