

[ROADSIDE ASSIST]

READY FOR LAUNCH

I'd like to buy a new or near-new SUV. I love the look of the Volvo XC40 and the extras with the Launch Edition. Is there anything representing good value that matches the equipment of the Volvo?

Kylie Petie, email

The XC40's a top choice. The style, materials, build quality, drive, packaging and X-factor make it one of my favourite SUVs, especially in loaded Launch Edition guise. It's not cheap, but finally Volvo has introduced capped-price servicing of \$1595 for three-years, far more in-line with luxury rivals. Cross shop against the all-new Audi Q3 Launch Edition for similar good features and safety.

CHILL OUT

Is there any way to assess the strength and efficiency of a car's air conditioner? Are there power ratings? Are some makes and models known for "good" or "not so good" airconditioners?

Adrian Thomas, email

Car air conditioners are typically made by third party companies (like Denso) so it's not possible to say "Toyota's is best" as many brands share the same supplier. Anecdotally, Japanese cars are "coolest", while some European brands can struggle in warmer weather. Many people claim aircon ain't what it used to be (old cars' systems were far more toxic). Queensland specialist Headland Auto told me they're seeing a spike in issues with evaporators and condensers in certain brands as they strive for cheaper and lighter systems. Subaru, VW, Jeep and Chrysler were some that had issues. Cars with multi-zone climate control should be better. Keep your filter clean, have the aircon serviced and use air recirculation when first trying to cool a hot car.

RAISE THE STANDARDS

I'm in my late 70s and the only shortcoming of my VW Golf is difficulty getting out of the driver's seat. With hindsight, I should have bought a higher SUV. I've noted if I raise the electric seat height to maximum it makes life easier; I wish this was an automatic feature when first opening the door.



George Joyce, email

Many cars with power seats move the chair back when you switch off to allow easy exit but raising the seat is less common. If you've got memory seats, pre-program your preferred entry/exit height and hit this when turning the car off. Hopefully it happening automatically will become more common, for the passenger seat too. With an ageing population, savvy car companies should take note and start offering this.

OUT ON LOAN

My year-old Ford Ranger's only done 12,000km and the 10-speed auto gearbox has failed. I'm sure Ford will fix it under warranty but where do I stand on getting a loan vehicle while it's being fixed? And an extended warranty on the transmission?

Chris Wanless, email

Ford Australia tells me: "Customers are provided with our Loan Car program when their vehicle is in service/repairs. It's a core element of our Ford Service Benefits offering." My local Ford dealer (Pacific Ford, Maroochydoore) says it has 11 cars for service/warranty customers, with a free rental car offered if none is available. Generally, any repairs/new replacement parts would be covered for the balance of your new car warranty. If it's something like a gearbox replaced with one month warranty remaining, Ford Australia would look at extending this on a case-by-case basis.



REAL WORLD TESTING

Re Emergency Assistance, I love the fact you and your wife tested how to safely stop a car if the driver's unconscious. You went the extra mile for Mr Hardman and your readers, figuratively and literally!

Mozza, Burwood East

Driver should test what happens when neutral is selected when using cruise control. My Holden VY Calais opens the throttle, so you could end up with a red lining motor.

Terry Bingham, email

Every day's a school day, for me too. I'd urge people to try it in their own cars — but only on a closed or very empty, quiet road.

QUIT YOUR WHINGEING

I wonder about drivers complaining about aspects of their cars rather than trying simple fixes. My 2014 Mazda3 had excessive road noise and harshness on its original Toyo tyres, lacks daytime running lights for safety and has the dreaded stop-start system. Easy. Tyres have been replaced with Continentals to dramatically reduce road noise; my headlights are turned on 24/7 and I activate the stop-start kill button.

Michael Cemm, email

Good on you for being proactive and not letting niggles affect enjoyment of your Mazda.

A BITTER TASTE

Why don't we have the same "Lemon Laws" as the US? If a consumer buys a new car and has to return it to the dealer more than three times for the same fault/problem/issue, if it's not

IAIN CURRY GETS ANSWERS

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rectified at the fourth attempt to the consumer's satisfaction, by law they're entitled to another car or have their car bought back. Lots of Australians would relish this consumer protection.

Bradley Midson, email

Each American state has its own new vehicle lemon laws with varying criteria but, yes, the



consumer appears well protected. Queensland's leading the way in Australia. On September 1 this year, "lemon laws" came into effect protecting owners of defective motor vehicles. The level for claims able to be handled by QCAT lifted from \$25,000 to \$100,000. Time will tell what sort of real outcomes consumers achieve.

FAVOUR THE LITTLE GUY



I'm considering a Ford Everest. Should I pick the new 2.0-litre four-cylinder twin-turbo diesel or the 3.2-litre five-cylinder diesel? I tow 2200kg van with a ball weight of 220kg.

Graeme Welsh, email

I'd pick the smaller 2.0-litre with the 10-speed auto. It's \$1500 dearer but you have more power (157kW v 143kW), more torque (500Nm v

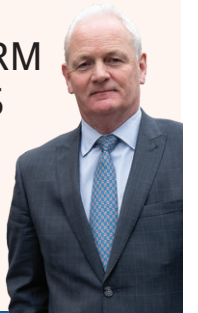
470Nm), greater towing capacity (3100kg v 3000kg), better fuel economy (7.0L v 8.5L) and slightly cheaper servicing. It sounds and feels more refined. I've not towed with either but reports suggest both are very capable, with the 2.0-litre edging it with the benefit of extra torque, extra gearbox ratios and overall smoothness. Test both with your caravan rigged up if possible.



The power of apprenticeships

BUILDING A CAREER ON FIRM FOUNDATIONS MEANS MORE THAN HAVING A JOB

Geoff Gwilym VACC CEO



Trade apprenticeships still form one of the most powerful learning and development pathways available. I'm a prime example.

When I was 15 I started my career as a vehicle body maker. I didn't know then that I would one day be debating policy with the Australian prime minister, that I'd be developing initiatives that positively affect all motorists, or that I would be representing one of the country's most important industries in houses of Parliament.

But I do. And what set me up for this was an apprenticeship.

Irrespective of the bashing the vocational training sector gets from time to time, there are thousands of successful apprenticeship opportunities across Australia, provided through employers, that set people on a great development pathway.

Apprenticeships still provide the best mix of on-the-job learning supported by underpinning technical theory.

Trade apprenticeships aren't about narrow skill sets, they're about learning for the whole-of-job, from the beginning to the end, including nutting out the problems along the way.

These skills are highly adaptable and transferable — highly desirable in an era when people change careers so often — and I can provide many examples of senior managers, business owners and leaders who have based their career development on what they learnt as an apprentice.

There's another big benefit for going the 'trade route'. Unlike a university graduate who might enter the workforce massively in debt, an apprentice actually gets paid to learn skills that will set them up for life.

That's pretty hard to beat.

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



Share your thoughts
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