

auto**talk**

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Industry airbag warnings not being heard

Motorists, vehicle owners and custodians of vehicles containing Takata airbags are still not hearing the warnings from the automotive industry to have them removed.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission says even with 80% of recalled Takata airbags removed from circulation since July 2017 by dealers, remote communities are still in the dark about the dangers one airbag unit poses.

Since the mandatory recall began in March 2018, nearly 77,000 vehicles have had their Takata inflator modules replaced every month, the equivalent of 4175 airbags per day being removed by

Australia's franchised dealer network.

ACCC quarterly figures show drivers in rural and regional communities, and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are at grave risk, with around half a million Takata airbags still to be replaced.

In NSW, 1507 'alpha' airbags - the most at-risk inflator type remain, Victoria has yet to replace 1130 while humid Queensland's 793 'alpha' Takata inflators remain at high risk, just as WA has 183, SA has 98 and the Northern Territory still has 38 high-risk climate-affected airbags waiting to be replaced or unexpectedly mis-deployed.

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Mass recall for SkyActiv engine

Mazda's haloed SkyActiv engine has been issued a recall by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, and affects nearly 19,000 vehicles.

A software fault has been discovered which Mazda Australia says could cause major power loss, and inability to restart the engine, potentially posing a danger if the vehicle suddenly stops in traffic.

According to the recall notice published on the Product Safety website, the powertrain control module, responsible for controlling cylinder deactivation "may not operate correctly".

If the fault arises, it "may cause an Intake Valve Rocker Arm to move out of position and make contact with other internal engine parts," the recall states.

Drivers would expect to see the engine malfunction indicator light appear on the dashboard and subsequently "the engine may lose power and may stall without the ability to restart, increasing the risk of an accident".

The Skyactiv-G 2.5L petrol

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Broker buyers beware

New South Wales Fair Trading has suspended and is investigating Cars & Co Pty Ltd's licence for allegedly stealing deposits and full payments from their clients.

The trader business, which AutoTalk published editorial on in September 2018, sources new and demonstrator vehicles from new car dealers for both fleet and private buyers, plus the buy/sell of used cars, including through consignment.

About \$1.5 million has been stolen according to *WAtoday*, from around 20 consumers in both Western Australia and New South Wales.

Fair Trading has confirmed Cars & Co "may owe more than \$600,000 to consumers".

A woman, who wished to remain anonymous, lost \$58,250 to Cars & Co after being scammed. Having done her research, but finding no prior warnings about Cars & Co, she engaged the purchase and transferred the \$58,250 to Cars & Co after dealing with national sales associate **Shervin Kalimi**.

Kalimi told her the money was needed to process the car and payment with a Perth dealer, but the dealer was unaware of such a deal or contract.

The woman realised something dodgy was going on when she rang Volvo Cars Perth, who said they had

never heard of Cars & Co or Kalimi.

One three occasions, the woman was told the car was coming from Sydney, but it never showed up.

Cars & Co signed a contract with Volvo Cars Perth for a Volvo XC40 worth \$66,500. The woman was told Kalimi would pay the difference to make up for the lost time, but he never did, and the car was sold to another customer.

She tried asking for her money back and got in touch with a lawyer to try and retrieve it.

She is eligible for compensation of up to \$40,000 with the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

NSW Fair Trading commissioner **Rose Webb** issued a public warning about Cars & Co, suspending the dealer's licence and advising people not to deal with the company.

"Fair Trading has received a total of 28 complaints and 14 enquiries about the trader between November 26, 2016 and June 7, 2019, with 16 complaints under current investigation," Webb says.

On the Cars & Co Facebook page a series of reviews corroborate similar encounters with the business.

One client, **Nicole Williams**, said in June 2018: "Potential buyers beware!"

"Cars and Co will source your car and get you an amazing deal, then they

will take your deposit and not deliver your car," she said.

"Our experience was so stressful and very unpleasant and even though for whatever reason they could not deliver our vehicle, they still have not returned our deposit," she explains.

"Every day there was a new excuse until eventually phone calls and messages are not returned," she adds, describing "several others in the same boat".

Ringwood Hocking Stuart real estate agent **Lee Fenech** bought an AMG Mercedes through Cars & Co in mid-2017 but did not describe the same experience.

"He [Kalimi] was absolutely fantastic. He sent me photos promptly and described the car in detail ... organised delivery to Melbourne and organised a great [deal] on my trade-in," Fenech says.

"When the car arrived it was better than described and he even followed up with a courtesy call to see how I was enjoying it," he added.

Pakenham, Victorian customer **Craig Thom** has made repeated posts of the NSW Fair Trading Public Warning against dealing with Cars & Co.

The Cars & Co Facebook page last posted on June 24 but remains active, however, despite office hours being 9am-6pm, the 1300 number dialled by *AutoTalk* during business hours was unanswered and directed to a messaging service.

The Cars & Co website has been deactivated. ■



Shervin Kalimi,
Cars & Co



NSW Fair Trading
Commissioner
Rose Webb.



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Waging war on auto waste

A new data-based organisation called ASPIRE aims to take the costly process of waste disposal and turn it into a revenue stream, with an emphasis on the automotive industry.

The Advisory System for Processing, Innovation & Resource Exchange, born out of the CSIRO's Data61 specialist data arm, is now a standalone digital marketplace designed to create a circular economy for Australia's growing waste problem.

Director **Cameron McKenzie** tells *AutoTalk* the automotive industry has a significant role to play in being socially responsible for its contribution to the waste crisis and actively working to turn back the trash-tide.



Cameron McKenzie, ASPIRE

McKenzie says new car retailers and the thousands of servicing and repair workshops across the country all contribute directly and indirectly to the problem and should not be making excuses when it comes to pitching in.

"Saying that it's easier to send it to landfill is a cop-out," he says.

"Dealers are currently paying to get rid of these resources when it could be turned into a profitable revenue stream with someone else around the corner," he explains.

ASPIRE works as a virtual meeting point to connect dealers and workshops with other businesses who can happily turn tyres, used oil, spark plugs and oil filters, barrels of dirty fuel, crates of worn clutches, brake rotors and pads, into something else.

One ASPIRE partner, Corex, has developed a "cradle-to-cradle" solution for reclaiming solid sheet thermoplastic products which once most commonly

supplied local parts manufacturers to the factory production line at Holden, Ford and Toyota plants.

The business recycles more than 3000 tonnes of thermoplastic – a non-biodegradable plastic – every year, and can turn old oil containers, bumpers and interior plastics into its signature Core-Flute sheeting, a warehouse storage option common for transitioning away from cardboard.

McKenzie is in discussions with a major council in Melbourne's west to conduct a waste audit of the dealership businesses in its municipality, which he says could break open the true extent of the automotive waste problem. But he wants to put dealers on the right side of the fence.

"Dealers who want to be leaders in the waste industry and set an example for others can be part of a circular economy that is not only socially responsible but equitable," he says.

"This programme could be massive for the automotive sector; it's about giving dealers and the wider auto industry like body repairers and independent workshops the tools to effectively reduce their waste and recover resources," he explains.

ASPIRE says increased population and affluence encourage waste production. As more people move to an area, eat more food, buy more cars and build more houses, waste is produced. And the CSIRO attributes nearly 80% of Australia waste generation to commercial, industrial, construction and demolition activity.

"The automotive industry needs to create a system similar to the construction industry which is required by law to recycle its waste carefully," McKenzie advises.

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Inside a wheelarch is one of the most intense environments on a car.

Wheels of fortune

Carbon fibre wheel designer and manufacturer Carbon Revolution is taking great interest in the rise of electric vehicles with big business potential for the growing Australian company.

Chief technical officer **Brett Gass** tells *AutoTalk* the Waurin Ponds business near Geelong is well-positioned as an OEM supplier of lightweight carbon wheels, and will soon be offering significant value-add products for the electric vehicle market.

"It's not a question of if, but when our products start showing up on electric vehicles," he says.

"We're already working with several OEMs and have had conversations with almost all of them – the world is re-thinking efficiency, optimisation, and our wheels are on some of the fastest vehicles, recording some of the world's shortest lap times," Gass explains.

He says Carbon Revolution, which has been in the media recently as another success story to Australia and Victoria's growing, innovative and economically robust automotive industry, is itself on the verge of exponential growth.

"Removing 20-30kg from each wheel is the equivalent of removing about 200kg from the passenger compartment, as well as reducing unsprung weight to help handling, acceleration and braking efficiency because wheels influence all vehicle behaviours," Gass says.

"Electric and hybrid vehicles have the potential to drastically reduce rolling resistance and improve range, and as the market grows for efficient solutions, we're going to grow like mad too," he attests.

Carbon fibre wheels will also benefit the cabin ambience of electric vehicles which can highlight road noise with tyre contact against road surfaces and heightened wind noise due to the conventional sounds of an exhaust, internal combustion engine and gearbox sounds.

A forged aluminium wheel can be as much as 870% noisier than a carbon fibre wheel-steel wheels can be 1000% noisier.

The inherent benefits of carbon fibre wheels, Gass says, means OEMs in future could design an entire vehicle around the engineering efficiencies of carbon fibre wheels, and points to a bespoke Corvette with its General Motors drivetrain replaced with an entirely electric drivetrain – by a company called Genova – which holds the world's fastest 1/4 drag race time thanks to the nature of Carbon Revolution's patented designs.

"Inside the wheelarch is one of the most intense environments on any vehicle, with forces, temperatures and physics to the extreme," he says.

"OEMs are increasingly moving into composites and we've already partnered with a number of them to become one of their many technology supporters," he adds.

AutoTalk understands the company may be in the midst of early, unconfirmed discussions with the aerospace industry and with potential military applications. Certainly,

the fact half of a Boeing 787 Dreamliner is made of composite carbon fibre suggests the business could have relationships with several industries outside of automotive.

"People once paid \$10,000 for a carbon fibre bike but can now get one for \$500," Gass continues.

Carbon Revolution is also heavily vested in a dedicated SUV design and manufacturing programme as the category explodes in popularity globally, which Gass says has extensions to the pick-up ute segment, light commercial fleets and even the heavy vehicle industry as transport companies, government and private organisations look to reduce fuel costs and increase payload. ■

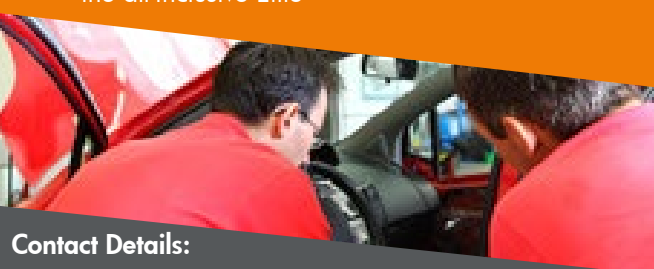


Brett Gass, chief technical officer.

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'People sell cars, not social media'

There's something in the water at Carworks in Ballarat, an X-factor which seems to score them dealer awards and industry recognition, but it's people power closing the deals, not apps.

Taking out the VACC's Industry Award for Best New Car Dealer in 2019, dealer principal **Carl Morandi's** business was also nominated for the same title in 2018, won the 2017 Provincial Dealer of the Year award and scooped the 2016 Renault Dealer Brilliance Award ahead of the brand's network of 51 other dealers.

Yet Renault Ballarat, aka Carworks, only began its tenure with the French brand in 2014 and has since become something of a thorn in the side of more established brands in the old goldmining region of central Victoria.

Located in Wendouree, which shares its name with the lake on the north side of town, Carworks, also a major used dealer, locks horns with a broad church of ownership with all the big brands – Ballarat Audi, Skoda, Volkswagen, Mazda, BMW, Skoda, Holden, Eclipse Ford, Kings Cars Suzuki, Peter Stevens Nissan, Bedgoods Motor Group (Kia, LDV, SsangYong, Citroen and Peugeot), Isuzu Ute, Ballarat City Subaru, and of course, Toyota.

Morandi tells *AutoTalk* it's a challenging market with so many brands in a provincial city of a growing 101,500 people, less than an hour-and-a-half from Melbourne.

"Ballarat is growing rapidly, with lots of affordable housing going up on blocks of land people can kick a footy on with their kids," he says.

"We now have the biggest Bunnings in Australia, it's a desirable location with a commute time similar to people living much closer to Melbourne, so that's bringing new potential customers to the region," Morandi explains.

Having also begun – and nearly completed – renovations as part new franchise with Fiat Chrysler Jeep, Carworks itself is mirroring the town itself.

But Morandi reveals times are quite tough at the forecourt level, especially in



the current economical climate, as sales continue to droop and consumer spending tightens.

"You sell a lot and make a little, and people refer their friends and family, especially in the light commercial side," he says.

"We do well off the referral business; as soon as you get the 'good bloke' stamp on you, because a mate or family member has worked with you, that's really good for business," he explains.

"Social media doesn't sell cars, all it does is give you brand familiarity, brand awareness," he continues.

Morandi says getting cut-through is tricky with a French marque in an area built on farming, primary produce and resources – where tourism is a growing but arguably quiet industry for Ballarat.

"Ninety-nine people out of a 100 in Ballarat would think a Renault is knocking down a wall in a house – we brought the brand to town five years ago and it's a slog because we're not at the front of everyone's minds or on top of their shopping lists," Morandi concedes.

"When customers do come to us we have to give them something they won't get at the other brands; the product doesn't sell, it's the people that make the difference and we're very hands-on," he says.

"I'm involved in every deal we do, meeting and greeting every single customer to make sure they get the best experience at every stage."

The challenges continue to Carworks' used car business, not only because buyers often go to the respective franchised dealer of the used car they seek a bargain for, but also due to the hamstrung financial sector.



Third from left: Carl Morandi, Carworks Ballarat dealer principal, with his passionate team.

Restrictions placed on dealers as a result of changes brought down by the Hayne Royal Commission is forcing business owners like Morandi to walk a tightrope.

Where used cars often become a dealer's go-to strategy in tough new-car times, Morandi says the second-hand trade is equally soggy.

"Used has had a shake-up too with the change in finance structure; we've had to change our business model slightly there as well – Melbourne's Cheapest Cars is no longer Melbourne's cheapest cars these days," he says.

"We're nimble enough to adapt if there is further dramatic change, where 70% of our customers were once finance, now we're back to industry standards, the volume's not there, and I think it's going to affect a lot of dealers," he explains.

As the new car retailing business evolves and grows like Ballarat itself, it's a given the changes and challenges facing Carworks will be overcome or navigated. Morandi certainly isn't sitting still.

Just this week the new Carworks Fiat Chrysler Jeep pylon branding is going up, perhaps as a sign of the times.

"When there's a change in the industry you have to change with it, or you won't be around," Morandi concludes. ■



'Family honour' at stake as special oil dries up

In May, *AutoTalk* reported on two independent Alfa Romeo and Fiat servicing workshops in Melbourne's outer suburbs being starved of one-make factory-specified oil.

Anotonio Scaffidi and **Laura Cannistrà's** modest family business depends on a relationship with a range of parts suppliers for both after-market, non-genuine and 100% authentic genuine Alfa Romeo and Fiat parts for the most passionate of their loyal customers.

"We also have customers who say they will not service their Fiat or Alfa with anybody else because they are a part of our family, so we honour them by giving them the best customer service we possibly can," Cannistrà says.

"Quite a number of customers also say they absolutely will not have anything other than totally genuine Alfa Romeo parts used on their car," she adds.

When the business tries to order Selenia oil, which the customer has requested to ensure everything is Alfa Romeo's specified brand, they can only order from the franchised dealer network in Australia.

"It can't be imported independently and nobody is allowed to stock it," Cannistrà explains.

"So, we order five litres, but the quote comes back saying four one-litre bottles are on back order, and we would've been supplied one litre – that order also had a three-month delay," she reveals.

"We can't wait that long, but we also can't order enough back stock to keep a steady supply," she adds.

Fiat Chrysler Australia resounded to *AutoTalk's* questions regarding the sup-

ply of specially-formulated Selenia oil to independent workshops.

"Yes, Alfa Romeo dealership departments are allowed to on-sell Selenia oil to independent workshops," an FCA spokesperson says.

"This helps to ensure the correct product is used for Alfa Romeo vehicles."

Asked what volumes the dealer network's back-order supply of Selenia oil holds, FCA says it "differs per dealer, based on dealer orders and service centre requirements."

A second Alfa Romeo workshop *AutoTalk* spoke to says the Selenia oil situation is just one sticking point.

"There are equivalent oils you can use from other brands which match the performance and then some, but they don't protect special solenoids which are prematurely chemically damaged by anything other than Selenia," Matt says.

"The new Selenia oil blend recipe is not licensed to any other oil brand ... I would suspect many workshops, possibly even some dealerships, are not using Selenia oil because whenever I've contacted the warehouse, they tell me it 'hasn't been in stock for months' or 'hasn't been made available'," he reveals.

A third workshop contacted this week says they always keep Selenia oil in stock because of its critical importance in servicing customers.

"I don't take any chances, Selenia oil is the only type we use," he says.

"If we used more than 5% of another oil it will damage vital components and void the warranty; I have this information through the dealer network bulletin," they concede.

He says Alfa Romeo is just one of many brands, including popular mass market brands, using or specifying unique grades of oil.

FCA says it values and appreciates all customers, whether they are a first-time

Alfa Romeo customer, or long-term advocates of the brand.

"Customers can service their Alfa Romeo outside of the FCA dealer network, however, FCA Australia recommends all Alfa Romeo customers service their vehicles at an authorised Alfa Romeo dealership, where the technicians are factory-trained and genuine Alfa Romeo parts are used," the spokesperson says.

"Alfa Romeo owners are highly focused on performance and design in equal measures. They are independently minded and confident in their decision making; they don't see themselves as followers or wanting to fit in with the masses," FCA says.

"Driver at the centre' has been a consistent brand attribute, and this has translated into vehicles that love to be driven," FCA adds.

All three Alfa workshops contacted say they too can perform logbook servicing, advanced diagnostics and two are VicRoads-approved licensed vehicle testers capable of issuing roadworthy certificates. All three offer technical expertise, use of specialised tools while fitting quality OEM parts at "less than factory prices", including advanced oils and lubricants.

But it seems the jury is still out on just how much choice that independently-minded and decision-making consumer is given in where they take their beloved Alfa.

The question remains why some Alfa workshops can't be properly supplied Selenia oil, "the lifeblood of Alfa Romeo", but franchised dealers can. ■



Anotonio Scaffidi and Laura Cannistrà's love for Italian cars is being tested.



Selenia oil is the "lifeblood of Alfa Romeo".



Rural Nissan dealers to complete Leaf experience

Nissan Australia has confirmed its entire national dealer network, including its rural retailers, will complete the brand's Leaf customer experience programme.

Speaking to *AutoTalk* this month at the Leaf launch in Melbourne, managing director **Stephen Lester** says Nissan's rural dealers are important for closing the gap between metro and provincial dealers to offer an uncompromised customer support map.

He says every Nissan dealership in the 187-strong family will be capable of selling, servicing and providing charging support for the new generation Leaf, with 60 already technically prepared, with trained sales staff on-hand and charging infrastructure ready to go.

"We have been very clear with the network: The requirements are the requirements, and they're non-negotiable – we are not going to deliver a sub-standard customer experience with the Leaf," he confirms.

"We would say to metro or provincial dealers: 'You are going to be a Leaf dealer because with this opt-in-opt-out idea, we're so convinced of the trajectory for EVs that as a brand we can't afford to have one dealer saying they're not doing it and giving a dissatisfaction to the customer'," Lester reveals.

"The 89 dealers already signed up to the Leaf programme roughly represent all our metro and provincial dealers across Australia, the balance is what we would classify as more 'rural' dealers," he says.

"Those dealers are typified by much smaller markets and are relatively remote," Lester explains.

He says Nissan dealers are vital to supporting the Leaf's widespread uptake.

"We need them to have the installations because going down the track we cannot deliver an experience where our customer is sacrificing when they go into a dealership," he explains.

"The plan will be to on-board rural dealers as we go, those who want to start early can do so and we'll give them all the benefits."

Lester says the market in Australia's more remote regions will be a long-term target customer for the benefits of the \$50,000 electric car.

"In our expansion plans we've gone out to all those rural dealers and said you're welcome to be a hand-raiser and we'll provide cars, but we still need



Stephen Lester.

you to do the basics, to send your people for training, and we need technical training," he continues.

"Tools, the EV service campaigns, and charging stations to ensure owners can receive the same level of service as a metro dealer."

Nissan says regional dealers in interesting locations such as tourism destinations, larger populated provincial cities and towns are seeing the strong benefits of having electric vehicle preparations in place.

Lester says Nissan hasn't encouraged the rural network as being part of a "push strategy" but says it was on a more voluntary basis.

"They have raised hands and come to us which is why we've been saying we'll see about 89, maybe 90 by the time we go on-sale, with charger installs within August, and many who are a bit further down the track," he says.

Lester explains rural Nissan customers tend to have "predictable traffic patterns", as well as renewable energy access such as in-home solar becoming increasingly popular to self-sufficient, smaller communities.

"Their route is usually pretty specific and being beholden to a petrol station is no longer necessary – you need a

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Western Plains Nissan. Image: Google Maps.

Rural Nissan dealers to complete Leaf experience

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vehicle to go into town, do grocery shopping, take kids to school – all tasks the Leaf can easily complete,” he concludes.

Nissan global director of EVs **Nic Thomas**, citing Morgan Stanley Research, says the amount of carbon dioxide and oxides of nitrogen produced from compliance of internal combustion drivetrain development will also rise.



Nic Thomas.

The drivetrain costs of CO₂ and NO_x compliance for electric vehicles versus internal combustion keeps rising, with a crossover period, accounting for real-world driving emissions (RDE), expected around 2024.

Where current compliance costs sit at around \$250 per kWh for an EV, it's expected to drop below \$100 per kWh by 2025, in the same two-year bracket when internal combustion is predicted to go from \$175/kWh to \$225/kWh.

“The costs of those conventional engines will go up,” Thomas says.

“These are the costs to us as a company of building traditional [internal combustion] engines in the way we always have,” he concedes.

“Therefore, we'll have to pass those costs on to consumers, not just us, but every other manufacturer,” he adds.

Thomas explains with the cost of batteries is also coming down rapidly because Nissan and mobile phone companies are investing in them, and because the world needs batteries.

“Those battery costs are falling very rapidly which is why we're offering the Leaf with a 40kWh battery at the same price we used to sell the car with a 24kWh battery,” he says.

“There will be a crossover very soon where a battery car will cost less than a petrol or diesel car,” Thomas highlights.

“But people aren't really going to buy a car to save the world, they buy a car because it's brilliant to drive.”

The 40kWh Leaf launched (a 62kWh battery is coming) is one of the most affordable EVs on the market at \$49,990, plus on-road costs.

A bi-directional charging capability allows it to power a home, known as vehicle-to-home (V2H), which means that, in future, Nissan Leaf customers in Australia will be able to use the vehicle to share energy stored in its battery with their home, business or even community.

V2H could be ready in about six months and helps provide emergency back-up power for up to two days.

Nissan says it is working with charging partners both locally and internationally, as well as various stakeholders in the energy, academic, government and business sectors to realise the benefit of this technology for Australian consumers.

An e-Pedal allows drivers to start, accelerate, decelerate, stop and hold the car by using the accelerator pedal alone without needing to use the brakes. It also features an auto-hold function.

The Leaf has a maximum five-star safety rating from Australia's New Car

Assessment Program (ANCAP).

Safety features include intelligent emergency braking with pedestrian detection, blind spot warning, rear cross traffic alert, lane departure warning, intelligent lane intervention and intelligent forward collision warning as standard equipment.

It also has intelligent around-view monitor with moving object detection, intelligent cruise control, intelligent driver alert, front and rear parking sensors, six SRS airbags, vehicle dynamic control with traction control system, ISOFIX and three top tether child restraint anchor points, Apple CarPlay and Android Auto.

The battery puts out 110kW of power and 320Nm of torque, providing instant acceleration.

It can be fully charged within 24 hours using a standard home wall socket, and the time drops to 7.5 hours if the latest 7kW home charger is used.

Plugging into a Chademo rapid charger gets from alert to 80% charge in around an hour.

A collaboration with Jet Charge will assist customers with home charging infrastructure needs, and via a partnership with Chargefox, Nissan, hopes to help increase charging awareness and ready the country for the impending spike in EV sales.

Chargefox aims to have more than 100 DC fast chargers in place by the end of the year, along with a national network of 22 ultra-rapid chargers forming a network connecting Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne and Adelaide. ■

Industry airbag warnings not being heard

Continued from page 1

The ACT also has 72 'alpha' inflators and Tasmania has 28 still posing a danger. There are also 646 unaccounted-for Takata 'alpha' inflator units which manufacturer brands are yet to trace whether they are still registered or in circulation.

Holden still has 115,760 standard Takata airbags to be removed, while Toyota has well over 90,000, along with some 54,000 Mercedes-Benzes, more than 45,000 Nissans and nearly 43,000 Volkswagens.

The ACCC has issued Indigenous Outreach Officers to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities especially in South Australia and Queensland who are also located in regions of high heat and humidity, exacerbating the risk factors.

ACCC deputy chair **Delia Rickard** says they're even asking children whose English is better than their elders to assist.

"We're urging all consumers, especially those from regional and rural areas

and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, to check if their vehicle is affected, and help spread the word to their family and friends," she says.

The Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries says despite tipping in resources including an advertising campaign designed to promote awareness of the issue, "Many owners of out-standing vehicles have simply overlooked the need to check the status of their vehicles," chief executive Tony Weber says.

"By increasing the tempo of the advertising with more direct messaging, we hope to seize the attention of vehicle owners and their families," he explains.

"Time, money and resources are not a consideration for the Australian automotive industry in the mandatory Takata recall. All that matters is the faulty airbags

are rectified as soon as possible, and with minimum inconvenience for the customer," Weber explains.

The FCAI recently targeted Western Australia as a particularly difficult state to reach into the remote communities of to spread awareness, as well as farming communities which are known for stretching the longevity of their vehicles.

"Many of these (affected) vehicles will be used by farmers and their families travelling long distances every day," Weber says.

"Others may be older farm vehicles that are only be used from time to time," he continues.

"However, there are still 62,859 airbags in Western Australia requiring replacement. This includes 371 of the highly dangerous Alpha airbags," he said in June.

In total, Australia's dealer networks have removed 3.2 million airbags from vehicles, according to the ACCC's records. ■



Delia Rickard,
ACCC.

Mass recall for SkyActiv engine

Continued from page 1

engine adopts cylinder deactivation to reduce fuel consumption when driving at constant speeds. The recall only relates to the 2.5-litre petrol, and does

not relate to the 2.2-litre diesel Skyactiv engine debuted in March 2018.

Mazda's dealership network will re-program the powertrain control module at no charge to the customer when

they present the vehicle for rectification.

The fault relates to 18,719 Mazda vehicles sold between February 16, 2018 to May 11, 2019. ■

Waging war on auto waste

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The Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce heaps praise on accredited automotive recyclers for keeping as much scrap from landfill as possible by on-selling parts to give them a second or even a third life, but more needs to be done.

"We put 200,000 tonnes of unrecycled automotive waste in the ground every year, not the metal, all the other material," chief executive **Geoff Gwilym** says.

"About 64,000 tonnes of the wasted material is in Victoria alone," he explains.

With nearly 1.2 million new vehicles sold last year, the VACC says this inevitably pushes another million scrap vehicles out of circulation and into landfill by the end of 2019. The auto waste problem will be the focus



Geoff Gwilym,
VACC

of discussions at the next VACC Industry Council meeting in late August.

Out of 180 countries, according to Yale University, Australia ranks only 21st in the world on

its Environmental Performance Index with a global ranking of 13 for water/sanitation; 46 for heavy metal exposure; 61 for biodiversity and habitat; 98 in climate and energy.

Auto Recyclers Association of Australia executive director **David Nolan** says: "Compared with Japan, China, Europe and the US, Australia's regulatory system for vehicle recycling is totally inadequate.

"Automotive waste has a significant environmental impact because vehicles are highly intensive of material resources," he concludes. ■



Supporting delays in RVSA

This week in Federal Parliament legislators will agree that new laws regulating the importation and supply of road vehicles be delayed for up to two years. The Road Vehicle Standards Act is the culmination of the review of the Motor Vehicle Standards Act, a process which has taken more than five years.



James Voortman, Chief executive officer, Australian Automotive Dealer Association, AADA

The review process has been politically sensitive, particularly in the early days when the Government was considering a scheme which would have allowed for the parallel importation of new vehicles from right-hand drive markets.

The AADA and other industry bodies strongly opposed this, mainly on consumer welfare and road safety grounds. In late 2017 the Government agreed with us, announcing that it would be abandoning this policy.

With this controversial element removed from the legislation, some stakeholders pushed for this new legislation to be implemented as soon as possible.

However, the AADA supports the legislative delay for the simple fact that the laws are not yet quite ready. The new legislation is the biggest shake up of vehicle standards legislation in 30 years.

There are a number of new complex elements such as a new online register of approved vehicles, recall powers for the Minister responsible, and new criteria to allow vehicles to be imported under a concessional path.

There are a host of stakeholders that have to adjust to this new environment, such as the many businesses involved with the importation and first supply of cars to the market.

OEMs, registered automotive workshops, newly established authorised vehicle verifiers and independent importers will all need to adjust. Governments will also need to be ready, not only the Federal Government but also State and Territory registration authorities.

In particular, the AADA supports the delay due to specific concerns we have around the operation of the Specialist and Enthusiast Vehicle scheme, known as the SEVs. The SEVs is a pathway for car enthusiasts to bring unique, rare and exotic cars to Australia.

Unfortunately, the scheme as it exists has been flagrantly abused. In particular, through a loophole that allowed independent importers to bring into Australia used people movers under the guise of campervans.

The SEVs is now being reformed and we support the goal of making it a more objective scheme that caters for true specialist and enthusiast vehicles.

However, the AADA remains concerned about several elements being proposed by the Government that could still allow the scheme to be used as a back door for mainstream second-

hand car imports.

Our biggest concern with the SEVs scheme is that for the first-time vehicle variants (not just models) that are not supplied by manufacturers in Australia will be eligible for importation by individuals and private businesses. In theory this is acceptable, but only if we have a robust definition of what constitutes a variant.

Cosmetic difference should not be part of that robust definition. A pink vehicle with an additional cup holder should not be considered a variant.

In our view, the definition of a variant should focus on core features that make a real difference, such as transmission type and propulsion type. The AADA believes appropriate international definitions of variant already exist, including the EU definition or the definition of variant within the United Nations Regulations.

Vehicles that do pass the variant test can then come into Australia under certain categories. We are still coming to terms with the thresholds embedded in these categories, but there is enough in there that concerns us that a potential backdoor for mainstream used car imports could emerge.

The Takata airbag recall has delivered a lesson in the importance of vehicle provenance. The safety and consumer welfare implications should be front and centre of this reform and we hope that a delay in the implementation of the laws assists us in reaching the best possible vehicle standards regime. ■



The great Australian fuel furphy

Dirty fuel, the bleached white Great Barrier Reef dying, and tinfoil-hat resistance to electric vehicles; the lucky country is messing things up.



Kurt McGuinness,
Board Director
Public Relations and
Brand Experience
Manager, Volkswagen
Group Australia

I recently caught up with a friend who does a similar job to me - a lobbyist for a major Australian supermarket.

While we swapped war stories and lamented the clichés vs the reality of what a lobbyist actually does (most of the time, anyway) he mentioned his day-to-day consisted primarily of collaborating with local and federal government bodies to bring about change for staff and customers across the company's national footprint.

Not once did he mention making political donations, buying off media, or anything else *House of Cards* would have you to believe goes on.

We went on to the subject of a presentation I gave on the simple strategies we employ at Volkswagen Group Australia to generate owned media and content, and how this has come out of necessity - as we attempt to plug the hole once filled by broad, independent media.

That hole has been left by a serious decline of unique voices in the automotive media. Where once my team and I would talk to close on 30 media

professionals at any given time, nowadays it's closer to 10.

Thanks to aggressive buy-outs, the continual decline of print relevance, and yes, big corporates such as us divesting traditional media spend into social media and owned-content streams; "the media" as it were, is not doing the job for our brand that it once did; which is to help us sell cars.

No surprise then, just as we have found ways to fill the hole left by media, media has found a way to fill the hole left by us - and that replacement has deeper pockets and influence than the whole auto sector combined.

Say hello to the new voice in your newsroom: **Mr Big Oil, PhD.** He's quite learned, apparently.

The Australian automotive industry is under attack and risks obsolescence if it doesn't keep up with the likes of Europe and Asia. Problem is, we don't have the same standard of fuel - not even close when it comes to our petrol - which remains some of the most sulfuric (dirty) in the developed world.

Even if the world's auto manufacturers take pity on our comparatively small market (selling one million cars a year vs China's 20 times that) and develop a work-around to contend with Australia's crap fuel quality, it still poses the question of what our fuel is doing to our environment, and our lungs.

President of the Federal Chamber of

Automotive Industries (FCAI) and CEO of Mercedes-Benz Australia/Pacific, **Mr Horst von Sanden**, summed it perfectly in his maiden speech as supremo of the automotive peak body: "We need fuel of first-world quality to get a first-world emissions outcome."

Dirty fuel equals Third-World cars. While EVs will go some way to reduce emissions and air pollution in our cities where it is at its peak, the reality is we will be driving internal combustion cars for some time yet in Australia; so, having better fuel will continue to be a pressing priority. The worst part is, in Big Oil's expert opinion, there's nothing he can do.

The depth of this line of b*** is breathtaking. A cursory glance at what petrol is actually brought into the country will show that, on occasion, First-World fuel of 10ppm does in fact make it to our bowlers, albeit anonymously. This begs the question why Big Oil can't make a habit of this practice, and ensure all cars are as clean as possible for Australian customers and communities.**

I'm writing this, because it appears very few else will.

Only a small number of my car company colleagues continue to talk about the shocking deficit in Australian fuel, despite becoming the dull voices at the party - repeating the same old

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The great Australian fuel furphy

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story and getting fewer listeners each time.

For every great bit of journalism that attempts to make sense of this raw deal and look at all factors, I can cite a dozen other examples where Big Oil gets a free kick. In the last 12 months: Big Oil has supplied major mastheads with advertorial fuel buying and how-to guides, fuel economy “research” and, perhaps most offensive to my formal journalism training, paid sponsorship of so-called “influencer” social media feeds.

While the media’s influence on the car-buying public continues to wane and manufacturers put up less ad dollars, the seemingly highly-educated and well-intentioned Big Oil is happy to foot the bill and produce content hiding in plain sight as editorial.

Now, it would be incredibly disingenuous of me to not acknowledge, a) my own personal allegiances which begin and end with my own livelihood and, b) the Dieselgate scandal that engulfed my company. [Volkswagen even unveiled its new Kombi-inspired ID Buzz with the poignant statement: “In the darkness, we found the light”].

But here, in Australia, where we are a local company that sells European products, our role to play is a simpler one – to get the very best products we can, so that we can sell them to as many Australians as possible.

That objective is the same for all car brands in Australia, who I would wager right now are also trying to convince their European and Asian parent companies to take them seriously, despite having Australia’s contemptible approach to climate change and any



meaningful approach to environmental reform.

Trust me, being environmentally friendly is great for marketing, but with the Australian public – it’s more a “nice to have”, rather than an imperative.

“We have a new White Australia Policy: The Great Barrier Reef and the bleaching of its ancient coral.”

On a personal level, however, it’s all I can think about. Like my friend the lobbyist, I hope I can enact a modicum of change – either by getting the word out to folks who read my work or hear me speak, or by continuing to question the motives of Big Oil who I think is taking the piss.

To be fair, Big Oil’s contemporaries are also to blame, so too are all of us. The Government’s own advisors are warning that more ambitious policies are needed to meet our Paris Accord commitments.

While I can no longer call myself a journalist (and nor should I – that’s the cost of a corporate paycheck), I still believe in the Fourth Estate and the role of the public to uphold it. Cutting-edge technology in cars is good for business, my business; but that doesn’t mean it can’t be good for the environment too.

My colleagues and

I are working on bringing Volkswagen’s ID family of electric vehicles to Australia at present, and the conversations with head office are tough to say the least. Not that you can blame our parent company – how can a market like Australia, so complacent in its poor environmental policy and standards, be taken seriously when it comes to EV infrastructure?

Just this week, Volkswagen announced its “goTOzero” plan to reduce emissions and drive sustainability company-wide.

I don’t have kids, but I do worry about our children. Whether you believe in climate change or not (or, more specifically, if you’re a flat-Earther or not), cleaner fuel means cleaner air. Given that most schools in suburban areas are on main roads, we should all want future generations to breathe easier.

If I am to be seen as a lobbyist; all slick words and corporate manipulation, let it be for something that matters. Big Oil is trying to buy what’s left of the media’s influence, and continue to treat Australia as a dumping ground for its dregs.

Whether you like it or not, new, fuel efficient cars burn less fuel, which in turn saves customers money. Sure, you can expect Big Oil to charge more per barrel for Euro-spec petrol, but if you’re using less of it, how much more can it be? By all reports, not a lot.

Of course, this is all a moot point in the face of an increased EV fleet roll-out. My only hope is the energy sector doesn’t treat Australia with the same contempt as Big Oil. ■



futuretrucking

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY TRANSPORT & EQUIPMENT



Old school in a brave new world

They don't make automotive businesses like they used to and peeking around the chilly, corrugated expanse of one bloody big shed in Melbourne's south-east industrial Mecca, few would disagree.

HM Gem Engines is an engine re-manufacturing operation headed out of Dandenong, with satellite branches in Adelaide, Shepparton, Wagga Wagga, Sydney, Coffs Harbour, Tamworth, Brisbane, Townsville and Cairns.

Their specialty is turning tired, hard-worked heavy duty diesel engines into pristine powerhouses with torque figures the automotive industry can barely fathom, let alone truly appreciate.

Anything is possible, from tiny two-litre four-banger van or ute engines to vast slabs of capacity one could measure with basketballs rather than bottles of milk. Put crudely, engines are stripped to their core and bored out by thousandths of a millimetre before being rebuilt and sent back to the customer to live another life moving

mountains, powering towns and hospitals, hauling sugar, coal and ore, or to simply stick back in the humble workhorse ute fleet.

The shavings which pile up under a 30-litre Cummins diesel block may look artistic and even beautiful to the scrap-sculptors out there, but anybody who's had a deep paper cut will attest to the razored edge of this carved metal form. It looks like it belongs atop a Masterchef's prize-winning cake, not on the cold concrete floor under an old, browned steel engine stand.

This is an artform many would agree has been lost to our world of disposable everything. Engineers working with decimal points, peering over the rim of their glasses, chewing on their bottom lip as levers are pulled and buttons are pushed having measured twice to cut once.

The rough cost of one of these bigger engines, destined for another reincarnation inside a regional passenger locomotive, or perhaps to burrow out the side of a small mountain, is anywhere around a quarter of a million dollars. The raw skill of getting this right is not only important, but profitable.

In late June, HM Gem, its managing director **Bruce**



R-L: Bruce Parker and Dean Taylor win Best Engine Reconditioner award.

Parker and general manager **Dean Taylor**, collectively won the VACC's Industry Award for investing back into the business on a large renewable energy initiative by installing 300kW of rooftop solar to run during the day what you could understand is a very energy-intensive operation.

The addition of one of the largest boring machines in Victoria and Tasmania is also a massive investment tipped back into the business which Taylor says puts them firmly on the front foot. He says such an enormous machine is already installed in Adelaide, Brisbane and Cairns to meet mining and heavy transport customers' needs. Just don't ask what it costs.

It'll bore anything from a 50-litre to 70-litre engine. But Taylor says his team is currently frying an even bigger, trickier fish.



Toyota's V8 diesel still a fibrous staple of HM Gem's diet.

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Old school in a brave new world

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"At the moment we're trying to figure out getting the crankshaft in here from a 91-litre Cummins engine," he says whimsically.

"That's a V20 engine bigger than the boardroom table we're currently sitting at," he describes, depicting a powerplant capable of running a small town, hospital or high-rise building.

The re-manufacturing process by its nature is considered economical and environmentally conscious because of the drastically extended life it gives an extremely resource-intensive engine.

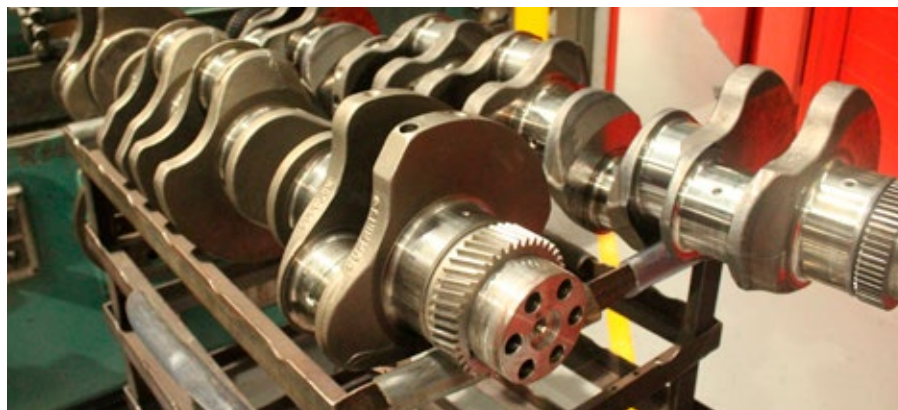
Efficiency in re-manufacturing is crucial which is why every minute spent on a job is benchmarked, but the nature of the business can also be fraught with trouble spots.

"Manufacturing is different from re-manufacturing because in the former, you're producing a raw component to an original design drawing with no stresses induced into it," Taylor explains.

"Re-manufacturing means you're working with parts that have been beaten around, you have to be able to interpret the part in order to correct it, with each part considered an individual component, despite often wearing similarly," he says.

Not only do his engineers need the skill, they also need to be trained to programme the CNC equipment, another "difficult barrier" Taylor explains is part of getting into this line of work.

Parker says the various computer systems the business runs are "constantly evolving" and despite having been rebuilding and assembling engines for more than half a century,



there's a new schematic or set of intricate information coming through for an upcoming job.

"Particularly for bus companies we're working with now, there is a new generation for engine assembly," Taylor explains.

HM is trusted with the intimate proprietary technical data of so many OEMs, they protect it with increasing vigilance. Some approach them for help at an extremely intimate level.

"We're talking about engines of over 5000 horsepower at the large end of the scale, we have to work with all their dealer networks, have a strong relationship with every OEM," Parker says.

Taylor says the relationship not only requires the highest confidentiality, but co-operation. For example, Pacific National has 570 active locomotives, each with an enormous engine that requires servicing.

"With those biggest engine manufacturers, we think of it as a partnership, because we can extend the life cycle of one engine by doing one small thing differently, with massive savings and benefits to both them, their cus-

tomers and us," he says.

The business also works hard to keep new blood coming in, with 14 apprentices in its Melbourne base and two per office, many of whom Taylor brings in from automotive to up-skill for heavy diesel.

"Bruce's commitment to investing in people is massive, I've never known a time without apprentices coming through – it's essential," he says.

Taylor spends a lot of time teaching young people the needed skills, which is easier in transitioning from automotive in the city, but the regional offices find long-term recruitment harder.

Parker and Taylor say a 20-year staff retention is reasonably common within the business, but rare in the modern workforce. Perhaps it's the nature of the work.

"The most human intervention is assembling components," Taylor says.

"Where it was manual machines using operator skill once upon a time, a lot of it is computer programmed, but particularly with crankshaft grinding, it's still very artful and requires teaching," he explains.

"With so many different engine types, it's a very custom process, so keeping new people coming in is still difficult when most people are only staying in jobs about five years," Taylor concedes.

"That's our biggest challenge, and there's a very personal aspect to interacting with our branches to keep them onboard – continually training them with the very best equipment keeps them keen," he adds.

"You can pick the eager kids early on down here in Melbourne, but in the regions it's much harder," he adds.



Loyalty meets longevity.

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Old school in a brave new world



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Despite the majority of the company's attention being drawn to the heavier industries, Parker says the automotive roots haven't gone anywhere even though he was warned things would change.

Parker says the trucking industry, which operates on numbers first and sentiment second, unlike the more materialistic automotive consumer, is a precious supporter of his company.

"The on-going value of a truck engine is built into the lifecycle of the vehicle, unlike the 1.6-litre four-cylinder engine in a Hyundai," he says respectfully.

"More than 60% of our business is machining services for the heavy vehicle industry, which about 20 years ago was more like 20%," he says.

"Effectively the price of cars has come down so low that it's not an economic argument to fit, exchange or remanufacture an engine anymore," he says.

Taylor explains: "Cars today are so cheap the scale isn't there anymore, but where we can see inherent value in a vehicle, such as a tradie vehicle

or four-wheel-drive with a special set-up, we do still do it."

"It depends on the models, their price, their inception into the market and whether they will hold intrinsic value for the owner and us," he adds.

HM Gem Engines was, once upon a time, the go-to business partner for General Motors Holden and Ford Australia for engine warranty repairs.

As one of the earliest disrupted businesses, Parker was warned of a potential collapse in Australian vehicle manufacturing.

"We knew that Holden and Ford were going to exit the country 20 years ago – they spoke to us, both of them, it came up very clearly around the Gen III programme," he reveals.

"They made us aware they were going to be exiting at some stage; Mitsubishi wasn't going well, Nissan had already gone, it was just a matter of 'when', not 'if'," he explains.

Taylor says the petrol and diesel



Moving mountains? There's no replacement for displacement.

passenger car engine remanufacturing market "took a nose dive over 20 years ago", which he and Parker attribute to the introduction of GST and the evolution of engines themselves.

"Everybody wants a shiny new car and a mechanic's workshop is not based on the very technical and skillful task of correctly fitting a new engine, which also means a hoist is in-use for a long time," he attests.

"Cars aren't designed to have engines replaced anymore, whereas in the trucking industry, those engines are absolutely designed to be remanufactured," Taylor explains.

The next time you absent-mindedly read "Without trucks Australia stops" on the back of a B-double, take a second.

Think about who keeps the stevedores and cargo cranes, the excavators, portable generators, the 100-car freight trains, dump trucks, the heavy-rigids and of course even the iconic Toyota diesel V8 from stopping.

HM Gem is now one of the most called-upon operations to carry out engine work of this kind. You know this because it's going on 70 platinum-plated years of service keeping Australia moving. ■



Sometimes skilled hands are the only way.

Gravity winning new car market battle

Kia was strong again in July

Top 10 Brands



Hilux drop 10% over July 2018

The rate of new car sales declines has slowed throughout July but brings closer two years of consecutive monthly sales decreases.

If Australia's franchised dealers and their respective brands can't arrest the market slide by early 2020, they could be looking at a 24-month downturn.

According to VFACTS data supplied by the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries, a 2.8% drop in reported July 2019 sales continues the market slow-down, while a 7.7% slump in annual sales for 2019 also puts the retailers and brands on the back foot.

Even with Toyota retaining its 19.2% market share dominance with over 122,600 reported sales, ahead of Mazda in second with exactly 10% share on 63,600 reported sales and Hyundai in third on 8.1% and nearly 52,000 July sales, nine out of the top 10 brands report declines.

The only top 10 brand to improve during July 2019 was Kia, gaining in monthly market share, annual sales and monthly sales over the equivalent 2018 period.

Kia finished in sixth placed with 5.7% market share, 36,570 reported sales for 2019, and 4506 July-2019 sales which were enough to keep Volkswagen in seventh, Nissan eighth, Holden ninth and Honda in 10th, while Ford (fifth) and Mitsubishi (fourth) managed to hold the Korean brand back.

Of the most popular models, the Hilux lost 10.4% reported monthly sales in July 2019 compared with last year, the Mazda 3 lost 22.5% against July 2018, and the

LandCruiser, despite news of its set-for-extinction V8, also recorded a slight dip - just 0.9%.

The only states to record a July 2019 improvement over last year was Tasmania with a 15% gain and Western Australia up 5%.

FCAI chief executive

Tony Weber blames a number of factors holding back the market ripe for the opportunistic consumer.

"Tight financial lending, drought, increasing Luxury Car Tax imposts and the Federal election have all contributed to make the Australian car market one of the toughest in the world," he says.

"It is great news for the consumer who is spoiled for choice with attractive new car offers as automotive brands provide excellent deals to stimulate sales growth," Weber concedes.

"The July sales figures continue to illustrate the tough market conditions facing the Australian automotive industry, and the sensitive nature of the economy over the past 12 months," he concludes.

Roy Morgan's quarterly *Automotive Currency Report* back in April suggested the retail new car market was facing a four-year rut for buying intentions.

Just 2,125,000 Australians said they were intending to buy a new car in the next four years, as of December 2018, and there were 61,000 fewer consumer considering buying within the next year.

At the end of 2018, there were 135,000 fewer intending consumers in the automotive market, 6% down on December 2017.

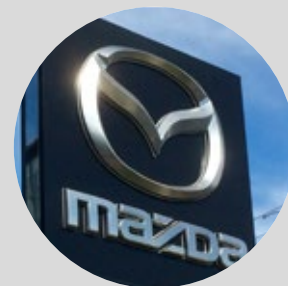
The report said things were only going to get worse before they improved, citing automotive consumer intentions at their lowest in four years and well below the 15-year average. ■



Tony Weber,
FCAI chief executive



1. Toyota 17,876



2. Mazda 8,227













3. Hyundai 6,983













4. Mitsubishi 5,247

2019 sales in July

Top 10 Light vans

	1. Toyota Hiace Van 646
	2. Hyundai iLOAD 371
	3. Ford Transit Custom 156
	4. Renault Trafic 140
	5. Volkswagen Transporter 126
	6. LDV G10 115
	7. LDV V80 38
	8. Peugeot Expert 10
	9. Mercedes-Benz Vito 3
	10. Citroen Dispatch 0

Top 10 Sports cars sub \$80k

	1. Ford Mustang 262
	2. BMW 2 Series Coupe/Conv 76
	3. Toyota 86 38
	4. Mazda MX5 38
	5. Subaru BRZ 22
	6. Renault Sport Megane 20
	7. MINI Cabrio 18
	8. Nissan 370Z 17
	9. Audi A3 Convertible 11
	10. Abarth 124 Spider 8

Top 10 Brands continued



5. Ford 4,900



6. Kia 4,506



7. Volkswagen 3,609



8. Nissan 3,804



9. Holden 3,266



10. Honda 2,938



Size matters, except when it doesn't.

Picanto someone your own size

Have you ever noticed that the short action heroes seem to pack the meanest punch, take the hardest hits and are near impossible to catch, capture or kill?

Think about it. **Bruce Willis** as John McClane, **Tom Cruise** as Ethan Hunt, **Sylvester Stallone** as Rocky Balboa, **Mel Gibson** as Riggs, **Harrison Ford** as Indiana Jones, and **Daniel Craig** as Bond. Need the list continue?

None are taller than 1.85m, and with yours truly at the same height and routinely adjusting the seating position in every single press fleet vehicle upon collection, it seems there's a theme with being short but unexpectedly tough as nails.

This sentiment extends to Kia's properly bonkers Picanto GT, as expressed to the brand's Australian communications team during the week-long test. Method:

- Take a regular Picanto.
- Open bonnet.
- Locate and remove nearest bee hive – use wasp nest if bees unavailable.
- Insert bees/wasps into engine bay.
- Close bonnet.
- Depress clutch pedal, turn key to start engine.

But this firecracker hot hatch is more than just a reverse engineered mirco-car from another top 10 manufacturer brand – it's a sign of the times – and yet it's something of a flashback to the way cars, like action heroes, used to be. Namely, real. Pay attention, anybody under 30.

You get a real manual gearbox housing five gear ratios you can select yourself in a two-stage process, by pushing the left (clutch) pedal, and moving the stick beside your left knee into the desired slot.

All joking aside, that movement is so effortless it's almost cheating, and

coming out the back is the sound of rice bubbles touching milk amplified a thousand times. It's a joyful process lost to a world of efficiency, timeliness and resourcefulness. To hell with that.

Not so well thought-out are the cupholders fore of the gearshift which is begging for spilt Dr Pepper, and the centre console is barely considered storage, but provides an excellent armrest when conducting J-turns mid car chase.

However, you won't be doing much resting when this malevolent little bugger gets stuck into it. When you bury it, the snarl of angry bulldogs growling at a possum bellows from its enthusiastic dual pipework exiting the rear sporty-styled bumper.

On several occasions I mistook the GT's blow-off valve for a Kenworth's air brake.

As you squirrel up and down streets and slingshot your way up country back roads, you're taken by how pliable and tactile such a front-driver is before getting anywhere near the limit.

That's helped by tyres, obviously, its low centre of gravity and a well-sorted chassis that doesn't feel unduly stressed at the idea of being thrown down a hill or round corners. The tiny 195/45 R16 alloys will skip over kerbs and bumps rather than slam into them like fatter ones.

Push the throttle right to the floor and you'll squeeze the overboost button, which is kinda like Hans Gruber asking "Mr Cowboy" John McClane if he really thinks he has a chance.

Unfortunately, you must wait a couple of seconds for the turbo lag, which feels like forever, but the wait is worth it. Those bees/wasps you installed earlier respond to your right-toe prodding and go positively berserk, in a **Mohammed Ali** kinda way - floating like a butterfly, and then pow!

Since the Jack Russell emulating Picanto GT was launched in January this year, 195 units have been sold, which suggests the 1.0-litre three-cylinder engine's 74kW (@6000rpm) and 172Nm (@4000rpm) is plenty of poke to stoke your fire, and of the segment-leading micro car's 3098 sales this year, there are still petrolheads among them.

That torque figure is a 30% increase on the regular GT Line and its lesser siblings in the Picanto range, but it does it using less capacity, down from the 1.25-litre three-pot in the aforementioned. Regular can also apply to the fuel you can tip into its teeny 35-litre tank.

Hopefully you enjoy changing gears yourself because the five-speed manual is all available to you, so save the complaints for someone who cares, and a 39kg kerb weight increase isn't exactly going to butcher your lap times running to and from work, but it's a good compromise for the added pepper on your steak.

The brakes can be pretty aggressive which is no surprise considering 256mm ventilated discs are only trying to stop a barely one-tonne metal box. Also on the harsh side is the Macpherson strut and torsion beam rear suspension set-up, favouring the seeing-red rather than the potential pensioners our action heroes might become were they to sustain a back injury hitting potholes in the Picanto GT.

This feisty featherweight is literally the only reason our vertically challenged action heroes might consider buying in the micro segment, and should they ever find themselves strapped for cash in retirement, will certainly be pleased there's a more affordable, performance-orientated getaway car that doesn't demand the big bucks. ■

Hybrids hit the high notes

Hybrids continue to do well in Australian vehicle sales, especially in SUVs - like the Toyota RAV4.



Sales of petrol and diesel vehicles are generally diving in comparison to EVs and hybrids.

Hybrids keeping rising to new levels.

That's shown in the latest VFACTs national figures for July 2019, with the popularity of hybrids in Australia continuing to soar.

Electric and plug-in hybrid (PHEV) vehicles are also on the rise in most new vehicle sales sectors, but not as fast as hybrids.

Petrol power and diesel, on the other hand, are declining in nearly all categories.

The biggest rises for both hybrid and electric/PHEV are in the SUV market.

Here hybrids are up 670 on June to 722 in July in the private sector and up 382 on the previous month to 457 in July (509.3%) in the non-private category.

In 2018, hybrids comprised just 52 for July in the private sector and 75 in the non-private SUV field.

Year-to-date (YTD) figures for hybrids are also well up in the SUV market.

The SUV private hybrid category reached 2431 YTD this year, up 495.8% on the 408 recorded YTD in 2018.

In the non-private sector, hybrid SUV sales were recorded at 1725 YTD, up 186.1% on the 603 in 2018.

Continuing in the SUV categories, electric/PHEV sales got to 80 in the private area in July 2019 compared with just six for July 2018 and 432 YTD against 75 YTD 2018 – up 476% YTD.

The non-private SUV sector saw a rise in July to 61 compared with 23 in July 2018 (165.2%) while YTD figures in that category went from 225 in 2018 to 663 in 2019 – up 194.7%.

In private passenger sales, hybrids topped 624 for July compared with 246 in July 2018 (153.7%) and made 4018 sales YTD this year against 2190 YTD 2018 – up 83.5%.

It is a similar story for non-private passenger sales. Hybrids there climbed from 516 in July 2018 to 1291 in July 2019 – up 150.2%. YTD figures in the same category show a 66% rise from 4409 in 2018 to 7319 in 2019.

By comparison, electric/PHEV vehicle sales in the private passenger category

barely lifted in July to 23, compared with 22 in July 2018. And YTD was marginally better, reaching 186 or 19.2% more than the 156 YTD in 2018.

However, hybrid sales in the non-private passenger arena rocketed to 1291 – up 150.2% on the 40 sold in July 2018. And YTD comparisons were good too, hybrids up 66% from 4409 in 2018 to 7319 this year.

In the private passenger sector, hybrids totalled 624 in July 2019 compared with 246 for July 2018 – up 153.7%. On YTD figures, hybrids also scored well, climbing from 2190 in 2018 to 4018 this year – an 83.5% increase.

Light commercial non-private vehicle sales in the electric/PHEV field staggered from one in July 2018 to three in July 2019, and from six YTD in 2018 to 10 so far this year.

Month and YTD declines in petrol and diesel vehicle sales were shown in both passenger categories and the light commercial non-private sector, while a drop in diesels was also recorded in SUVs and light commercial private.

The Federal Chamber of Automotive

Industries (FCAI), in releasing the new vehicle sales figures for July 2019, says the downward trend in vehicle sales continues, with a 2.8% overall decrease from July 2018. YTD, the industry reported a drop of 7.7%.

While the figures represent a slight slowing of the downward sales trend, the market remains sluggish, FCAI chief executive **Tony Weber** says.

"The July sales figures continue to illustrate the tough market conditions facing the Australian automotive industry, and the sensitive nature of the economy over the past 12 months."

Weber blames tight financial lending, drought, increasing Luxury Car Tax impositions and the federal election for the decline in sales. ■

NEW VEHICLE SALES BY BUYER TYPE AND FUEL TYPE							JULY 2019	
	Month		YTD		Variance +/- Vol. & %			
Total Market	2019	2018	2019	2018	MTH	YTD	MTH	YTD
ELECTRIC								
Passenger Private	23	22	186	156	1	30	4.5%	19.2%
Passenger Non-Private	126	40	279	300	86	-21	215.0%	-7.0%
SUV Private	80	6	432	75	74	357	>999%	476.0%
SUV Non-Private	61	23	663	225	38	438	165.2%	194.7%
Light Commercial Non-Private	3	1	10	6	2	4	200.0%	66.7%
Sub Total	293	92	1,570	762	201	808	218.5%	106.0%
HYBRID								
Passenger Private	624	246	4,018	2,190	378	1,828	153.7%	83.5%
Passenger Non-Private	1,291	516	7,319	4,409	775	2,910	150.2%	66.0%
SUV Private	722	52	2,431	408	670	2,023	>999%	495.8%
SUV Non-Private	457	75	1,725	603	382	1,122	509.3%	186.1%
Sub Total	3,094	889	15,493	7,610	2,205	7,883	248.0%	103.6%
TOTAL	3,387	981	17,063	8,372	2,406	8,691	71.0%	103.8%



AUSSIE TALK DIARY

AutoTalk Australia's editor Scott Murray looks at the month gone by on autotalk.com.au



July 1

Turners invest in Australian car subscription business

Turners Automotive Group Limited is investing AUD\$1 million (NZD\$1,044,479.65) into ASX-listed Collaborate Corporation, a tech-focused car-sharing and vehicle subscription business based in Australia.

Turners will acquire a 12.13% stake in Collaborate Corp and will appoint a director to the Collaborate board.

Renault's masters and apprentices rewarded

Renault Australia has sung the praises of its best technicians and apprentices in its programme conducted with Kangan Institute's Automotive Centre of Excellence.

The Renault Apprentice Programme is giving over 200 apprentices and technicians a new career path with state-of-the-art facilities at the brand's Mulgrave head office and Kangan in Docklands, while the automotive industry goes through an unprecedented skills shortage.

July 2

Mobile Tyre Shop growing options for dealers

Mobile Tyre Shop is about to expand its fleet of entirely self-contained tyre replacement workshops on wheels to provide greater opportunities for dealers.

Speaking to *AutoTalk* last week, Mobile Tyre Shop chief executive Travis Osborne says the nationwide tyre service is about to ramp-up its fleet to cope with increased demand from the automotive industry, especially dealerships.

July 4

Road Vehicle Standards bill delayed another year

The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development has put forward legislation to delay the introduction of the Road Vehicle Standards amendments bill until July 1, 2020.

The department has raised concerns about the computer infrastructure's preparedness for a substantial and complex series of technical regulatory changes which were proposed to take effect from early December this year.

July 5

Hyundai's clever new engine tech eventually for Oz

Hyundai's new Continuously Variable Valve Duration engine technology has been declared but won't come to Australia in its debuted form.

Hyundai Motor Company claims a 4% boost in engine output with a 5% improvement in fuel efficiency and a significant 12% reduction in emissions thanks to engine technology which manages the timing of engine valves during the opening and closing sequence according to driving demands.

July 8

Tony White Group to gain from merger

Dealership business Tony White Group has agreed to buy Kloster Motor Group in Newcastle, NSW, from AP Eagers.

The Heads of Agreement sale is estimated at \$54 million and is one of three dealerships placed on

the market by AP Eagers in response to market coverage concerns raised by Australian Competition and Consumer Commission about the dealer giant's \$2.3 billion acquisition of Automotive Holdings Group.

July 11

Carbon Revolution excited by electric future

Carbon fibre wheel manufacturer Carbon Revolution says the increasing interest in electric vehicles has great potential for the growing Australian company.

Chief technical officer Brett Gass tells *AutoTalk* Carbon Revolution is well positioned as an OEM supplier of lightweight carbon wheels to create significant value-add products for the electric vehicle market.

"It's not a question of if, but when our products start showing up on electric vehicles," he says.

July 12

All Nissan dealers to become Leaf-ready

Nissan Australia has confirmed its entire national dealer network is expected to become part of the brand's Zero Emission sales and servicing strategy, including its rural showrooms.

Speaking to *AutoTalk* this week at the Leaf electric car launch in Melbourne, managing director Stephen Lester says every franchised Nissan dealership will be capable of selling, servicing and providing charging support for the new generation Leaf.

July 16

Local car manufacturing closure known in early 2000s

The potential shutdown of Australia's vehicle manufacturing was made aware to select individuals within the industry as early as the year 2000.

Heavy diesel engine remanufacturing business HM Gem tells *AutoTalk* the potential pulling out of manufacturing by Holden, Ford and Toyota was signalled to the business in the early 2000s when the Dandenong operation was primarily in the automotive space.

July 18

Adelaide's 'best' dealerships named

News and opinion website Best in Aus has ranked what it describes as the "top and leading" franchised and independent used dealerships in the City of Churches.

In no particular ranking, Lakeside Nissan in Pooraka, Dave Potter Honda in Glenelg South, and Adelaide Vehicle Centre with five sites across the capital's south-east, win the accolade of Adelaide's best dealers.

July 19

Rich-listed Gold Coast lemon dealer busted

Used car "dealer" Andrew Fraser-Scott has been found guilty of breaching Australian Consumer Law by overcharging customers for unroadworthy vehicles.

His AFS Corporation, which operated a chain of automotive businesses "Cartel Dealers", "Brisbane Dealer Auctions" and "Turn Key Auto Services & Inspections", has pleaded guilty to 11 breaches of the *Motor Dealers and Chattel Auctioneers Act 2014* (MDCA) and 66 breaches of the Australian Consumer Law (ACL).

Fraser-Scott and AFS Corporation copped over \$300,000 in fines.

Continued on page 22

Continued from page 21

July 22

MTAQ puts dent in apprenticeship demand

Motor Trades Association of Queensland has entered the next wave of automotive hopefuls into the workforce.

Twenty new potentials, aged from 14 to 17, have dipped their toe into what could become an automotive apprenticeship by taking part in the fifth MTAQ's Auto Camp these latest July school holidays.

VW Australia first car brand to pledge used-tyre recycling

Volkswagen Australia is the first automotive brand to recycle all the used tyres disposed every year.

Teaming up with the Tyre Stewardship Australia (TSA), Volkswagen Australia is pledging its commitment to the responsible disposal of used tyres.

July 23

Lexus Australia tops customer satisfaction survey

An annual survey shows Lexus Australia as the number one brand for customer satisfaction.

Beating out the likes of Volvo, Mazda, Audi and Mercedes-Benz, the annual Roy Morgan survey shows Lexus coming out on top with an increase of 4% from 2018.

Automotive manufacturing on the rise post big-three closures

There are now more Australian automotive manufacturing businesses alive and thriving than four years ago.

That's according to the Australian Automotive Aftermarket's commissioned study by ACA Research into the outlook for the industry in a post-car manufacturing era where Holden, Ford and Toyota are no longer the primary source of employment, funding and innovation.

July 24

Car dealer suspended after complaints

New South Wales Fair Trading has suspended and is investigating Cars & Co Pty Ltd's licence for allegedly stealing money from their clients.

About \$1.5 million was stolen from about 20 consumers in Western Australia and New South Wales, WA Today reports after a woman, who wished to remain anonymous, lost \$58,250 to Cars & Co after being scammed.

Corvette conjecture at dealer level

Holden dealers are cagey regarding paying deposits on the purchase of a new right-hand drive Chevrolet Corvette C8.

A report by Wheels magazine has found some dealers indicating the factory right-hand-drive 'Vette could arrive as early as October 2019 in time for the Bathurst 1000, while another dealer advises a prospective owner might

not see their 369kW/637Nm supercar for another year.

Regulator approves AP Eagers merger

The AP Eagers merger acquisition of Automotive Holdings Group has been approved by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, with conditions.

The ACCC has accepted AP Eagers' proposed selling of its Kloster Motor Group business in the Newcastle/Hunter Valley region to create a more balanced consumer market when the \$2.3 billion merger takes place.

Eclix share price skyrockets

Eclix Group Ltd's share price shot high on July 5 after a major announcement.

The sale of both Eclix's GraysOnline and AreYouselling businesses to Quadrant Private Equity for \$60 million was announced, making the share price go up by 28% to \$1.64. ■

THE DIARY

AutoTalk New Zealand's group editor Richard Edward looks at the month gone by on autotalk.co.nz



July 1

Serial used-car sales fraudster jailed

A Trade Me fraudster has been jailed for using several aliases to convince people he was a car dealer and targeting Trade Me users, scamming buyers out of nearly \$100,000.

Richard Wallace scammed 18 car buyers out of \$95,400 by claiming to be a legitimate car dealer between April 2015 and January 2017.

Dealer numbers still falling

The number of registered motor vehicle traders in New Zealand continues to edge down – almost 200 on this time a year ago.

The number of dealers

stands at 3318 – down almost 30 on the previous month.

Heat comes off new vehicle market

Fewer new vehicles were sold in June compared to the same month last year confirming that the overall market for the year will be down on 2018.

The latest registration data shows a total of 13,952 new vehicles hit the road in June, down 8% compared to 15,172 units in the same period last year.

July 3

Vehicle imports take a hit in June

The total number of vehicle imports took a hit in June with both cars and commer-

cials down for the month, New Zealand Customs motor vehicle statistics show.

The total number of all vehicles arriving in the country, including trucks and buses, was 23,615 for the month compared to 27,755 in May. The total number of cars for June was 19,766 compared to 22,928 in May.

July 11

Options limited on the hunt for ESC

When AutoTalk spoke to a range of import dealers earlier this year to establish what they were expecting from next year's introduction of the final stage of electronic stability control, answers varied widely.

From hugely disruptive to a small blip was their answers.

Some expected little change to their stock, others were predicting hits to up to 50%.

July 15

Auckland man jailed for driving licence bribe fraud

A man involved in a scheme taking bribes in exchange for driving licences has been jailed for two years and eight months.

Mohammed Feroz was found guilty of 55 charges of obtaining by deception at the Manukau District Court in South Auckland on July 15, 2019.

July 23

Dealer's Ferrari crashes on test drive

A Ferrari crashed in Auckland on July 21 – while it is understood to have been out on a dealer test drive.

The \$289,900 white Ferrari 458 Italia caused an 8km traffic jam. ■



EV TALK DIARY

EVtalk Australia editor Geoff Dobson looks at the month gone by on www.evtalk.com.au



July 12

New Leaf on sale August 1 under A\$50,000

The 2019 Nissan Leaf goes on sale at 89 dealers nationally from August 1, making it the largest electric vehicle network in the country.

The 40kWh version launched this week in Australia (a 62kWh one is coming) is one of the most affordable EVs at \$49,990, plus on-road costs, and has bidirectional charging capability which allows it to power the home.

July 19

Residential EV sharing service launched

Ohmie Go has launched a private electric vehicle sharing service in Melbourne.

In a partnership with Jet Charge and Hyundai Australia, it will see two Hyundai Kona electric SUVs based at EQ Towers, an apartment complex owned by ICD Property.

July 23

Around Australia in 80 days in an EV

Linda Rohrs has circumnavigated Australia solo in an EV on an 80-day challenge.

The Gold Coast resident drove her Tesla Model S100D with 450km range about 17,640km.

July 24

EV Cabs in WA

A Perth taxi firm is trialling two Hyundai Ioniq electric sedans, which it believes is an Australian first.

EV Cabs is a trial initiative involving Swan Taxis and parent company Comfort-DelGro, the latter one of the world's largest transport firms which includes an EV taxi fleet in Singapore.

July 25

EVs now attainable - RACQ

An EV has become attainable for the first time to motorists wanting to drive greener and not blow the budget.

So says the Royal Automobile Club of Queensland (RACQ) in releasing its latest annual report on the cheapest and dearest cars to own and operate.

Tesla Model 3 sales soar

Tesla achieved record EV deliveries and production to end the 2019 second quarter with US\$5 billion in cash and cash equivalents on the eve of launching its RHD Model 3 in Australia and New Zealand.

Recent reports suggest at least four Model 3s are in Sydney and three are in Auckland for media drives before customers start receiving theirs in September. ■

Keep up with AU Electric Vehicle industry news

evtalk.com.au



FUTURETRUCKING DIARY

Futuretrucking Australia editor Scott Murray looks at the month gone by on www.futuretruckingtalk.com.au



July 4

ABB charging up Singapore e-buses

ABB has won contracts to provide electric bus charging infrastructure to charge 40 single-deck electric buses due on Singapore roads in early 2020.

The orders were received from BYD Singapore and ST Engineering Land Systems, two of the three companies awarded e-bus contracts by the Singapore Land Transport Authority.

July 8

Ford and VW to partner on trucks

Back in January, Ford and Volkswagen announced they would collaborate on developing electric pick-up trucks, delivery vans and medium duty trucks.

A Ford spokeswoman says this is still in discussion, and Ford will share updates as details become firmer. However, Ford and Volkswagen have reached an agreement that will allow Ford to share VW's new MEB electric car platform.

July 12

Daimler Trucks test vehicle simulators

Daimler Trucks development engineers are teaming up with truck drivers to put mobile vehicle simulators to the test.

Truck drivers are helping test the prototypes which are based on existing systems in the new Mercedes-Benz Actros. Feedback will go into further development work at Daimler Trucks.

July 17

World's largest EV proves worth

A Komatsu e-Dumper from Kuhn Schweiz AG, reported to be the world's largest operating EV, has been proving its worth during the past year.

The e-Dumper weighs 111 tonnes (fully laden) and transports 60 tonnes of lime and marl (clay and lime rock or soil) from a mountain extraction area in Switzerland.

July 18

Labor EV backing a tailwind for transport

The federal Labor opposition's support for electric vehicle policy is being described as a potential win for the transport and supply chain industry.

Australian Logistics Council chief executive Kirk Coningham says today's policy announcement from Labor offers signals the party would make the potential of

electric vehicles more realistic provided governments collaborate with industry.

July 19

Biodiesel plant to entice Euro 6

The Barnawartha biodiesel plant in north east Victoria has the potential to drive Euro 6 engine sales, slash carbon emissions and improve fuel security.

The plant's capable of producing up to 50 million litres of renewable biodiesel made from animal and vegetable waste oil.

July 22

Fiat Ducato set to offer first EV

Fiat Professional has announced it will be taking pre-orders for its first fully electric model later this year.

The new Ducato Electric will launch in 2020 with a pilot scheme to major clients. ■



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