



## Registration re-think

USER PAYS IS THE WAY TO GO

Geoff Gwilym VACC CEO



When you receive your VicRoads registration bill, you will find you are charged the same as the person down the road. That's great, you might think.

But what if your vehicle is lighter, more fuel efficient, or emits less pollution than that vehicle down the road? Do you feel the same now?

I'm all for equality, but in Victoria a motorcycle is a motorcycle, a car is a car, and a truck is a truck in VicRoads' eyes, and that's not fair.

Some motorcycles use less petrol than others, some cars emit less pollution than others, and some vehicles weigh much less than others.

One-size-fits-all approaches are usually organised for the benefit of government departments. So, it's easy to imagine VicRoads developing pricing based on basic categories — motorcycle, car, truck. Surely, we can be more sophisticated than that.

Here's a thought — why not base vehicle registration on other more meaningful metrics?

Like a vehicle's fuel consumption (and the type of fuel it uses, including electricity), its carbon emissions, and its weight (because large SUVs wear roads down much more quickly than a compact sedan).

Scooters and motorcycles cause less road congestion and ease parking conditions, as do smaller cars and commercials. And digging up less fuel and emitting less pollution into the atmosphere isn't a bad idea either.

A sliding registration scheme will incentivise vehicle owners to 'go green' and think about the necessity of driving solo to work in oversized vehicles. Why wouldn't VicRoads want that?

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

Share your thoughts  
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IAIN CURRY GETS ANSWERS

WRITE TO MOTORING AT  
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If we want to visit more out-of-the-way spots around Australia we've been advised we need a four-wheel-drive. Is there a smallish 4WD that's good off-road but also OK for city and highway driving? Or is that a silly question? Anne Mitchell, email

Not a silly question. We have a proliferation of small, mainly 2WD faux-wheel-drives in the market, but next to no small proper off-roaders. The obvious exception is the Suzuki Jimny, but its waiting list is more than six months: many others, like you, want to go adventuring but don't want a giant, expensive 4WD. The lightweight, personality-packed Jimny is brilliant off-road, but on-road it's noisy on highways and cornering isn't a strong point. A Subaru XV's a better fit if you aren't planning extreme off-roading. It's all-wheel-drive, has excellent 220mm ground clearance and smart X-Mode for some challenging surfaces, but no low range for really tough stuff. A Jeep Cherokee Trailhawk is also superb off-road, but costs more than \$50,000 and is a thirsty petrol beast.

### FEELING INSECURE

Last year I bought a new Nissan X-Trail N-Trek and paid the dealership extra for a full-size spare wheel. I'm not a fan of space-savers. After its first service I noticed the boot floor



coverings hadn't been properly replaced and the spare was not secured properly as there was no securing bolt. The dealer told me this was because it was not a standard spare wheel, and I should go to Bunnings and buy a longer securing bolt, or weld an extension on the current one. I found this unacceptable. Errol Sullivan, email

If they've taken your money for a full-size spare, it's ludicrous not to ensure it comes with a correct-sized securing bolt. I brought this to Nissan Australia's attention, and I've been told your dealership has asked you to bring your X-Trail back to them so they can investigate and manufacture a bolt to secure your spare.

### ROUGH SOLUTION

Re car maintenance tips, I have two very large paperbark trees outside my property that drop huge amounts of black sooty mould. It sticks like glue on car duco. The best solution is to use 3000 Grit sandpaper. You wet it, scrub the affected area and wipe it away with a rag. You should do a cut and polish afterwards, but our badly affected cars came up like new. Peter Mitchell, email

Brave move, taking sandpaper to a car's body, no matter how fine it is. Great it's worked for you, but this would be a very last resort for me. If the tree sap or mould's been there a long time, I'd try a clay bar or claying rubber first.

### UNWANTED ADDITION

My 2020 Subaru Forester's just had its first



I'm happy with my 2019 Toyota RAV4, except its CVT auto gearbox. Have other owners had trouble with flaring or rough selection when trying to accelerate? At its last service the dealer didn't find any problems ... or didn't want to. David Laycock, email

Sounds like typical CVT behaviour, I'm afraid. That said, the fun-sapping single-speed CVT gearbox (now commonplace in modern Japanese cars) in the RAV4 is one of the better ones. They really don't like harsh acceleration, so it's best to use gentler inputs to avoid the flaring and whining. If things get worse, demand Toyota investigate thoroughly.

service. A 250ml bottle of fuel additive was put in the fuel tank and I was given another to add in six months or after 6000km. I was charged \$32 (without my consent) and feel it's a money grab as the car's manual says it's fine to run on 91 octane fuel. I always fill up with premium 98. Mark Tumbers, email

Subaru says its additive has been "formulated to suit the special design of the Boxer engine ... when mixed in the fuel it will help decarbonise the inside of the engine." All well and good, but what if you're using quality fuel that will be doing the same thing? A Subaru Australia spokesman told me: "The factory doesn't make allowances for different fuel types." If you only use 98, I'd tell your Subaru dealer not to charge you for the additive — it's your car, your decision.

### FANNING THE FLAMES

Why do so many motor vehicles catch fire these days? It seems to happen every week if you watch the television news. I don't recall such incidents when I was younger. Richard Lahey, email

Cars have always caught fire for various reasons, you just see more of it on the news and social media today because everyone has a camera on their phone ready to record it, backed up by dash cameras and CCTV everywhere. News networks jump all over this high impact (and often free) footage to show a hungry public. If it's a supercar or electric car that's on fire, all the better for ratings and clicks.

### CLASSIFIED INFORMATION

Can you please help me locate the cabin filter on my 2018 ZB Commodore wagon? Paul Sutherland, email

Normally I'd say open the glovebox and read your owner's manual, but having seen an online version, the manual won't tell you, only instructing you to visit the dealer. Ridiculous. So, open your glovebox, on the right-hand side there's a small flexible clip you can pop off. Look up inside the glovebox and there are two tabs you need to press upwards. The glovebox should fall forwards, revealing your filter.

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