

[ROADSIDE ASSIST]

COST OF TYRES WEARING THIN

IAIN CURRY GETS ANSWERS

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

I've just had to draw down on my house mortgage to fit new tyres to our cars — a 2017 Mercedes-AMG C63 S and 2018 Audi RS3 — \$3500 for both! Respectively, they've covered only 19,000km and 18,000km and needed new Michelins and Pirellis. I know they're consumables, but I find the lack of tyre durability disconcerting. The cars are driven conservatively, with the occasional squirt that reminds they're quick off the mark. Surely manufacturers can supply more robust tyres? James Barut, email

Tell it to the judge, James. "The occasional squirt that reminds they're quick..." may be more frequent than you remember, and last I checked C63 and RS3 buyers don't understand the term "driven conservatively". Beyond that, excellent choice of German toys you have there. Sadly, the reason they're so talented is partly due to the soft compound performance tyres. Even so, the life of your tyres seems abnormally short. I'd join AMG and Audi RS-specific forums and social media groups and ask owners if there are more durable tyres they'd recommend that don't distill the drive experience.

BRING A TRAILER

Re the gentleman interested in towing a trailer with his 2013 Toyota Prius, I'm sure I could source a trailer for him that would tow his Prius. Do you think he'd be interested? Norman Warren, email



Okay, a session at Hybrid Haters Anonymous for you Norman.

ROSE-TINTED GLASSES

I had a chuckle hearing your readers yearning for old cars, especially pre-1970 models. They're fine to look at, but on the whole they drove appallingly compared to a modern car, with substandard brakes and steering, plus horrendous fuel consumption. Safety wasn't even given a thought! My first car was a 1963 Holden EJ wagon. I loved it at the time, but couldn't imagine driving that barge now. Old cars? Look, but don't touch.

Chris Wares, email

Chris wins Dream Crusher award this week! Of course, you're completely right, but love and passion do strange things to car enthusiasts. My advice? Never total up the repair bills, buy a good tool set and find an understanding spouse.

POORLY BALANCED

It was good to see your balanced comments about the Tesla last week, but where was the balance when two owners wrote about their old Toyotas? It was more like a lovefest. I've had seven second-hand Toyotas over the years; I kept buying them because reports said how reliable they were. Not for me. Dead starter motors, collapsed driver's seat, warped dash, faded paint, boot leaks, power steering and more. Eventually I had an automotive love affair when I sold the last Toyota and got a Honda. Bruce Cohn, email

Criticising old Toyotas feels like laying into Don Bradman. It's surely un-Australian? Sounds like you've been unlucky, but for balance, my 1976 Toyota Corona needed a carburettor rebuild somewhere near Wangaratta on a 40C day. I've still not forgiven that car.



BOXING CLEVER

Recently, every feedback letter says avoid CVT automatic gearboxes like the plague. This was echoed by my car-selling neighbour when I voiced I was looking for a new SUV. Most small SUVs have CVTs, including the much-praised Kia Seltos, but I see it also comes with a DCT twin-clutch automatic. Do you favour the Seltos with CVT or DCT, and are there issues? I'm waiting to see what the new VW T-Roc will have, and like the look of the Toyota and Mazda.

Gail Walker, email

I highly rate the Kia Seltos, and the Sport Plus comes with non-turbo 2.0-litre petrol engine and CVT gearbox, or punchier 1.6-litre turbo petrol with twin-clutch gearbox. In a nutshell, the CVT is a bit whiny and unsatisfying, the twin-clutch can prove a bit jerky around town. But really, both are competent, and on the reliability front, Kia's seven-year warranty gives strong peace of mind. The Seltos turbo is more rewarding but a fair whack pricier. Test both. I was really impressed with the VW T-Roc (on sale soon) and it uses a twin-clutch as well: great at speed, a bit jerky from standstill. Definitely wait to test one before making your mind up, and try Toyota's new C-HR Hybrid (CVT gearbox) too.

CORONA VIRUS

This was the real Corona crisis: in 1978 the



energy crisis (fuel taxes were significantly increased by then-treasurer John Howard) meant many cars changed from six cylinders to four. Toyota used a four-cylinder Holden motor to meet government direction; essentially a cut-down version of the 173 cu in the Holden six-cylinder. Like COVID-19, this 1.9-litre had health problems, typically a high temperature, difficulty breathing and was always weak and lethargic.

Bruce Bryan, email

Ah, the gutless Holden Starfire engine. Affectionately known as the "Misfire-4". It found its way into VC Commodores too, its 58kW offering a 0-100km/h crawl in 17.5-seconds. Aussie-built Corona sedans and wagons used this antiquated motor from 1979, but imported five-door Liftback versions had Toyota's more efficient and rewarding 63kW 2.0-litre. Different times, eh?



Getting going again

RECOMMISSIONING YOUR VEHICLE IS SIMPLE BUT IMPORTANT



Geoff Gwilym VACC CEO

If you are currently working from home, you're probably not using your vehicle much. Perhaps not at all.

That's OK. But in the future — when we resume normal life — you'll need your car, motorcycle or truck to be in safe working order. So here are some things you can do at home to ensure you'll be ready to go.

The first issue you may face is a flat battery. If you're not driving your vehicle at all, start it up in your driveway two or three times a week and let it idle for 10 minutes. If you can, use your car once a week when doing your grocery shopping and, if it's a short trip, extend your drive on the way home. You could also invest in a battery charger, but ensure you adhere to product instructions or you could cause damage.

Fuel degradation can be an issue. But this is unlikely unless you leave your vehicle unused for months. Anyway, the best thing to do is give your car a run a couple of times a week and you should be fine.

Tyres can lose pressure over time. So, if you haven't driven for a while, walk around your vehicle checking for any signs of deflation. Inflating all tyres — including your spare — to the manufacturer's recommended pressures should be the first thing you do when you get to a service station.

Take these simple steps and you'll be ready to go when life finally gets back to normal.

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

Share your thoughts
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READY TO CHARGE



I've heard Mitsubishi has an Outlander hybrid? How does it compare against other hybrid SUVs?

Mac Calderwood, email

You're talking about the Mitsubishi Outlander PHEV, which stands for Plug-In Hybrid Electric Vehicle. As with a conventional hybrid — the Toyota RAV4 Hybrid for example — it has an electric motor and petrol engine. The PHEV is different as to charge the electric battery you need to plug it in. In the Outlander PHEV's case, that gives you 54-kilometres electric-only range. If this runs out, the petrol engine kicks in. I lived with

an Outlander PHEV for six months and it's a clever all-wheel-drive SUV that makes most sense if you do lots of bumper-to-bumper commuting and charge using renewable energy. Normal hybrids are simpler as they don't need to be plugged in (the battery recharges on the move), but electric-only range is significantly less. The Outlander PHEV starts from \$47,390 and is showing its age. Compare with Toyota's RAV4 and C-HR Hybrids, Subaru's Forester and XV Hybrids — all cheaper, newer and very efficient, but with long waiting lists. Above all, do lots of homework to see what bets suits your circumstances.