

[**ROADSIDE ASSIST**]
WARPED VIEW

IAIN CURRY GETS ANSWERS

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

My 2017 Renault Koleos suffers vibration and knocking from the rear when braking. The Renault dealer diagnosed warped rear brake rotors, explaining this happens due to temperature change when you drive through puddles or when raining. Sounds rubbish to me, more like the car's not suitable for everyday conditions after only 22,000km. It costs \$805 to fix and there's no warranty coverage. Gordon Schofield, email

There's no chance of a warranty fix on consumables such as brake rotors, sadly. The rotors aren't actually warped but have worn unevenly. I'd say it's more likely caused by brakes getting too hot when braking on a downhill stretch, the pads not being bedded in properly or the rotor not sitting properly with the wheel hub. See an independent brake specialist – it's possible your rotors can be machined and, failing that, aftermarket rotors should cost a lot less than at your dealer.

CHANGE FOR GOOD

It's often said to minimise overall costs of buying and running a car you should trade in after three years. Is this true of a typical mid-size SUV? My 2014 Honda CR-V runs well and I intend to keep it as long as possible. Expensive faults will occur eventually but I've saved money not buying a car after three years. Rob Lochran, email

Often said? Probably by car dealers wanting to sell you a new car every three years. It depends on circumstances and use but the biggest decrease in a car's value occurs during those first three years. If factory warranty's expired there's a chance of a massive bill should something like an engine or gearbox fail, so that's a sound reason to upgrade. Big advances in safety or fuel economy would compel me to update. Autonomous emergency braking, for example, wasn't common in 2014, but is in practically every new car today. I'd also be tempted by a modern hybrid if the bulk of my kilometres were in city traffic. A 2014 CR-V averages 7.7L-8.7L/100km, while a similar-sized Toyota RAV4 Hybrid claims just 4.7L/100km: big savings to be had there.

SLIPPERY SITUATION

I understand there are at least 900 Mercedes vehicles being eaten by snails on ships. Given these cars have been on the water since before Christmas, where does this leave customers who have cars on order? Should they be auctioned off as snail damaged goods? Martin Major, email

Snail sale. That's marketing gold, Martin. Mercedes-Benz Australia clarified: "The affected cars are not out on the water being eaten by snails ... and the snails themselves do not pose a threat to the vehicles." Heath snails – which are foreign to Australia – were detected on some Benzes when unloaded (in October 2019). The cars were placed in quarantine as they couldn't pass customs without treatment. The spokesman said: "Daimler elected not to subject the vehicles to chemical treatment and instead sent the shipment back to Europe to be cleaned and treated before redistribution." Customers affected were offered "solutions within the retail network" or, in plain English, different cars.

PERFORMANCE WANTED

I'm looking at downsizing from a V8 Holden Commodore to a smaller car with auto gearbox and some zip for about \$50,000. It needs to be able to use a tow ball-mounted bike rack. Ken Smith, email

That's a healthy budget, Ken, so there's much fun to be had. With Skoda's cycling links, you'd look the part with the Octavia RS 245 Wagon: about \$50K as they're doing free on-roads for model year 2019 cars. It has heaps of room for your cycling kit and the 180kW turbo four is good for 0-100km/h in 6.7 seconds. A 213kW VW Golf Wagon R is even more rewarding if you can manage \$58,990 on the road. I've not driven it yet but I hold great



warm/hot hatch hopes for the new \$44,690 Ford Focus ST. Prestige? Check the Mercedes A250 or Audi A1 40 TFSI for size.

IN TOO DEEP?

Why do we have right-hand drive cars? With Holden closing due to us not taking left-hand drive cars, wouldn't now be time to change? Can it be done? Prices would go down as factories wouldn't need to make a few cars just for us. Danny Eckers, email

We're not the only ones. Britain, Japan, India and South Africa also travel on the left in right-hand drive cars. As Britain drove on the left, its colonies, including Australia, did likewise. Sweden famously made the switch to driving on the right in 1967 to align with bordering countries. Interestingly, Samoa switched from driving on the right to the left to get access to cheaper imports from Australia and Japan. Should we switch? Australian drivers can barely merge into traffic successfully,

let alone deal with switching sides. Then there's all the traffic signs and road markings to change. Chaos. We're stuck as we are.

ON TOUR

I want a new SUV to drive around Australia – no towing and not many rough roads. A couple of recommendations, please, for my budget of \$50,000-\$60,000? Eddie Galizi, email

Toyota's RAV4 AWD Hybrid is comfortable and economical (4.7L/100km) but there's a waiting list to get one. There are lots of Toyota dealers around the country for servicing. I rate Subaru's Forester for long-distance comfort. Again, fuel bills will be cheaper if you go the new Hybrid version (from \$39,990). I don't reckon you need anything larger for your trip but if you do, consider a Kia Sorento, Skoda Kodiaq, Mazda CX-8/CX-9 or Hyundai Santa Fe – all are solid choices.

OUT WITH THE OLD

The radio head-unit in our 2013 Hyundai ix35 is playing up and we discovered online it's a common problem. The Hyundai dealer has quoted \$495 for a replacement and offered no help. We would not purchase a Hyundai in future as there seems to be no responsibility. Annette Hamilton, email

Sad your ownership has been soured but on the plus side you have the opportunity to get a far more modern head-unit in your Hyundai. Chat to an independent car audio specialist. You can buy a bang up to date unit with excellent Apple CarPlay/Android Auto connectivity for about the same as Hyundai's quote. Fitting will cost extra.



SCRAP VALUE

Re electric park brake replacements. On my 2007 Range Rover Sport, the brake unit has expired for the second time – replacement quote is more than \$2500. The car is worth about \$25,000, so the work quote is about 10 per cent of its value. How absurd. Stephen Vecchiet, email

Increasingly, we will be scrapping otherwise excellent cars due to the cost of complicated replacement parts. When an electric handbrake, LED light cluster, turbocharger or diesel particulate filter costs thousands to replace, it can make repair financially unviable. In addition, it's hardly eco-friendly.



Getting to grips with tyres

KNOWING YOUR RUBBER IS AS EASY AS READING THE SIGNS

Geoff Gwilym VACC CEO



Vehicle companies work closely with tyre manufacturers to create optimum vehicle performance. Tyres perform two very important roles, to support the weight of the vehicle, and to transmit drive and braking forces to the road.

Specified tyres for any given vehicle are listed on the 'tyre placard' usually fixed to the door pillar of most cars.

This placard specifies the tyre sizes fitted at the factory, and includes other information such as speed rating, recommended pressure and load carrying capacity.

A tyre's sidewall will typically feature four main pieces of information: the manufacturer's name, the tyre model name, the load and speed rating and the size. It might look like this: Michelin Pilot Sport 255/40 R21 102Y.

The 255 refers to the tyre's width (255mm); the number immediately after that refers to what's called the aspect ratio (in this case 40 means the tyre section is 40 per cent as high as it is wide); the letter 'R' refers to its radial ply construction and 21 refers to the wheel diameter of 21 inches. The 102 is the load index and Y is the speed rating (Y indicates 300km/h maximum).

Different tyres can be fitted, provided they meet the specified load carrying capacity, and do not vary by more than 15mm in overall diameter from the original.

Speed ratings on tyres are a physical measure of the maximum speed capable, and not a measure of roadholding ability.

In Victoria, and most other states, replacement tyres can have different speed ratings, provided they meet at least 'S', which equates to 180km/h.

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

Share your thoughts
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