



Your car, your choice

DO YOU HAVE IT OR NOT?

Bruce McIntosh
TACC State Manager



Can you choose where to have your vehicle repaired in the event of an accident? I reckon I'm on safe ground in suggesting you don't know the answer.

Do you read your vehicle insurance Product Disclosure Statement (PDS) each year at renewal time? I bet you don't.

Can't blame you. An insurance PDS is hardly riveting reading, with plenty of fine print that's tedious to wade through. Insurers are good at making the detail hard to read and understand.

And yet, it's extremely important you know what you're paying for.

Having choice of repairer is a fundamental right. It's your vehicle. You are paying good money for your insurance policy. So, you should be allowed to have your vehicle repaired by the business of your choosing.

You may not have a strong opinion on who repairs your vehicle, and that's fine. But plenty of people do.

Some motorists have an ongoing relationship with a panel repair shop they rely on and trust – I know this is the case for many TACC member-businesses. Some people, particularly in regional areas, are passionate about supporting local businesses. And some owners of collectable and classic vehicles only want to take their pride and joy to a marque specialist.

All these are legitimate reasons to want choice of repairer.

So, when it comes to renewing your vehicle insurance cover, take the time to ask if you have choice of repairer. If you do not, go to an insurer who does offer it.

On our end, TACC is helping spread the word about choice of repairer, and running initiatives to educate and empower motorists. Visit yourcaryourchoice.com.au for more information. Knowledge is power after all.

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THE GRILLE
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ROADSIDE ASSIST



TIME TO DOWNSIZE

IAIN CURRY GETS ANSWERS

WRITE TO MOTORING AT
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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.

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.

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 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.

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

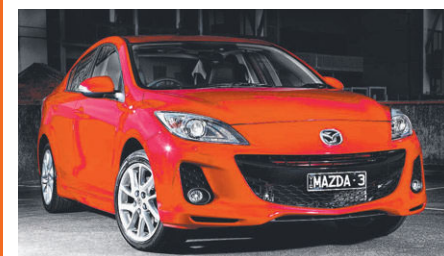
answer, but surely it's a preferable alternative to burning fossil fuels forever, if only for the better air quality in our cities?

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 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.



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.