

## [ ROADSIDE ASSIST ]



## IAIN CURRY GETS ANSWERS

WRITE TO MOTORING AT  
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I've been told by a car dealer you shouldn't tow a caravan if your car has a CVT gearbox, such as a Subaru Outback. Is this correct?

Bob Simpson, email

CVT gearboxes have become more robust and tow ratings have increased to match. Check the manufacturer tow rating. All new Subaru Outbacks use a CVT auto, with tow ratings ranging from 1500-1800kg. It'd have to be a very small caravan.

## HIT THE BRAKES

Re burnt manual clutches, unless driving a car with a sequential gearbox, it's poor form to use gears to slow down. My driving instructor drilled into me that gears are for go and brakes for slow.

Barry Bourne, Raymond Island

Re burnt clutches, the short answer is brake replacement is cheaper than clutch replacement.

John Courcier, email

Many older drivers were taught to slow down using gears, but brakes and tyres have improved so comprehensively it isn't necessary today. You're correct, with the cost of transmission parts, replacing brake pads is a far cheaper exercise. That said, "engine braking" is a good old-school skill to have, especially for downhill or snow and ice driving.

## PRICIER WITH AGE

Last week you recommended the Toyota Corolla Hybrid, highlighting service costs are a cheap \$175 per annum for the first five years. The next five years cost an average of \$528 per annum for those wanting to keep it longer. Nobody seems to mention this.

Reg Bettiol, email



Good point Reg, and on Toyota's website it's actually worse. Corolla Hybrid's next five services are \$743, \$228, \$1758, \$289 and \$523 – an average of \$708. The petrol version's average is \$524 per annum from years six to ten. I broached the \$1758 service with Toyota and was told it was due to the Hybrid's different fuel pump assembly, but they'd "worked with our suppliers to ensure this filter is now serviced as a separate unit, reducing maintenance cost substantially." Happy news is



I noticed Infiniti recently announced its departure from our market. I've seen its Q50 2.0T Pure sedan drastically cut to \$37,000. A spectacular discount for something competing with a Benz C-Class and BMW 3 Series. What are the pros and cons of buying one?

Ross Alexander, email

Fire sale! Great price for a prestige sedan with RRP of \$54,900, and I see ex-demo Q50s with a few thousand on the clock listed in the classifieds for about \$35,000. Infiniti's website stopped

the Corolla Hybrid's 8 yrs/120,000km service is now \$781 – same as the petrol version.

## KEEP YOUR OPTIONS OPEN

Most people are unaware you don't have to take your new or second-hand car to a dealer to have it serviced or repaired to maintain your warranty. An independent mechanic can perform a logbook service in accordance with the car's owner's manual, and you pay up to 50 per cent less than a dealer charges for the same job. Plus at an independent mechanic you can talk to the person working on your car face to face.

Brad Midson, email

Many independent mechanics are superb, and you correctly state scheduled servicing can be performed by them and your warranty is not affected, as long as manufacturer dates and specifications are adhered to. However, ask for goodwill assistance if your car develops a problem outside factory warranty and non-dealer servicing won't help your cause. Case in point, this month my Skoda's windscreen wipers failed, a year after its warranty expired. My main dealer – where I've serviced it since new – fixed it for free after I requested a goodwill repair.

## CRACKS ARE FORMING

Our Holden Acadia is six months old, and we're generally happy with it: rides well, comfy on long trips and economical for a large SUV. We copped a stone to the windscreen and it needs replacing. We were told there were none in the country and there won't be for three months!

publishing drive-away prices after announcing in September it would "withdraw and conclude its sales operations in Australia in late 2020." The Q50 looks good, is comfortable, luxurious enough, but dynamically not on par with German rivals. It's also thirsty, lacks some modern safety kit and resale will be poor. Ownership-wise, it's not yet been rubber-stamped, but as Infiniti is Nissan's luxury arm, you'll be able to service and have warranty repairs done at Nissan dealers. Is it worth a punt? If your eyes are open to the negatives, go for it.

No wonder company sales have collapsed. Mike Minehan, email

You're right, that's unacceptable for such a commonly replaced part. We've had numerous Acadia owners write in with similar parts delays. I broached it with Holden previously and was told they'd had "issue with supply of some parts from the US," and "the recent United Auto Workers Union strike caused production delays and a backlog of orders." If it's not safe to drive your Acadia, insist on a complimentary loan car until the new windscreen arrives.

## ROOM FOR EXPANSION

I need to change my small car for a medium car as I drive my grandchildren and need something larger. What's the best value for money for around \$18,000? That's my price limit.

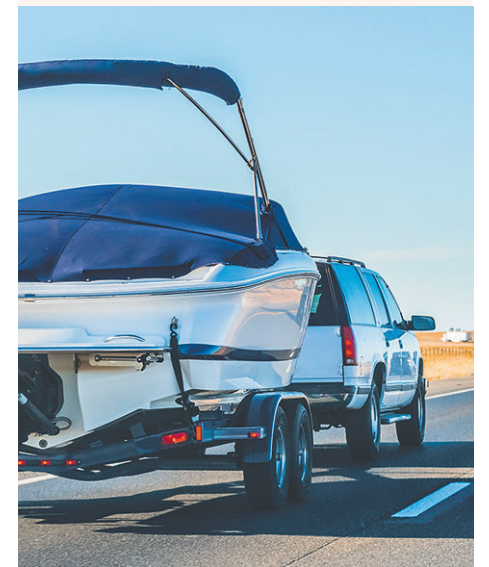
Marlene Devereaux, email

My pick would be a Skoda Octavia (sedan or wagon), sold from January 2017, as that's when the brand's five-year warranty was introduced. Rare at this price, but out there. A 2016/17 Kia Optima's a good choice (seven-year warranty), while a 2017 Toyota Camry's a safe bet, if a tad dull. All have five-star safety ratings to protect your precious cargo.

## THE GYPSY LIFE

Re flat towing behind a motorhome, A-frame setups can be a pain. Just buy an articulated Gypsy trailer. Ramps are put in place and the front wheels go on the trailer. You just need to buy a front-wheel drive vehicle.

Richard Perkins, email



## Towing the line

MOTORING HOLIDAYS CAN BE GREAT FUN IF YOU'RE WELL PREPARED

Geoff Gwilym VACC CEO



It's holiday time. For many that means hitting the road with a caravan, boat or trailer in tow.

This is an economical and fun way to use your car. But you need to know what you're doing.

Firstly, consult your owners' manual to check your vehicle's towing capacity. Don't exceed it.

Ensure the tow-ball and trailer-hitch fit well, and once you've connected the light cable from the caravan/trailer to your vehicle, check the lights and indicators work.

After you've loaded up your caravan/trailer, check the load to ensure there's nothing hanging outside its parameters. This is dangerous and could be illegal. If you're towing a trailer, cover the load with a firmly secured tarp.

Then check all tyres to ensure they're holding the weight and aren't deflating.

Once on the road, pay attention to the weather — particularly strong winds and rain — and adjust your driving accordingly. If conditions are bad, pull over and take a break.

Allow additional room for the vehicle in front, to compensate for extra braking and acceleration time, and when descending hills choose a lower gear to save the brakes.

Reversing a trailer into position can be difficult. It's best to begin with the trailer and vehicle in a straight line then slowly ease back. Remember, if you need to move the trailer to the left then you need to turn right. It takes practice, so do that before you leave.

Finally, be courteous to other motorists and get where you're going in one piece.

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



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