



Safe driving

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE BASICS



Geoff Gwilym VACC CEO

When it comes to road safety, the two most important things you can influence are the condition of your vehicle and your ability to drive it with care and concentration.

Maintaining your vehicle in optimum condition is a partnership involving you and your local repairer.

You should regularly conduct a visual check of your vehicle, looking for tyre wear, and whether your seatbelts, lights (including indicators and brake lights) are functioning correctly, and if there is any dangerous body or windscreen damage.

Keeping your vehicle serviced and maintained by a trusted automotive technician is crucial.

A thorough professional inspection using up-to-date specialist equipment can detect dangerous deficiencies, like worn brake pads and leaking brake lines, degraded suspension components, and misaligned wheels.

Before driving, ensure your seat is in a comfortable position and that your feet and hands can easily operate the pedals, steering wheel, and handbrake.

Check the positioning of the interior and exterior mirrors (paying particular attention if towing).

When on the road, obey all speed and traffic signage.

Keep a safe distance (depending on your speed, this will mean several car lengths or more), be courteous, don't rush, and try to anticipate what other road users may do.

Consider taking an advanced driver training course.

Actively participating in motorsport events is also a great way to improve your driving skills — if that's your thing.

Importantly, never stop learning.

Road safety is not everyone else's responsibility. It is yours.

So, make sure you and your vehicle are fit for the road.

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
CARS@NEWS.COM.AU OR
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My wife and I are in our 70s and want to downsize from our 2004 SsangYong Rexton seven-seater. I can see your eyes roll, but it's been reliable, easily pulled our caravan and is comfy to drive. We want a smaller diesel SUV with all-wheel-drive, no dual-clutch or CVT gearbox and lots of safety equipment. We're considering a Volvo XC40 T4 Inscription, SsangYong Korando EXL, Kia Sportage and Mazda CX-5. Any thoughts or suggestions? Colin Bridgford, email

No eye-rolling here. SsangYongs come under more criticism for their, ahem, "interesting" designs rather than their mechanical reliability — Mercedes drivetrains help there. If you're a fan of the brand, I've recently tested the new Korando and it is both stylish and loaded with kit. Great value for money, bar the depreciation it'll suffer. All on your list are solid choices, but if you can afford one and it's large enough (it's a small SUV), the Volvo XC40's a safety-laden package of brilliance. Try a Toyota RAV4 Edge too — it has a conventional 8-speed auto unlike other RAV4s.

DONE NOTHING WRONG

Re You Will Obey, unlike John Appleby, my 2020 VW Golf R had the nannying "follow traffic regulations" message setting turned off. I can't see why turning it off should be an issue with a VW dealer or it being a warranty issue if you do. It does not affect operating parts on a vehicle, or render it defective or unroadworthy.

Laurie Rucker, email

Agreed. My advice was more a word of warning that if you or a third party mess around with a car's computer — be it for settings, tuning or otherwise — you run a risk it may void your warranty. I've seen it happen with tuning chips for a car's ECU. Simply removing a warning message is clearly very different, but a small risk nevertheless remains.

COVER YOURSELF

Re You Will Obey, if we're expected to wear

face masks to prevent an offensive virus, perhaps Mr Appleby could put a mask on his Golf's screen to prevent transmission of offensive messaging?

Norm Warren, email

Good idea. Expect to see genuine accessory infotainment screen masks at dealerships in time for Christmas.

UNWANTED ASSISTANCE

Above 80km/h our brand-new Hyundai i30 N-Line's steering begins to feel vague and somewhat unsafe. The dealer told me this is Lane Assist, a "safety feature". I can disable it on the steering wheel or touchscreen, but it resets when the engine is started. Why?

J Dalmer, email

I agree the i30's lane-keep tech can be a bit invasive, much like many other brands' efforts. These safety systems default reset to "on" in case a different driver uses the car next and expects them to be active. If you expect (for example) lane-keep assist, traction control or auto emergency braking to work and they have been turned off by the previous driver, that could end in tears. It's a pain, but if you can't tolerate your Hyundai's lane-keep assist (it's active from 60km/h) turning it off has to become part of your pre-driving routine. Seat belt on, lane keep assist off, check mirrors, go.

BRASSED OFF

Re dull headlights, for lenses made from polycarbonate plastics, a good way to remove grime is with a terry towelling cloth and a dab of good old Brasso, rubbed in a circular motion. Let it dry, then buff off. Lenses will look like new.

Mark Keys, email

Brasso. Now there's a smell from our childhoods. As with last week's toothpaste suggestion, go on the internet and you'll find those agreeing with Brasso, and others warning against it. For the record, auto stores sell headlight restorer kits from about \$15.

HEADS UP

The head-up display (HUD) in my Holden Calais VF, where the likes of speed are projected on the windscreen, is one of the best extras I've experienced. Is there a large 4WD



WORTH A SHOT

I bought a new Nissan Pulsar in 2013, it's been serviced every 10,000km and has now done 106,000km. The auto transmission needs fixing, quoted at \$5000 from an auto repair shop. I'd have thought a transmission would last longer; do you think Nissan would help towards the repair even though it's out of warranty?

Ron Woods, email

I always advise trying. Call Nissan's customer service (1800 035 035) to discuss your case, but you'll need the car properly diagnosed by a Nissan dealer. As a seven-year-old car any goodwill assistance would be unlikely, but if you've serviced with Nissan your case would be stronger. Getting a discount on parts would be a good outcome. Regardless, make sure you get other quotes for such an expensive job.

with integrated HUD? Once you have it, it's hard to go without.

Michael Matthews, email

HUDs are commonplace in prestige vehicles these days, but not often seen in more mainstream models. On the large 4WD front you'll find built-in HUD in most Ford Everests or Land Rover Defenders. You can buy aftermarket HUDs, but they won't be the same quality as from the factory.

SHOP WINDOW

I bought a new Isuzu D-Max in 2016, which for four years had a continual problem with the driver's window going back to the half open position after closing. Isuzu tried replacing the window, everything inside the door, then the whole door, all to no avail. Isuzu ultimately offered to buy back my car and give me a replacement, like-for-like. To my delight I'm the proud owner of a new 2019 Isuzu D-Max. Well done Isuzu.

Rob Shaw, email

Great outcome for you, Isuzu doing the right thing here. It reminds me of the USA's Lemon Laws. This entitles new car buyers to a replacement car or refund if it is so defective it's not able to be repaired by the dealer in a reasonable amount of time. I know many disgruntled car owners would love lemon laws this tough in Australia.



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