

[ ROADSIDE ASSIST ]

## NO TRAILBLAZERS



## IAIN CURRY GETS ANSWERS

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

We bought a Holden Trailblazer from our local dealer and just after 60,000km the auto transmission seized and the vehicle stopped immediately. We were told the diesel pump in the fuel tank had failed and there wasn't a replacement part in the country and wouldn't be for a month, plus another couple of weeks' wait until it reached our country dealership. It's not right. They shouldn't sell a product if they don't have the parts on hand to fix it if something goes wrong.

Anthony Carpenter, Grenfell NSW

You're right, parts availability should have been better. Daniel Cotterill from Holden confirmed the part's wait time into Melbourne, and the 10 days to reach the rural dealer "given the time of year and location." Mr Cotterill said your order was given high priority and "freight was expedited and the part arrived on December 10th and was promptly dispatched to the dealer. It will still take some time but will be earlier than originally planned." Your wait is frustrating, but Holden acted correctly, sped up your parts order and gave you a courtesy vehicle. Even so, I believe you're looking to offload the Trailblazer due to your experience.

## CHEEKY CHARGES

Re They Don't Miss You, why are new car buyers charged for dealer delivery? It should be built into the cost, like when buying a fridge. What on earth does it include, and why does it vary between makes and dealers? Isn't it time buyers pushed back against this rip-off?

Don Page, email

Agreed, and if you don't like the charges, haggle. They're negotiable, unlike registration fees, which can't be budged. Dealer delivery isn't the cost of getting the car to a dealership, it's preparing the car for the customer to drive away, including removing protective materials from transporting, fluid and tyre checks, washing, fuelling (hopefully), fixing plates and all the paperwork. Should it cost the \$2000-\$3000 or more dealers charge? No. Why do some brands charge more? Because they think they can. Haggle the fees or buy driveaway specials.

## DRIVING LESSONS

Re the new VW Polo manual burnt clutch, you shouldn't need to change your driving style. I always downshift gears to slow rather than continually braking; I've never had manual clutch trouble since getting my licence in 1974. My late husband and I owned an auto transmission repair workshop for 23 years. I'd never buy an auto. Too much trouble!

Marilyn Irons, email

Re VW Polo burnt clutch, I've hired two brand new ones in Europe recently and found the hill-start assist so intrusive you had to slip the

clutch horrendously to get it to let go. Both cars had much worse clutches when they got back to the airport.

Justin Matthews, email

Interesting. Polos still use old-school manual handbrakes. Owners should master hill starts using it to save their clutch.

## FRENCH RELIABILITY?

I read with interest you drive a 1980s Peugeot. I'm a retired workshop owner and the most bombproof car I had was a 1974 Peugeot 504 seven-seat wagon. It was in the family for 25 years and apart from normal maintenance it didn't have a spanner on it. Only complaint was terrible brakes.

Ian Robinson, email

French cars and reliability, eh? Where did it all go wrong? No wonder those old 504s won numerous African rallies; they were practically indestructible. You'll be comforted to learn Peugeot brakes in the 1980s remained next to useless.

## NO TOW BLOW

I'm having difficulty finding a small SUV under 1800kg with auto gearbox that can be flat towed. We need an SUV for ease of entry and exit, and won't be off-roading. We'd only buy a manual as a last resort.

Colin Dyson, email

I've just bought a motorhome and want a new vehicle to flat tow behind. A Suzuki Grand Vitara was suggested but I've found out the new ones can't be flat towed. Apparently



even some manual vehicles need rear wheels off the ground.

Don Eaton, email

Flat towing is when the towed vehicle has four wheels on the road, all of which would be turning. Most modern, tech-filled auto gearbox-equipped cars can't be flat towed as lubrication won't reach the moving parts. Same for CVT gearboxes and a lot of manuals. Mazda told me you can't flat tow a CX-3 SUV, and Subaru likewise with its XV "due to the permanent nature of our AWD system and the potential to damage it and the differential." Suzuki brings better news. "Both manual and automatic transmission Grand Vitara 4WD models can be flat towed with 'neutral' position in the transfer case." These are mid-size SUVs but weigh between only 1489-1620kg. No new ones available, but used 2017/18 models are out there. Apart from Jeep's Cherokee and Wrangler, I'm having trouble finding any flat towing candidates. Can any readers help?



## CHANGE FOR GOOD

I drive only in the suburbs and clock less than 10,000km a year. Should I consider a hybrid? Are they costlier to service and maintain? Is battery life dependable?

Doug Davis, email

Smartest suburban hybrid is the Toyota Corolla, costing from \$29,500 drive-away. Its petrol equivalent (also with CVT auto gearbox) is about

\$1250 cheaper. On paper, fuel use is 4.2L/100km vs. 6L/100km, but the hybrid's much more economical in town, where you'll be driving. We drove them back to back in peak hour and the hybrid used roughly half as much fuel. Service costs are identical (\$175 annually) and hybrid batteries are under warranty for 10 years. Go the hybrid.



## Get real

BUYING PARTS  
ONLINE COULD  
BE A FALSE  
ECONOMY

Geoff Gwilym VACC CEO



The internet is so convenient for shopping around and finding the best price on any given article. But when it comes to purchasing vehicle parts, it's buyer beware.

It may seem like a good idea to buy what you need online, then go to your mechanic and ask them to fit it. You might save some money, right?

I can't blame you for thinking so, but there are some things you should keep in mind.

Research from Incopro states that 60 per cent of online search results connect consumers with sellers of counterfeit products, which includes car parts purchased online and brought into Australia.

There are plenty of honest sellers online, but lots of dishonest ones too. Can you tell the difference?

Asking a mechanic to fit a part to your vehicle that you cannot verify puts them in a tricky position — and my advice to mechanics in that position is: don't do it.

But guess what? In the end it is you, the consumer, that is liable if things go wrong.

The best course of action is to buy only from trusted sources — and that usually means from the manufacturer, a well-known retailer, or your mechanic.

If buying online, you'll have to pay freight and duty, so it's unlikely you will find genuine parts at much of a discount. It's best to leave it to those who know.

Putting a part on your vehicle that isn't fit for purpose can be very dangerous and may void your warranty. Just don't risk it.

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



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