

[ROADSIDE ASSIST]**LET ME GO****IAIN CURRY GETS ANSWERS**

WRITE TO MOTORING AT
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For the past 12 months I've had intermittent problems removing the key from the ignition of my 2015 Subaru Forester with continuously variable transmission. It happens after selecting Park and turning off the engine. If I restart it and move the gear selector, sometimes the key can be removed. The dealer blames operator error, yet I've heard of several owners with the same problem, possibly caused by a sensor on the gear selector.

Gary King, email

A quick bit of research shows a few Subaru owners have had similar experiences but Subaru Australia says it hasn't heard of this being a frequent issue. Good news for you is you've still got a tiny bit of your four-year warranty remaining. Subaru says: "At this stage it looks like a new auto transmission select lever will prevent the issue with the key becoming stuck in the cylinder when in Park, which may occur in isolated cases."

RETIRING IN STYLE

My wife and I are retired and the Holden Calais has to go. She wants a medium SUV with all the bells and whistles. I still love the power, comfort and gearbox in the Calais. Price isn't a big issue, comfort is. We regularly drive from Sydney to Wagga. Any suggestions?

Paul and Anne, email

If you want to enjoy your retirement with class, style and comfort, check the Volvo XC60. The D5 R-Design ticks the bells and whistles part. If you can abide diesel, this twin-turbo engine's 173kW/480Nm helps you hit 100km/h in 6.9 seconds (same as your V6 Calais). The T6 R-Design is your petrol alternative. Also sample the Range Rover Velar. To my eyes, it's the most attractive SUV on sale and an ideal retirement present.

CAVEAT TEMPTER

I'm tossing up between a Skoda Fabia and MG3 Auto. I've not seen comparisons between these vehicles and would appreciate your views.

Ross Perry, email

You can drive away the MG for just \$15,990, it has a seven-year warranty and some decent inclusions. But how highly do you value safety? It's not been crash-tested in Australia and scores only three stars with Euro NCAP. The Skoda has a five-star ANCAP rating, can be had from \$16,990 drive-away, has five-year warranty and is a lovely city car. I bought a Fabia wagon four years ago and have been hugely satisfied.

NOT SO PROFESSIONAL

Re Parents Don't Know Best. Being taught by a driving instructor, rather than by parents or friends, leaves me totally worried for new drivers. In recent weeks I've witnessed some dangerous driving by driving school cars, including an illegal U-turn by an instructor –

how did he get his licence? The road safety authorities should get out there and start checking accreditation given to driving schools.

Jonathan Rixon, email

Sadly, learners will pick up bad habits from poor-quality driving instructors as much as friends or relatives teaching them to drive. Agreed, driving instructors should be highly skilled, and regularly reassessed, such as pilots and doctors.

HARD TO STOMACH

I've been experiencing a bad smell from the airconditioning of my Mercedes-Benz GLC350. Is this a common complaint?

Angus Hetherington, email

Not just Mercedes but other brands as well. My mechanic mate says first job is to replace the cabin air filter, which can become dirty. It's easy enough to do yourself. Causes? The worst he's experienced have been caused "by something that used to have a heartbeat". Mice are typical. They can cosy up under your bonnet, get cooked and you smell them decomposing. Worth checking – look for mouse droppings under your bonnet.

LOOSE CONNECTION

My 2014 Mazda BT-50's dashboard stopped working. My local dealer and Mazda Australia told me I had no choice but to book it in for diagnosis at my cost. A mate advised to take the battery terminals off and re-set it – I did so and it's all back to normal. I want to make sure the fault won't recur but the Mazda dealer has quoted \$144 an hour to diagnose.

Dave Whittaker, email

Your ute's long out of warranty so I'm not surprised Mazda asked you to pay for diagnosis. If you don't like their charges, find an auto electrician you can



trust. The problem may have been caused by a loose connection at the battery or dirty terminals, probably solved with your reconnection.

NO TIME TO LOSE

I'm looking at a medium SUV. Toyota dealers say there's up to 12 months' wait for a RAV4 Hybrid. I'm also considering a Mazda CX-5 or VW Tiguan. The VW's cheaper but I'm a little concerned about previous reliability issues.

Haran Manoharan, email

My local Toyota dealer reports 12 months would be a particularly long wait – but even base specification white body with black interior RAV4 Hybrids have a six-month wait. If you choose different grades and less common colour combinations, that wait will be longer. Supply can't meet demand. If you can't wait, I wouldn't be concerned about the Tiguan's reliability. It's a great SUV, the dual-clutch auto transmission dramas look fully resolved and VW now has a five-year warranty.

**FUEL FOR THOUGHT**

We have a 2004 Lexus LS430 with 4.3-litre V8. On long highway trips using cruise control at 100km/h, I decided to compare the economy with varying grades of fuel. Using 91 RON, I returned 9.2L/100km; E10 was 8.5L;

95 was 8.4L and 98 was 8.2L. An eye-opener.

Joe Vella, email

Interesting. I'm sure the results will vary for other types of engines but it's an experiment other drivers should conduct with their cars.

**Hitting the road****PREPARATION IS KEY FOR SAFE HOLIDAY MOTORING**

Geoff Gwilym VACC CEO



For many families school holidays mean heading off on a road trip.

It's a fun and economical way to create a memorable holiday but, no matter whether you're driving off-road or going five-star, things can go wrong. So, here's some tips to help you arrive safely.

Before you leave ensure you have a spare tyre ready to go and are familiar with the associated tools. If your car doesn't have a spare, check if your vehicle has run-flat tyres.

Inspect tyres for wear and ensure they're all inflated to the recommended pressure, as indicated in your vehicle's manual (which should always ride with you).

Fill up your tank and, if going off the beaten track, take some spare fuel in a safe container.

A first aid kit should always be in your vehicle and bring a portable phone charger.

Take some cash, a torch and spare batteries, a blanket and some water. Carrying jumper leads is also a good idea.

If towing a caravan, trailer or boat, make sure you properly connect it, checking to ensure all lights are working, that your supplementary driving mirrors are correctly positioned, and that you know how to manoeuvre your vehicle safely.

Lastly, tell someone where you're going and when you're expected back.

Don't forget, there are lots of other people sharing the roads during the holiday break. Take your time, be courteous and schedule regular rest stops. That way you'll not only have a fun holiday but a safe one as well.

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

Share your thoughts
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