



Vehicle ownership

COMING FULL CIRCLE

Geoff Gwilym VACC CEO



The old saying that the more things change, the more they remain the same could not be more apt in the current climate.

At the height of the coronavirus lockdown in April new-car sales around the world fell by alarming levels and, as a result, manufacturing plants across the globe closed or severely wound back production.

Most of these facilities are now back in action and some parts of our lives are returning to normal, including our car-buying habits, along with the associated maintenance that comes with car ownership.

It's still very early days, but as I look around at the new normal one thing is clear — owning and using personal transport (cars, motorcycles, bikes) has never been more attractive.

It's true there are now many more transport options available, especially in urban and suburban areas. People can use vehicles on a pay-per-use or subscription basis and, of course, home delivery and good old-fashioned postage means some people have less need to travel.

For those who can, however, using a personal vehicle — the make and model they prefer, with all the options they desire, and all the settings where they want them to be — is what a lot of people prefer. Right now, and into the foreseeable future, a personal vehicle also provides the ultimate in social distancing.

I'm predicting that — in the sphere of personal transport — we will come full circle. Heading out on the highway on our own terms, with all the freedom and choice that brings, will become part of the new normal.

Prepared by the 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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I've just turned 16 and my parents and I have been looking at buying my first car. So far we're considering a Mazda2, Suzuki Swift or Holden Barina. How are they mechanically? We're also unsure whether to get an auto or manual? Budget's around \$6000.

Olivia Marcoianni, email

You never forget your first car, so it pays to get one you love. If the majority of your driving is in town or city traffic, an auto's the easier option. But learning how to drive a manual is a wonderful life skill; it's harder work but worth it. Manuals are normally cheaper too. Leave Barinas alone. Too much trouble. The Mazda2's a reliable shout, but the pick's the Suzuki Swift. Look for a Swift S (more airbags and alloy wheels) with excellent service history and that'd be a great, mechanically sound first car. I used to own one and it was a gem. Try a Ford Fiesta too. They're zippy and fun, but only manual versions as the autos were troublesome.

FEELING BLUE

My 2015 Audi Q5 "check engine" light came on, and the Audi dealer said the AdBlue (additive to help reduce emissions on some diesel cars) line needed replacing as the heater element in it had failed. More than \$1000 later I was told it wouldn't be covered under warranty. Audi's within its rights as my car was over a year out of warranty, but for a 41,000km Q5 always serviced with Audi, I believe the part should



have been covered in good faith, and after writing to them in March, they said they'd get back to me. Is this a common problem?

Todd Palmer, email

Failure of the AdBlue heater has been reported in diesel Audis, VWs and Porsches — I'd imagine it's a shared part between the brands. I'd have expected Audi to offer some assistance to a loyal customer. Call their customer service (1300 557 405) and get a case number. Ask if they'll at least cover cost of parts if you pay labour. Don't let them fob you off if they suggest they've not heard of this problem before.

LONG SERVICE

Re Tough Cell, I recently replaced the battery in my 2008 VW Golf GTI. On replacement, it was found to be the original. It was tired but had lasted 12 years.

Grant Barwick, email

Good innings. High temperature, heavy use, short drives and endless electronics in our cars rob batteries of life. Your 12-year-old VW one should be put in a museum.

BUY WITH CONFIDENCE

I'm looking at a small car, the Hyundai i30, Kia Cerato or Toyota Corolla. Which would you recommend as being reliable?

Ian Smith, email

All of them. If reliability is key, Kia's seven-year warranty trumps Hyundai's and Toyota's five years. Test drive all before making a decision, but really, you can't go wrong with any on your list.

ENLIGHTEN ME

What are the rules about driving in rain and fog without lights on? I know people have been fined for driving with their fog lights on unnecessarily, but what about the other way around? I ask which is more dangerous?

Chris Wanless, email

Good point. Not having your lights on when required is an offence. "Failing to have lights on vehicle lit at night or in hazardous conditions" cops a \$114 fine in NSW, \$133 in QLD, and in Victoria — a state that never misses a chance to revenue raise via the motorist — a whopping \$248. A big problem is so called "auto" headlights. I've tested many new



For my retirement car I've got approximately \$35,000 to spend. It won't be a daily driver, but I'll be doing three long trips per year from the mid-north coast. I'm 100kg so would like plenty of cabin space, but don't need much boot space. I plan to keep it at least eight years. What should I look for in a new or used car to suit my budget?

Steve Howard, email

For your budget and considering you plan to keep the car a long time, treat yourself to something new. Most sensible is a Toyota Camry — the current ones look flash and drive superbly. Go for the Ascent Sport, on the road for \$34,899. Smart roomy cabin, loads of safety kit, satnav and five-year warranty. Servicing is a bargain \$1000 for the first five years. The pricey but excellent Mazda3 (hatch or sedan) offers a serene drive, while on the SUV front try a Kia Seltos Sport+ or Hyundai Tucson Active X. Used luxury can be had within your budget, so try a Mercedes C-Class or Audi A4 with some of their three-year warranty intact.

cars where they don't come on early enough at dusk, increasing my risk of a fine or accident.

SPORTY NUMBER

We're after a used medium SUV, ideally no more than three years old, for about \$20,000. We're looking at the Kia Sportage, but any others to rival it?

Scott Shade, email

A 2018 Sportage is a good used choice as it has many years of Kia's seven-year warranty remaining. Decent all-round SUV too. A 2018 Holden Equinox is also worth a try. They're a bit bland but good to drive and well-equipped, plus GM has assured Holden owners that customer support would be available for at least ten years despite its closure. Some early Equinoxes came with a seven-year warranty, so favour those. A few Hyundai Tucsons with some of their five-year warranty left can be found for less than \$20,000 too, and are well worth considering.



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