



Road user charges

SOMEONE HAS TO PAY

Geoff Gwilym VACC CEO



Let's get one thing straight — the Victorian Government's recent announcement that it will tax electric vehicles (EVs) with a Road User Charge is not about the environment or being a gas guzzler or a greenie. It's about roads. That's all.

Australia is about the size of Europe. So, building and maintaining our road network with only 26 million inhabitants to fund it is crippling for the country.

Roads are expensive. There are lots of them. Someone has to pay. And that's that.

The announcement from Treasurer Tim Pallas that the State Government will begin taxing EVs 2.5 cent/km from July 2021 has been met with vitriol.

It's unfair, say some. They're coal-loving Neanderthals, say others.

That's not the case. The Andrews Government is simply looking ahead and asking the question as to who will pay for roads in the future.

With petrol and diesel usage set to decline, the tax on fuel will not sustain the required costs of maintaining our road network.

The fairest way to pay for roads is to have those who use them contribute to the cost. And that means road users — owners of cars, motorcycles, commercials and trucks.

When people get all emotional about the tax, they need to stop and consider that owners of EVs are road users — and should pay their fair share.

As EV sales accelerate and with internal combustion engines set to be banned sometime in the future, just who is going to pay for the roads then?

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

Share your thoughts
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UTE BATTLE

[ROADSIDE ASSIST]

IAIN CURRY GETS ANSWERS

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

We want to upgrade from our 2015 Holden Colorado dual cab (190,000km and still going strong) to tow a caravan. I've been considering a new Isuzu D-Max but my son-in-law has suggested a VW Amarok V6. Which would be better overall and for towing?

Jeff Wilson, email

Both are strong choices so make sure you spend time testing them — especially on a highway — to see which you prefer. Each tows 3500kg and they are renowned as superb tow vehicles, but while the Amarok is now almost a decade into its life cycle, the D-Max is box-fresh new. It means the Isuzu is loaded with advanced safety technology for a 5-star crash test result under stricter testing. The VW lacks most of the D-Max's active safety kit and rear airbags, though this may not bother you if you never use the rear seats. The D-Max has 140kW/450Nm versus the Amarok V6's 165kW/500Nm (190kW/580Nm in higher grades), and on the bitumen the VW's more enjoyably car-like. I'd pick the Isuzu for features, safety and towing economy.

BAD REPUTATION?

Re "Drop a Size", Colin Bridgford stipulated any car you advise must not have a dual-clutch or CVT auto transmission. Is this personal preference or is there something seriously wrong with such gearboxes?

Eddie Sheldon, email

Depends who you ask. Owners of certain Fords, VWs, Audis and Skodas with dual-clutch gearboxes can share many a horror story of reliability (and cost to repair), while low-speed jerkiness is a trait in most I've tested. As for CVTs, they are often whiny, unsatisfying things — though fine for daily duties. Both dual-clutch and CVTs

help fuel economy, but owners care little if said transmissions implode after just a few years. Engineering has improved in both over the years, but it's interesting to see "normal" torque converter automatics are once again finding favour with some brands, VW included.

FORD VS HOLDEN

A few weeks ago you asked if any Holden Barinas, Cruzes or Malibus had managed 300,000km. Looks like you've had no takers. No, I don't have one. I've owned a 2006 Ford Focus since new, no major problems, only one set of replacement brakes and still with the manual gearbox's original clutch after 360,000km.

Ian Smith, email

The Focus vs Cruze showdown isn't history's most compelling Holden vs Ford battle, but we'll chalk this one down as a Blue Oval victory.

TOTAL STEAL

Every night on our TV news there's at least one item involving a stolen car. How do so many cars get still get stolen? It's not as if you can hot-wire them like back in the olden days. All these new electronics don't seem to help.

Patricia Woolcock, email

Data from Budget Direct and carsafe.com.au showed nearly 60,000 cars were stolen in Australia in 2019 — about one every ten minutes. The most popular way? Car keys being taken in a burglary. Some 37 per cent of the total were pinched this way, while 18 per cent were due to keys being left in the car, and 14 per cent through good old-fashioned hot-wiring. Modern immobilisers help, but the average age of a stolen car is about 12 years. Most popular car to nick? The Holden VE Commodore. Gotta love patriotic criminals. For modern cars with keyless entry; signal relaying, signal jamming, key programming, code grabbing and even app hacking are the latest ways to steal your wheels. I've a secret spot in my home for car keys in case we're burgled. Beats leaving them by the front door.



CONFIRMED ALFAHOLIC

I've owned my Alfa Romeo Stelvio diesel SUV for a year and it's turned out to be my most enjoyable purchase ever. Since buying a rusted Alfa Romeo Alfasad in 1975 I began my Italian love affair journey. I've driven Ferraris, Porsches, Mercedes and recently a BMW M2, but nothing feels like the Stelvio for your dollars. It points, steers, grips and goes swiftly and simply refuses to use much fuel. If you're remotely thinking of buying one, don't even hesitate.

Dave Burt, email

Great news your first 18,000km have cemented an Alfa love affair. A four-cylinder diesel SUV may not sound the sexiest of Alfa Romeos, but the Stelvio is beautiful to behold and a lovely steer. Rare too. Alfa's sold just 400 this year so far — BMW's managed 10 times as many X3s. It deserves more love.

BIG NUMBERS

I've owned a 2006 Toyota Corolla wagon from new. It has 331,000km on the clock and has suffered no major problems, though it seems to be using a little more oil these days. I'm a big fan of Toyota and totally agree with you they must be serviced on time and driven with respect for reliability.

Robert Sims, Kensington, NSW

A Corolla with 331,000km? She's just running in, Robert. A hundred years from now the only cars on our roads will be electric ones and Corollas that refuse to die. I'm sure yours will be one of them!

DODGY DEALER?

My daughter has a 2008 Toyota Camry which she always serviced at the local Toyota dealer. Four years ago she was told the car needed new front brake discs, a new water pump and had a leaking rocker cover gasket. I told her to go to an independent mechanic, and they said not one of those three things needed doing before her next service. Toyota, you lost four family members who drive your cars.

Tom Williams, email

I see your point, but one dealership that possibly tried to do unnecessary work on your daughter's car shouldn't tarnish your opinion of Toyota. Rogue dealers frustrate head offices as much as customers. Without knowing full details, the Toyota dealer may have stricter tolerances for its servicing and repairs than the independent mechanic, especially when it comes to perishables such as brakes or preventive measures such as water pump replacement.

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