



Knowledge is key

HAVE FOB WILL TRAVEL

Geoff Gwilym VACC CEO



I had another one of those 'I can't believe I didn't know that' moments recently when the battery on the key fob I use to lock and unlock my vehicle died, and I was left on the roadside with no way of getting home.

Or so I thought.

After standing around for about 20 minutes feeling sorry for myself, I started fiddling with the fob and must have pulled a tiny lever and out popped a 'real' key to my car.

And then it hit me. Of course, most fobs these days have a key embedded in them for situations just like this.

It's a clever 'belt and braces' approach to technology that was pioneered by Siemens in Germany for Mercedes-Benz — who called it 'Key-less Go' — back in 1998 when launching its new W220 S-Class, a large sedan that cost a fortune in its day.

Fortunately, keyless entry filtered down to cheaper models and was widely adopted by other manufacturers. These days, it's hard to find a modern vehicle that doesn't use this technology.

Of course, like most technology, it's all good ... until it isn't.

But the smart people at Siemens recognised that batteries — even very good ones — have a life and that, like me, people would be left stranded if the battery in their key fob failed when they were out and about.

So, the clever idea of embedding a 'traditional' metal key inside the fob was born.

Thank you Siemens. I won't be forgetting your good work in a hurry.

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

Share your thoughts
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THE AFTERLIFE

[ROADSIDE ASSIST]

IAIN CURRY GETS ANSWERS

WRITE TO MOTORING AT
CARS@NEWS.COM.AU OR
PO BOX 2808, GPO SYDNEY, 2001

Re sealed for life automatic transmissions, Land Rover has stated for years its Discovery 4WD gearboxes are "sealed for life". In our Land Rover Owners Club of Victoria, we recognised this wasn't satisfactory, not least when one friend spent nearly \$9000 on a complete transmission rebuild at 200,000km. Several auto transmission service centres will replace the sump plate for one with a drain plug, flush the system then refill with new oil. Sealed for life? No way.

Peter Brett, email

Many mechanics agree "sealed for life" is misleading. Not enough manufacturers appreciate a car's life regularly extends beyond 10 years and 200,000km.

A COOL CHANGE

I bought a new VW Golf GTI 40 Years three years ago, one of the few manuals that came to Australia. The service booklet doesn't tell me much, so I wonder how often the engine coolant should be changed? I've heard if it's not done it can get corrosion.

Paul Baker, email

Back in the day, your car's service booklet would list everything due for a scheduled service. Not so in modern cars. VW's website also doesn't clearly state what happens at each scheduled service. As a fellow Golf owner (though mine, sadly, isn't as fun as your GTI 40), I spoke to my local VW dealer about this. They promptly emailed me what work takes place at each service, so you should try likewise. The VW technician said coolant wouldn't be changed unless you were replacing something such as a water pump, or if the coolant's pink colour was getting lighter.

WHY PAY MORE?

Re the cost of replacing tyres, I have a Ford AU Falcon and use cheap 17-inch tyres by Sailun or A1. They're about \$100 each fitted and balanced. They last about 70,000km, are quiet, good in the wet and I've had no flats. I've saved thousands of dollars over 280,000km using budget tyres.

Brad Midson, email

You can only report as you find, and I'll only report as I find. I've only once fitted cheap tyres to one of my cars — a 1992 Saab 900i — and I won't do so again. The big difference was in cornering grip and braking distances, especially in the wet. I lost confidence and junked them after a few months. Interestingly, they were quieter than the pricier brand I replaced them with, but at least I could corner safely again.

A DIM VIEW

Re your reader with the infotainment screen going blank in his Holden VF Commodore, I had a similar problem in my 2014 model. From time to time the screen went very dark, but not blank. If it's the same thing, the solution is to keep pressing the illumination control upwards until the lighting returns.

John Newman, email

It's unlikely to be the same problem, but worth considering. I've tested cars where the screen automatically dims and can barely be seen. Screens auto dim (so they don't distract at night) when using headlights or if it's dark outside, but the light sensor can get confused in shady areas, or, for example, if you inadvertently cover the sensor with a dashboard mat.

DROPPED CATCH

I have a 2018 Toyota Prado 2.8-litre diesel, owned since new. I can't decide if an oil catch can is necessary. Toyota says it's not, yet when reading up on them it makes sense considering what they do. I'm torn as everyone has their own agenda. What do you believe?

Rob McGregor, email



SWEDEN SENSATION

We're considering either a Volvo XC60 T8 Polestar or Audi SQ5, but are struggling with what's going to best suit our family. We have three kids between 12 and 17, tow a trailer for camping a few times a year, but no real off-road adventures. Your thoughts?

Jim and Liz Tek, email

I'd advise snaring a 24-hour test with both. The dealer should comply for such a pricey purchase. Personally, I'd go the plug-in Volvo. It looks incredible, is brimming with tech and luxury, and there's something about the cabin that sets it apart from the competition. I sat in one recently and the rear space is good for adults (or teenagers), while the performance (0-100km/h in 5.2 seconds) with a return of 2.2L/100km — though you won't get that — is exceptional. About 40km of pure electric driving is very relevant for everyday life. Tows 2100kg too. The Audi SQ5's still a great all-rounder, and take a peek at the polished BMW X3 M40i too, just to be sure.

It's personal choice. Catch cans trap oil vapours that would ultimately clog your engine's intake and reduce its efficiency. If one's not fitted as standard, it's little wonder Toyota say it's not necessary. Some diesel experts I've spoken with disagree. If you fit one use a creditable company that guarantees its work, and drain your catch can regularly. The grey area is whether it affects your factory warranty, even though I can't think of a way a catch can could be proven to cause any damage.

OLD BOOTS

Re auto transmission reliability, I've owned my 2003 Toyota LandCruiser GXL V8 since new, it tows a 3000kg caravan and has covered nearly 300,000km. The auto's never missed a beat or been serviced. The 100 Series 'Cruiser has built up a bulletproof reputation for good reason.

Graham Shaw, email

This is why buyers deliberately seek out these older, simpler and highly regarded LandCruisers. Long may yours maintain its reliability, but perhaps now's the time to treat the old girl to a gearbox service?

TECH OVERLOAD

Re Wheel Nuts, I agree that, barring safety gear, there's far too much electronic crap in a modern car. Much of which, in my opinion, contributes to today's dreadful road toll. After 76 years and more than a million miles without hitting things, I can park my vehicle myself without technology, thank you.

Alistair Woodcraft, email

Quite right. If you can't reverse park or negotiate a corner without cameras, radars, sensors and semi-autonomy helping, you shouldn't have a licence. Any technology (such as Apple CarPlay/Android Auto) that stops people using their phones when driving is, however, most welcome.

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