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MORE THAN 10,000 ALPHA BAD AIRBAGS REMAIN IN AUSTRALIAN CARS

Despite the motor manufacturers replacing hundreds of thousands of faulty Takata airbags across Australia, there are still thousands more needing replacement including the fatal Alpha type airbag.

Altogether there are more than 284,187 vehicles in Australia that require replacement airbags and of these there are more than 10,681 vehicles which are fitted with the highly dangerous and fatality-inducing Alpha type airbags.

The Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries (FCAI) has issued a state by state update of the number of vehicles that have not been brought back by their owners for replacement Takata airbags.

FCAI chief executive **Tony Weber** says while the recall has seen the successful replacement of hundreds of thousands of airbags in vehicles across all of the Australian states and territories, the high number of vehicles which have not been presented yet for airbag replacement is hugely concerning.

He says the manufacturers fear partners and children of vehicle owners are being exposed to danger when travelling in vehicles that still carry the faulty airbags.

"Owners of vehicles with faulty airbags need to understand the real danger to anybody who rides in their car and stop exposing themselves, their families and their friends to unnecessary risk," says Weber.

Tony Webber

"We urge all motorists to act now to ensure the safety of your loved ones. Don't risk the unnecessary death or serious injury of your family."

In New South Wales more than 1.07 million faulty airbags have been replaced but there are 90,432 faulty airbags remaining that require urgent replacement, including 3308 of the highly dangerous Alpha and critical airbags.

In Victoria more than 907,000 faulty airbags have been replaced but there are 88,339 faulty airbags remaining that require urgent replacement. This includes 3,525 of the highly dangerous Alpha and critical airbags.

"Owners of vehicles with faulty airbags need to understand the real danger to anybody who rides in their car and stop exposing themselves, their families and their friends to unnecessary risk," says Weber.

In Queensland more than 733,000 faulty airbags have been replaced but there are 51,484 faulty airbags remaining that require urgent replacement. This includes 2274 of the highly dangerous Alpha and critical airbags.

In Western Australia more than 376,000 faulty airbags have been replaced but there are 24,572 faulty airbags remaining that require urgent replacement including 763 of the highly dangerous Alpha and critical airbags.

In South Australia more than 234,000 faulty airbags have been replaced but there are 15,312 faulty airbags remaining that require urgent replacement including 390 of the high dangerous Alpha and critical airbags.

In Tasmania more than 85,000 faulty airbags have been replaced but there are 6052 faulty airbags remaining that require urgent replacement. This includes 90 of the highly dangerous Alpha and critical airbags.

In the ACT more than 68,000 faulty airbags have been replaced but there are 5542 faulty airbags remaining that require urgent replacement including 216 of the highly dangerous Alpha and critical airbags.

In the Northern Territory more than 23,000 faulty airbags have been replaced but there are 2454 faulty airbags remaining that require urgent replacement including 114 of the highly dangerous Alpha and critical airbags.

Vehicle owners should check the recall status of their vehicles by using the automotive industry's Takata airbag recall website **www.ismyairbagsafe.com.au** and by taking prompt action to arrange for the free rectification of any affected vehicles.

Owners can go to the website and enter the vehicle's registration number and state or territory. They can also check by texting **TAKATA to 0487 AIRBAG (247 224).**

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8/152 Quay Street, Limited.
P.O. Box 10 50 10, Auckland City, 1030.
Ph. 09 309 2444

MANAGING EDITOR
Richard Edwards
021 556 655
richard@automediagroup.co.nz

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Geoff Dobson
021 881 823
geoff@automediagroup.co.nz

JOURNALIST
Sophia Wang
021 240 2402
sophia@automediagroup.co.nz

BUSINESS MANAGER
Dale Stevenson
021 446 214
dale@automediagroup.co.nz

RECRUITMENT SPECIALIST / PRODUCTION
Fran Da Silva
021 933 279
fran@automediagroup.co.nz

GROUP GENERAL MANAGER
Deborah Baxter
027 530 5016
deborah@automediagroup.co.nz

PUBLISHER / CHAIR
Vern Whitehead
021 831 153
vern@automediagroup.co.nz

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INVEST IN FUTURE SUCCESS AT AUTOCARE 2020

Australia's largest education led automotive convention and trade show, Autocare 2020 will be held at the Brisbane Convention and & Exhibition Centre from June 19 to 20.

Hosted by the Australia Automotive Aftermarket Association (AAAA) Autocare 2020 is designed to transform, grow and inform all businesses involved in the automotive parts, service and repair sector.

It will bring together thousands of professionals directly involved in the $14 billion Australian automotive parts and mechanical repair industries.

"Autocare is an educational forum with practical advice and thought-provoking insights. Learning where the market is heading and how you can take advantage of changes is a sound investment. It also provides fantastic networking and business development opportunities," AAAA chief executive officer **Stuart Charity** says.

Two high profile international automotive aftermarket industry leaders will headline Autocare 2020. **Bill Hanvey**, president and CEO of the Auto Care Association in the US will discuss the threat that connected cars and other disruptors present to our industry, and the steps being taken globally to address these.

Frank Massey, regarded as one of the most respected automotive technicians and trainers in the world will provide advanced training on diesel, DPF and EGR diagnostics and oscilloscopes. Both of these keynote speakers will impart their insights across two, not to be missed sessions.

Each of the three concurrent Autocare conference streams will run tailored programmes, although registered delegates are able to attend sessions across any of the streams.

The streams are:

- **Mechanical Repair - Technical** - advanced training for automotive technicians.
- **Mechanical Repair - Business Improvement** - targeting workshop owners and managers.
- **Automotive Suppliers** - targeting senior managers from aftermarket parts and accessories companies.

Each conference stream is designed to help delegates to "Invest in Your Future Success". The conference programs feature industry leaders covering a

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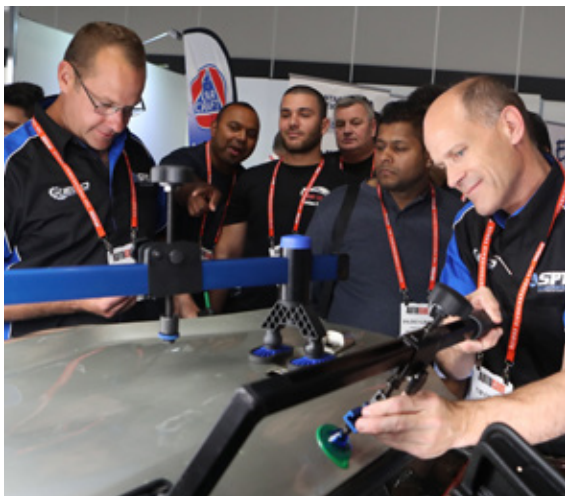

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range of topics that will provide valuable knowledge and training to foster business growth in the fast-changing automotive landscape.

There will also be a free Autocare Trade Show. Close to 100 top automotive companies will exhibit products, services and interactive displays.

A special demonstration stage will enhance education opportunities and allow companies to showcase new technology and products. Anyone working in the industry can register for the Trade Show free of charge via **autocare.org.au.**

To enhance networking and business development opportunities available at Autocare 2020, a special Happy Hour will take place from 4pm-5pm on Friday, June 19, ahead of the Autocare Gala Dinner.

The industry dinner will host inspirational Zimbabwe auto technician, **Taurai Raymond Sewera**, and celebrate the 40th anniversary of AAAA.

Autocare 2020 will display a number of high-performance race and show cars, offer a number of interactive exhibits and opportunities to test new products and technology.

The recently launched Auto Innovation Centre (AIC) will also exhibit some of its capabilities on offer to the automotive industry.

Many of Australia's top automotive companies have thrown their support behind the event. The Autocare 2020 platinum partner is Repco, and supporting partners include ACM Parts, Burson Automotive, FMP Group, MAHA Australia, Microhouse Australia, Pedders Suspension & Brakes, Ryco Group and ZF Services Australia.

To register for Autocare 2020 and see a full programme of speakers and activities, head to **www.autocare.org.au.**

NEW TRAFFK PLATFORM DRIVES INVENTORY-CENTRIC CAMPAIGNS

Sam Buchanan

Automotive media agency McKenzie Partners has launched a marketing platform for the industry called TRAFFK to drive inventory-centric campaigns.

According to McKenzie Partners the TRAFFK technology crawls and indexes live inventory listings and distributes them across all major digital channels to drive a higher quality of leads and better sales results.

"The inventory specific approach has long been the unicorn of automotive digital marketing," McKenzie Partner chief commercial officer **Sam Buchanan** says.

"It is due to recent advancements in AI that this has been made achievable. It has already exceeded all expectations across new and used vehicles, shortening the path to purchase by mirroring the way people search for cars."

The TRAFFK platform can deliver exceptional improvements across search, display and social. On average, clients have experienced a 42% increase in clicks, a 315% boost in impression share and a 31% reduction in cost per click.

"In short, this platform helps dealers get more leads and more market share at a lower rate, which is much needed in this particularly volatile time for the automotive industry," Buchanan says.

JEEP ANNOUNCES NATIONAL DEALER OF THE YEAR WINNERS

Jeep Australia has named City Chrysler Jeep, Knox Chrysler Jeep and Dwyers Chrysler Jeep as 2019 Dealer of the Year in their respective categories.

The three Jeep dealerships were ranked the highest performing in Australia, assessed on seven key performance indicators across sales, parts, excellence in service and customer care.

The Dealer of the Year award is assessed in regions, divided into category A, B and C winners based on primary market size.

Named one of the winning dealerships of the 2019 Dealer of the Year, **Paul Hopper, James Sounas** and **Dan Eades** accepted the award on behalf of City Chrysler Jeep at the Dealer Meeting in Melbourne.

"To be named the 2019 Jeep dealer of the Year means so much after a challenging year for the industry in Australia," City Chrysler Jeep dealer principal Sounas says.

"The team at City Jeep has worked incredibly hard over the past 12 months, with a particular focus on delivering a superior customer experience, and I know the team will be very proud of this achievement."

FCA Australia managing director **Kevin Flynn** congratulated all dealers on their success in 2019.

"The dedication of the Jeep dealers throughout 2019 is something to be proud of. Each dealership has contributed to our business this year, and the dedication and passion over the past 12 months is greatly appreciated," Flynn says.

"2020 is shaping up to be a big year for Jeep, and we're excited to build on the work done in 2019, to deliver a further elevated customer experience across all aspects of the customer journey this year."

The national Dealer of the Year winners are:

- Category A – **City Chrysler Jeep**
- Category B – **Knox Chrysler Jeep**
- Category C – **Dwyers Chrysler Jeep**

The regional winners of the 2019 Dealer of the Year are:

- Southern Region Category A – **City Chrysler Jeep**
- Southern Region Category B – **Knox Chrysler Jeep**
- Southern Region Category C – **Dwyers Chrysler Jeep**
- Eastern Region Category A – **Tynan Chrysler Jeep - Sutherland**
- Eastern Region Category B – **Gerald Slaven Chrysler Jeep**
- Central/ Western Region Category A – **Osborne Park Chrysler Jeep**
- Central/ Western Region Category B – **Wanneroo Chrysler Jeep**
- Central/ Western Region Category C – **Mt Gambier Chrysler Jeep**
- Northern Region Category A – **Gold Coast Chrysler Jeep**
- Northern Region Category B – **FR Ireland Chrysler**

The 2019 accolades were awarded at the Jeep Dealer of the Year Dinner celebration in Melbourne on February 6.

INCHCAPE SENIOR MANAGEMENT CHANGES

Automotive distributor Inchcape has announced the retirement of long-serving chief executive **Nick Senior,** as the group combines its Asian and Australian businesses into a single APAC region.

George Ashford, who currently heads the Asia business, will lead the expanded region. Ashford was Senior's predecessor in Australia.

Senior will retire on April 1 after being with Inchcape for 29 years.

"In an industry that is rapidly evolving, it is important that we are organised in the right way to meet the challenges, change and complexity ahead," Senior says.

"Following a review of our regional organisation, Inchcape announced to its employees a new structure that includes the formation of APAC - a new region which comprises the current Asia and Australasia businesses.

"This new, expanded region will be headed by George. Having spent five years leading Australasia before transferring into the CEO role of the larger Asian business, George is well qualified to integrate and leverage the expanded footprint."

Nick Senior

George Ashford

Senior joined Subaru Australia in a corporate public relations role in 1991, before working in roles of national advertising manager, national marketing manager, general manager, then managing director in 2005.

He has been Inchape Australasia chief executive since October 1, 2016.

Before joining Subaru Australia, Senior worked as a motoring journalist on the *Daily Mirror and Daily Telegraph in Sydney.*

A proud Tasmanian, Senior has an interest in sport, as his passion for rallying was reflected in Subaru Rally Team Australia's unbroken run of 10 championship wins from 1995-2005.

Ashford joined the Inchcape Group in March 2006 as director of implementation of Inchcape Advantage. He led the implementation of a group-wide strategic programme, putting the customer at the centre of the group's service initiatives.

In October 2006, Ashford was appointed managing director of European retail, where he led the implementation of retail operation programmes across the European retail network.

Ashford spent five years leading Inchcape Australasia before heading the Asia business.

Senior leaves the company after 29 years to the day, allowing time for him to work with Ashford on the changeover.

MITSUBISHI MOTORS RECOGNISES DEALERSHIP SKILLS

Mitsubishi Motors Australia has announced the winners of the 2019 National Skills Competition.

Mitsubishi's national skills program recognises excellence across the Mitsubishi dealership network and assesses three categories – service advisors, sales consultants and technicians.

The top five performers in each category travel to Mitsubishi's Australian head office to compete in the national finals. Competitors are required to showcase product knowledge, customer service skills and technical expertise to solve real customer queries.

Mitsubishi Motors Australia deputy director of aftersales **Shaun Westcott** announced the three 2019 champions at the ceremony:

Sales national skills champion: **Joel McCall,** Ross Gray Mitsubishi, QLD

Service advisor of the year: James Tate, Southside Mitsubishi, WA

Technician of the year: **Dylan Deaves**, Lander Mitsubishi, NSW

Tate took out the top prize in the service advisor category for the second year in a row.

"Our dealer staff are critical to ensuring Mitsubishi customers receive the best experience in our dealerships," **Shaun Westcott** says.

"The national skills competition is just one of the ways that Mitsubishi recognises the best of the best in our dealership network."

All 15 finalists will join a Mitsubishi Motors study tour this year in Japan.

CES 2020: COVERING THE SPECTRUM OF WHAT'S NEXT

by **Tim Stevens**
World Car of the Year Awards Judge

The Consumer Electronics Show (CES) continues to expand by gobbling up greater and greater stretches of the city of Las Vegas. The tenor of the event itself also continued to evolve in 2020.

While Intel pulled out this year, a new generation of smaller and fresher brands stepped in to keep the show as dramatically chaotic as ever.

Chaotic could definitely describe 2020's automotive offerings. Centred around the North Hall at the Las Vegas Convention Centre, manufacturers such as Ford, Audi, and Mercedes-Benz chose to have a presence at this year's show, displaying everything from near-term aftermarket upgrades and stereo equipment to fanciful show cars the likes of which most manufacturers swore off years ago. Even Lamborghini had a presence at this year's show.

At the forefront was Mercedes-Benz, which showed off the Vision AVTR concept. The name is a strong nod to the Avatar film, the highest grossing movie of all time with US$2.8 billion earned worldwide.

The first of its many planned sequels is still a few years off, but to stay ahead of the curve, Mercedes partnered with **James Cameron** to create a concept "inspired" by the films.

How so? Well, this is a car supposedly able to read your biometric information, like your heart rate, in a way conceptually similar to how the steeds in Avatar interface with their Na'vi riders in the films. That's fun in theory, but far more significant are the sustainability aspects of the vehicle, including a fully recyclable interior and a battery free of heavy metals that's said to be compostable.

That latter bit sounds like fantasy, but it's conceptually possible thanks to research done with IBM.

That company's fledgling quantum computers were used in a project with Mercedes-Benz to determine the ideal chemistry for automotive batteries of the future. This kind of consumer electronics/automotive crossover is exactly what we love seeing at CES.

As to what the attendees love seeing, it's usually some sort of flying car. The things have been in the works for decades, but Uber Elevate is saying it wants to have early models flying within the next three years.

To that effect, both Hyundai and Bell showed off concept VTOL aircraft intended for use with the Uber Elevate service. That service will be built around multiple hubs in major cities, where flying craft will whisk you over the gridlock to your suburban destination.

Hyundai's model, the SA-1, is all-electric and offers 96km (60 miles) of range, but that's enough to get over the worst of the traffic. Meanwhile, a recharge takes just five minutes. That means that by the time one load of five passengers has exited and the next has been loaded, the craft will be ready for the return leg.

Interestingly, these vehicles will be human-piloted, Uber wanting them in the air as soon as possible, hopefully avoiding the required development and legislative debates that will surround fully autonomous airborne vehicles.

Regardless, while the technology for these aircraft may be ready within three years, many questions remain about just how they will be implemented within major metropolitan areas.

Continued on page 9

Continued from page 8

On the earth-bound, two-wheel front, Damon Motorcycles showed off their all-electric Hypersport HS. This US$25,000 bike will do 321km/h thanks to a 149kw engine and has a highway range of 321km/h. Those are impressive specs, but more impressive is the bike's ability to shape-shift, raising the bars and lowering the pegs to make it more comfortable for commuting.

But as to who made the biggest splash at CES, it was surprisingly Fisker. Last year the company debuted a fanciful concept called EMotion, a gull-wing beauty that was priced too high and intended for release too far into the future to resonate with the market.

In 2020, Henrik & Co were back with the Ocean, a little SUV that practically stole the show. This sub-US$40,000 electric crossover was a gangbuster hit among those reading the CES news.

The big story here is the price, USD$37,499, undercutting even the Tesla Model 3.

But, with a promised range of 640-770km, a fully vegan and recyclable interior, plus a design that's simple and clean but striking, this looks like it could be a compelling package -- if it actually hits production on schedule.

Fisker indicated the car will enter production next year and went so far as to start taking US$250 deposits.

The company has not yet confirmed how many potential owners put down their money. ■

AUTONEXUS PARTNERS WITH KTM GROUP, ADDS FIRST BIKE CLIENT

A provider of automotive logistics and supply chain solutions will expand by adding its first motorcycle client to its logistics portfolio.

KTM Group has signed a multi-year deal with AutoNexus to supply warehousing and distribution of all parts, accessories, merchandise and apparel.

"AutoNexus are thrilled to welcome KTM Group to the AutoNexus family and to expand our operations to incorporate motorcycles," AutoNexus managing director **Darren Bowler** says.

"Our intimate knowledge of the auto industry and demonstrated success in streamlining logistics operations for numerous marques was what attracted the KTM Group to AutoNexus. It was however our focus on customer experience, clear processes and demonstrated cost containment that convinced KTM Group to partner us."

AutoNexus has expanded its roster of automotive marques to 14, broadened its fleet conversion business, and strengthened its mobility and electric vehicle solutions logistics capabilities.

"Everything we do is designed around our customer experience. We have developed our business to be more flexible, adaptable, and provide faster to market solutions and look forward to delivering our tailored solution to KTM Group," Bowler says.

Darren Bowler

AutoNexus is a division of Inchcape Australia and operates in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth to provide vehicle, parts, and fleet conversion services to the Australian automotive industry.

MANHEIM INVESTS IN CUSTOMER VEHICLES PROTECTION

Vehicle and industrial auctioneer Manheim is building large scale canopies to protect customer cars.

Manheim has awarded a contract to MakMax Australia to design and build large-scale protective canopies, to protect vehicles on Manheim's auction sites in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane from being damaged.

The canopies will protect vehicles from extreme weather events, such as the hailstorm in Sydney December 2018, which resulted in $675 million worth of property and asset insurance claims.

"This project represents a significant investment in our facilities and combined with our existing under cover storage areas, will ensure Manheim can provide extensive protection for our customer's assets," Manheim chief executive **Charles Cumming** says.

Hail netting design and coverage area at Manheim's Altona Site

"The large structures will provide sellers with confidence their vehicles will be protected whilst onsite – regardless of whether the vehicle is on display to the public or in storage awaiting allocation to an auction."

The infrastructure investment in order to protect their customer's vehicles will cost around $5m and will have the ability to accommodate and protect over 6000 vehicles across all sites.

MakMax was chosen for its experience in building structures around Australia for automotive OEMs and 3PL companies. The project will begin in the first quarter of this year.

MAZDA FINANCE LAUNCHES MAZDA ASSURED

Mazda Australia is committing to customer experience with its new finance product, Mazda Assured.

Sitting under Mazda Finance, introduced last year, Mazda Assured allows customers to change their vehicle as their lifestyle changes, giving them a flexible and easy way to drive the right Mazda at the right time.

Mazda customers select the Mazda they want to drive before receiving a personalised interest rate over a loan term for up to four years, in addition to a Guaranteed Future Value (GFV) for the end of the term. Once the four years is up, customers may trade their vehicle for another Mazda vehicle, keep the vehicle and pay the remaining GFV, or return their vehicle.

Mazda managing director **Vinesh Bhindi** says Mazda Assured represents Mazda's ongoing commitment to offering industry-leading customer experience while providing drivers peace of mind.

"Customers are at the heart of Mazda's business and Mazda Assured is another product designed with customer needs in mind," Bhindi says.

"We recognise our customers' lifestyles change more frequently than they're able to change their car to suit – be that having children or getting a new job. Mazda Assured allows them to own a new Mazda more often and more suited to their personal circumstance.

"Adding to customer peace of mind, Mazda Assured also provides each customer with a personalised interest rate calculated on their individual circumstances in addition to a Guaranteed Future Value that ensures they'll always know the minimum value of their vehicle Mazda Finance has set at the end of their loan term.

"Mazda Assured, and the other Mazda Finance products, are available at Mazda Finance dealers nationwide, giving customers the ability to enjoy a Mazda today and in the more often in the future."

Also available at selected dealerships is Mazda Vision servicing, providing customers with a detailed walk-around video of their vehicle during its service.

"Mazda is focused on providing customers with a pleasant experience both at the point of purchase and at services," Bhindi adds.

Mazda recently received top spot in JD Power's Service Satisfaction Index for the fourth consecutive year.

MERCEDES-BENZ AXES THE X-CLASS

The Mercedes-Benz X-Class is officially on the chopping block and will be removed from the market globally in May.

"It has been decided that from the end of May 2020, we will no longer produce this relatively young model," Mercedes-Benz said in a statement.

"In our global product portfolio, the X-Class is a niche product which plays a great role in a few markets, including Australia and South Africa."

The ute was first launched in 2018 and was manufactured at the Nissan plant in Barcelona, Spain, alongside the Navara. However, it had been reported that Mercedes-Benz parent company Daimler was looking to axe the X-Class to reduce costs amid profit warnings.

Daimler downgraded its earnings outlook by up to 4% for the 2019 financial year in light of costs associated with a diesel emissions breach and Takata airbag recall.

The X-Class featured a 3-litre V6 model and a twin-turbo four-cylinder diesel model.

Pricing originally started from around A$46,750 for the 2.3-litre to AU$77,330 for the top of the range V6 model..

BERWICK MOTOR GROUP PARTNERS WITH CAR SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE

Berwick Motor Group has signed a partnership with car subscription software provider **blinker.com.au** which allows customers to subscribe rather than drive with a mouse click.

The partnership will see Berwick Motor Group offering Blinker's car subscription solution directly to customers through its website, as well as making the service available across the company's many dealership showrooms. Customers will be able to subscribe to cars directly from the Berwick Motor Group website, including brands such as Nissan, Kia, Jeep, Chrysler, SsangYong, Great Wall and Haval.

"We're thrilled to be working with Blinker to bring car subscription to our customers around the country," says Berwick Motor Group dealer principal **Mark Wright.**

"We've listened to our consumers who have told us that they want an alternative to traditional car ownership, and Blinker streamlines the process in offering this."

"Our dealers have seen a growing organic demand for subscription services over the last 12 months, and with Blinker we've been able to structure the offering exactly to suit our customers' needs. The out-of-the-box software has made it simple for even our large dealerships to get the subscription program up and running, so we can provide local drivers with a totally unique, tailored offering."

Based in Victoria, Berwick Motor Group is proudly Australian-owned and has been part of the local community for more than 25 years. The company operates several award-winning new and used car dealerships around the state.

The partnership with Berwick Motor Group is the latest in a series of agreements for **Blinker.com.au.** Late last year, the company announced partnerships with Titan DMS and Dealer Solutions.

Titan DMS became the first distributor for the platform in the Australian market, offering the subscription solution to car dealerships around the country.

Dealer Solutions was Blinker's first integrated website partner, offering the subscription to its network of dealers currently using it as their preferred website partner. The Titan DMS and Dealer Solutions networks combined provide Blinker.com.au with access to more than 1000 dealers nationally.

DIGITAL DISRUPTER BRINGS LOCAL CLIENTS TO LOCAL DEALERSHIPS

Digital disruptor **PriceMyCar.com.au** was founded in 2018 with the aim of increasing transparency and making it easier for new car buyers to find the best possible price from authorised brand dealerships in the highly competitive Australian market.

In a very short time frame, the Sydney-based company has accumulated a database of more than 300,000 transactions and written price quotes across 500 different new vehicle makes and models.

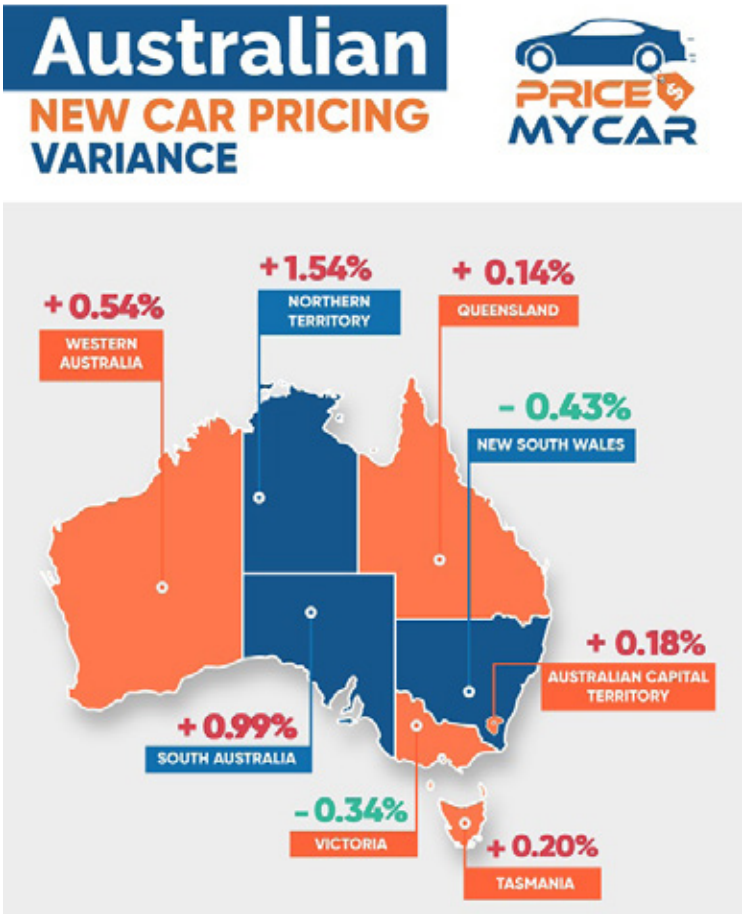
Unlike other third-party websites which charge up to $55 per lead, **PriceMyCar.com.au** has a much different business model. It doesn't charge the dealer for every sales referral, it simply bills a fee to the dealer on the completion of the actual sale to the happy customer.

Founder and chief executive **David Lye** says the philosophy behind PriceMyCar.co.au is to put the full control of the deal and the negotiation with the buyer back into the hands of the dealerships.

"It's a compelling offer for the dealerships, in that PriceMyCar.com.au allows them to offer the full package on a new vehicle, including arranging the fitting of options and accessories, as well as arranging finance and insurance if required," he says.

"Other third-party referral operators have taken some of the control of the deal from the dealerships and they've lost touch with the buyers, but we've put it back in a completely transparent and risk-free process that also puts local customers in contact with local dealers," he says.

David Lye



A recent report on the new car sales industry from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission noted that most buyers will only travel a maximum of 35 kilometres out of their home area to buy a new car from a dealership.

Currently more than 1299 new car dealerships across Australia have registered with PriceMyCar.com.au and Lye says the business has experienced average monthly growth of 20% since inception.

"We delivered 4135 leads to dealerships in January 2020," he says.

"The beauty of our system is that it is completely automated, dealers can choose the prime marketing area they wish to target and they can be as conservative or aggressive as they wish, because we have a complex mapping system that will direct customers to the closest dealer offering the best possible price on the vehicle they are looking for.

"Many dealerships have signed up with us because they have recognised that PriceMyCar.com.au saves them a lot of wasted time, it strips out the to-ing and fro-ing that often happens in new car purchase negotiations. It always them to finalise a deal more quickly.

"But it's not about new car buyers beating the dealers down on price, it's a shorter route to finalising a deal in the most transparent and fair manner for both parties," he says.

Dealers can find more information about the website at PriceMyCar.Com.au.

SURVEY FORECASTS 44% OF MOTORISTS WILL BUY A CAR IN 2020

New research has revealed that nearly half (44%) of car owners are planning to change their vehicle this year.

The findings come from a survey of an independent, nationally representative panel of 1006 Australian adults who own a vehicle, commissioned by *Money.com.au.*

"There's a general lack of confidence in the economy paired with rising costs of living – so it begs the question: Will Aussies be upgrading or downgrading their car this year? While some may be upgrading, it's likely that many will be going for a cheaper option," *money.com.au* spokesperson and licensed financial adviser **Helen Baker** says.

"A luxury car may have been bought at a 'good price' years ago, but the high maintenance costs may have led to people switching to more cost-efficient new vehicles now," Baker says.

"However, younger people will often buy relatively cheap cars, then upgrade once they've been working or change to accommodate a family. Meanwhile, older Aussies are heading into retirement and will choose cars to last them the next 10 years."

The survey panel consisted of the following types of vehicle owners: 38% owned a sedan or coupe, 27% owned an SUV, 27% owned a hatchback, 5% owned a ute, 0.6% owned a convertible, and 0.4% owned a truck.

Among the 44% of car owners who are planning to change their vehicles this year, 28% will buy a new one and 15% will buy a used vehicle (this compares with 27% of under-30s who will buy a used vehicle). Just 1% said they will ditch their vehicles and go vehicle-free this year.

When *Money.com.au* asked respondents whether they would have upgraded their vehicle earlier if the economy was in better shape, 45% admitted they would.

In 2019, 1.06 million new vehicles were purchased in Australia – the lowest reported figure since 2011 according to the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries (FCAI).

The survey also found that the younger the car owner, the more likely they are to change their vehicles this year: 60% of under-30s said they will change their vehicle in 2020, compared with 54% of 30-49 year olds, 39% of those in their 50s and 23% of over-60s.

Car ownership periods are becoming shorter

According to the 2019 ABS motoring census, motorists tend to hold on to their vehicles for an average of 10.2 years.

However, the survey revealed that, when they upgrade their vehicles this year, just 31% of respondents will have held on to them for 10 or more years. In fact, two-thirds (63%) will have held on to their vehicles for up to seven years.

The findings also reveal that the younger the motorists, the more likely they are to change their vehicles sooner: 81% of under-30s will have owned their vehicle for less than seven years, while 51% will have only held on to their vehicles for up to four years when they do replace it.

Surprisingly, the survey findings revealed more than half (53%) of respondents will fund the purchase of their new vehicle this year with their own savings. Just 18% will get a car loan, and a further 3% say the sale of their existing car will fully cover the cost of their new vehicle.

Aussie car owners' habits towards changing vehicles in 2020:

Yes, I am planning to buy a new vehicle	28%
Yes, I am planning to buy a used vehicle	15%
Yes, I am planning to be vehicle-free in 2020	1%
No, I am keeping my existing vehicle	56%

How many years have you owned your current vehicle?

Less than 1 year	6%
Around 2 years	9%
Around 3 years	10%
Around 4 years	9%
Around 5 years	18%
Around 6 years	6%
Around 7 years	6%
Around 8 years	5%
Around 9 years	2%
Around 10 years	15%
Around 11 years	1%
Around 12 years	1%
More than 12 years	14%

AUSTRALIAN-FIRST ZINK TECHNOLOGY MAKING ITS MARK ON AUTO FINANCE

An Australian-first ”three-click” car loan is set to revolutionise the automotive industry, allowing dealerships to green light applications within two minutes.

Developed and patented by emerging fintech company AusLoans Finance Group, the largest privately-owned automotive finance broker group in Australia, the new “Zink” technology has tripled productivity for its in-house brokers since being rolled-out in October.

AusLoans Finance Group managing director **Rodney Michail** said the company spent two years developing the technology, which it will offer to its workbook of 1100 dealerships across Australia in the coming months.

Michail said the benefit of Zink was two-fold - it increased productivity while ensuring compliance, a major issue facing the automotive industry in the wake of the Hayne commission and impending new dealership finance licensing laws, expected to be in place by mid-2020.

"We have already experienced a three time increase in productivity with our in-house team and believe Zink will have even greater efficiencies for dealerships. I am confident that in that setting, we will be able to double that number again," he said.

"With this technology, you simply take a photo of the customer's driver's licence and within two minutes you have a 'traffic light' assessment - green is a go, orange may warrant further investigation and red is, unfortunately, not eligible for a loan at this time.

"For a dealership to make this assessment in that amount of time is a game changer. It will save them - and the customer - considerable time. That assessment would usually require a 30-minute conversation and significant paperwork and damage the customer’s credit file.

"To do it with no paperwork, in two minutes and then be able to focus on what cars are available to the customer in their budget has the ability to change the way the industry operates. It puts the focus squarely on the customer experience, which is a win-win all around. "The feedback so far has certainly been overwhelmingly positive."

Michail said with dealerships likely to require financial licences to offer car loans by mid-2020, Zink was a credit safe option.

"Dealerships are going through the biggest change they have faced in 40 years in the wake of the Hayne commission, and it is putting pressure on an industry that is already experiencing a tough time, with new car sales falling consecutively for 20 months now.

"Recent Cox Group Research has revealed 16 major issues dealerships believe is restricting their growth - and Zink answers nine of those, including meeting regulations, reducing expenses, boosting consumer confidence and addressing margin compression through new efficiencies.

"When you blend technology with people you significantly boost productivity, customer satisfaction and operational efficiency, Zink has the opportunity to do all those things."

Michail said under the three click system, once eligibility was confirmed, finance options from 40 lenders were offered and car options presented.

"I called 2019 the year of personalisation, and that is what Zink provides, along with complete transparency," he said.

"AusLoans Finance Group has 40 lenders on our books, so instead of a customer being presented with one choice at the dealership, they have a range of options so they can make their own decision based on what best suits their circumstances."

Michail said the 10-strong team that developed Zink was working on final testing for stage two, with a total of seven stages to be progressively rolled-out.

"Our focus was on getting the first two stages out to market- which we believe are the most critical for consumer confidence in this declining market, with stage one the broker application and stage two the customer application," he said.

"While the broker application allows for early assessment efficiencies and in-field capture, the customer application is all about simplifying the process of document collection to improve their experience. We are hoping to bring that to market shortly."

Michail said Zink was also designed to speak to the largest emerging car market – millennials, and has been designed from real industry use, not out of a boardroom that’s not deep within the market.

"Most millennials are beginning their car search on their smart phones, so this technology allows them to make their own pre-assessment of their financial situation and cars that suit, increasing their experience when they arrive at the dealership." ■

ESTABLISHING YOUR DIGITAL FOUNDATIONS

by **Gavin Cox**
Managing Director
AdTorque Edge
gavin@adtorqueedge.com

As we've explored in previous columns, today's competitive automotive market requires dealers to be running continuous digital advertising campaigns to ensure they reach customers at every stage of the buying journey. However, what is the point of investing in advertising, if your marketing foundations aren't in place?

You wouldn't spend large sums of money to promote your dealership, only to have people disappointed when they hit the showroom floor with degraded facilities, low stock levels and unprofessional staff.

Dealers appreciate that the appearance of their premises and the presentation of their team is key to converting customers, so they invest in these accordingly. Similarly, investment needs to be made in some key, long-term marketing foundations to ensure you are always putting your best foot forward in the digital landscape: namely, your website and your search engine optimisation (SEO)

Website – your digital face

Your website is the digital face of your business so aesthetics are paramount if you want to keep a customer engaged. Website creative is a speciality that only highly qualified designers truly get right – and within that, automotive websites have a sub-set of design elements that are specific to the industry.

These include the way automotive websites navigate through new car content, the inclusion of offers pages and scrolling banners, stock locator layouts, and multiple conversion points including live chat, enquiry forms and click-to-call buttons.

Furthermore, you need to ensure your website is unique to your dealership – not just a templated version of other dealership sites of the same franchise. When visiting a website, customers want to feel as though you are speaking to them, with an understanding of who they are and what they want, and this is done through content that is unique to your dealership. The investment in a qualified designer also ensures you end up with a website that functions in a way that delivers the best user experience. With 65% of website views taking place on a mobile phone, it's imperative that your site is responsive: Adjusting its view, navigation and the functionality of its forms depending on the user's device.

The load speed it also a key element in ensuring a good customer experience, and only a reputable website developer can implement the necessary strategies to ensure this is achieved.

Customers today don't like to wait for a webpage to load – they expect an instant response to their click, and if they don't get that, they will move to another website. Load speed also has an impact on your website's search engine optimisation (SEO), with rankings of sites being downgraded if they take too long to load.

SEO – outrank your competitors

SEO is a process of optimisation that ensures a website is compliant with the many regular algorithm changes that the major search engines implement. "On-page" and "off-page" SEO strategies are executed to ensure a website's ranking potential is met and relevant traffic is being driven to it.

The best place to start your SEO is to have a qualified specialist audit your website: A process in which they will examine several key areas and detect any problems that may be preventing the site from ranking well. Once this is established, an SEO campaign can be set up to address the issues and attract customers to your site.

SEO is a long-term investment, not a short-term expense. With any SEO campaign, no matter what goals you have, success should be seen as value delivered over time. The best part about paying for SEO is that there is no expiry date: The benefits compound.

With the major players always improving their ranking algorithms and your competitors always looking to dethrone you, search engine rankings are constantly changing.

For this reason, rather than paying-as-you-go, my recommendation to dealers is to sign a retainer for SEO with a reputable agency that shares your goals and values.

This then gives you peace of mind that you have a long-term strategy in place, with a team of experts monitoring your website month after month.

Like a renovation to your premises where you would hire a qualified construction team that you trust will deliver a dealership that looks great, functions well and appeals to customers, you should take the same approach with your website.

Partner with providers who will deliver a website that is going to present well, perform well and rank well, because, once these foundations are in place, like your showroom, they will act as free advertising for your business. □

AUDI AUSTRALIA ANNOUNCES Q3 SPORTBACK ARRIVAL

Audi Australia has announced pricing and product details for the Q3 Sportback before customer deliveries begin in March.

Audi says the all-new Q3 Sportback offers a new exterior design, combining the sleek attributes of a coupe within a modern compact SUV. It's both longer and lower than the Q3 SUV, with pronounced wheel arch blisters, a nod to Audi's 'quattro' motorsport heritage.

All Australian-bound Q3 Sportback models come standard with S line exterior styling, as well as 19-inch alloy wheels. It offers 530 litres of luggage space – the same as its Q3 sibling. This can be increased up to 1400 litres, with ease, thanks to rear seats that slide fore/aft and split fold 40:20:40.

"The very first Q3 Sportback will expand Audi's presence in the premium compact SUV segment," says Audi Australia managing director **Paul Sansom.**

"The growing share of the premium compact SUV segment shows no sign of slowing down, and so the Q3 Sportback is absolutely the right car at the right time for the Australian market," he says.

Infotainment and connectivity are real strengths of the Q3 Sportback with features such as the virtual cockpit, MMI navigation plus with MMI touch, DAB+ digital radio, natural language voice control and a combination of USB-A and USB-C charging points.

It is equipped with wireless Apple CarPlay technology as standard, as well as Audi phone box light with wireless smartphone charging, dual simultaneous Bluetooth phone connection and Audi connect plus.

Through high-speed internet access, Audi connect plus offers a suite of features including: real-time traffic information and avoidance options, check petrol station fuel prices, weather updates and availability of spaces at a parking station.

The Q3 Sportback offers leather-appointed upholstery, multi-function leather steering wheel, 2-zone climate control and ambient interior coloured lighting, and keyless entry.

It has been awarded a 5-star ANCAP safety rating, and comes equipped with Autonomous Emergency Braking (AEB) with cyclist and pedestrian detection, lane departure warning, lane change warning, rear cross-traffic assist, tyre pressure monitors, hill descent control, as well as a comprehensive suite of parking sensors and rear view camera.

The Q3 Sportback is equipped with six airbags.

The 35 TFSI S line model is the entry point into the Q3 Sportback range, powered by a 1.4-litre turbocharged TFSI petrol engine that produces 110kW and 250Nm. Mated to the six-speed S tronic transmission that delivers power to the front wheels. The Q3 Sportback reaches 100km/h from rest in 9.3 seconds, returning 7.3 litres per 100km. CO2 emissions are 167 grams per km.

The 40 TFSI quattro S line model will join the line-up soon after, powered by a 132kW/320Nm 2.0-litre turbocharged TFSI petrol engine. It will be matched to a seven-speed S tronic transmission, driving all four wheels.

A special Launch Edition is also available to the market, which includes: metallic paint, privacy glass, black exterior styling package, folding/heated exterior mirrors, high-output sound system, auto dimming interior mirror, colour interior lighting package, electric front seats with electric lumbar support, heated front seats, a 360-degree parking camera, as well as adaptive cruise assist, with active lane assist and emergency assist. ■

ANOTHER FIRST FOR BMW IN THE LUXURY SECTOR

BMW Australia has introduced a first for the luxury segment by offering owners online upgrades that can be downloaded and installed without their vehicle even leaving the driveway.
The updates can be downloaded via the BMW ConnectedDrive Store and be fully functional within minutes.
The first upgrade available is High Beam Assistant for both the all-new BMW 1 Series – which went on sale in October 2019 – and the 2 Series Gran Coupé, which launches in Q1, 2020.
High Beam Assistant uses a light-seeking camera located in the rear view mirror housing to monitor the road for up to 700 metres ahead. When enabled it adapts to the conditions and prevents glaring other road users.
The system boosts safety, enhances visibility and aids convenience.
Customers with new model variants featuring BMW operating system 7.0 can also purchase the advanced BMW drive recorder through the BMW ConnectedDrive Store.
BMW Drive Recorder enables the vehicle's surround view camera system to capture video recordings of the immediate surrounds of the vehicle for up to 40 seconds.
The system can either create the recording on demand or generate recordings automatically in the event of a collision.
It uses all four surround view cameras by default but drivers can also configure the system to record using the front or rear cameras independently.
In addition, all recorded videos can be exported onto a USB drive and include the following data parameters: date, time, speed and GPS coordinates.
Applicable models and relevant production timing for BMW Drive Recorder are as follows:
3 Series Sedan (from July 2019)
3 Series Touring (from July 2019)
7 Series (from July 2019)
8 Series Convertible (from July 2019)
8 Series Coupé (from July 2019)
8 Series Gran Coupé (from July 2019)
X5 (from August 2019)
X6 (from August 2019)
X7 (from August 2019)
Vehicles must also have parking assistant plus, which is standard on all the above model variants except 320i.
A remote software upgrade will be available this year for vehicles built prior to July 2019.
Additional upgrades and updates are planned to be added to the BMW ConnectedDrive store for other BMW models in the future. ■

VEHICLE SALES CONTINUE TO DECLINE IN 2020

The new vehicle sales figures for January this year show a decline in sales once again.

Totalling 71,731, this number is a 12.5% decline from this time last year, and comprised of 20,494 passenger vehicles, 35,393 SUVs and 14,035 light commercial vehicles.

January 2020 marks the 22nd month of declining sales.

The results from the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries (FCAI), the peak body for the automotive industry in Australia, confirms these results.

"Given the broad range of environmental, financial, international and political issues facing Australia during January, it is no surprise to see the new vehicle market has reported a conservative start to the year," FCAI chief executive **Tony Weber** says.

Toyota lead the chase in January with 14,809 sales and 20.6% market share, followed by **Mazda** with 6695 sales and 9.3%, **Hyundai** with 5443 and 7.6%, **Mitsubishi** with 5108 and 7.1%, and **Kia** with 4705 and 6.6%.

The **Toyota Hilux** was January's top selling vehicle, with 2968 sales, closely followed by the **Ford Ranger** with 2624.

The **Toyota Corolla** was third with 2370, fourth was the **Toyota RAV4** with 2290, and the **Mitsubishi Triton** with 2075.

January this year had one less selling day than January 2019, resulting in a decrease of 291 vehicle sales per day.

Weber commends the updated VFACTS reporting system.

Tony Webber

"VFACTS is the most accurate source of data for the automotive industry. The updated VFACTS system is working well and automotive brands have welcomed its release," Weber says.

"The benefits of the new system include improved data accuracy and more timely reporting lines."

The 2019 figure, 1,062,867, was the lowest annual sales result reported in VFACTS since 2011, and 2020 is off to a slow start. January 2019 saw 81,994 vehicles, 10,263 more than this year.

The passenger vehicle market is down by 7556 vehicle sales (-26.9%) over the same month last year; the sports utility market down by 547 vehicle sales (-1.5%); the light commercial market is down by 1774 vehicle sales (-11.2%); and the heavy commercial vehicle market is down by 386 vehicle sales (-17.6%) versus January 2019. ■

TOP 10 BRANDS

1. TOYOTA 14,809

2. MAZDA 6,695

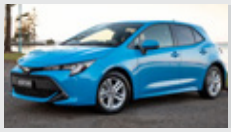
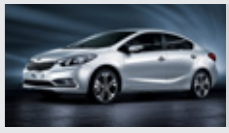
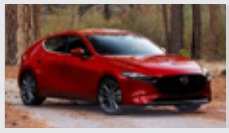
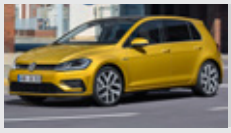
3. HYUNDAI 5,443

4. MITSUBISHI 5,108

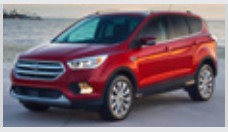
5. KIA 4,705

Continued p20

SMALL UNDER $40K

	1. TOYOTA COROLLA 2,370
	2. HYUNDAI I30 2,038
	3. KIA CERATO 1,500
	4. MAZDA3 1,330
	5. VOLKSWAGEN GOLF 1,119
	6. HONDA CIVIC 901
	7. SUBARU IMPREZA 286
	8. FORD FOCUS 181
	9. HYUNDAI ELANTRA 178
	10. HOLDEN ASTRA 121

SUV MEDIUM UNDER $60K

	1. TOYOTA RAV4 2,290
	2. MAZDA CX-5 1,859
	3. NISSAN X-TRAIL 1,467
	4. HYUNDAI TUCSON 1,257
	5. HONDA CR-V 1,144
	6. MITSUBISHI OUTLANDER 1,003
	7. KIA SPORTAGE 817
	8. SUBARU FORESTER 806
	9. VOLKSWAGEN TIGUAN 480
	10. FORD ESCAPE 235

TOP 10 BRANDS CONTINUED

6. FORD 4,169

7. NISSAN 3,444

8. HONDA 3,436

9. VOLKSWAGEN 3,246

10. HOLDEN 2,641

EVS RISE WHILE ICE SINKS

Tesla sells well in Australia, the Model Y due possibly later this year.

New battery electric and plug-in hybrid electric vehicle sales climb while petrol and diesel vehicle sales drop.

The continuing Australia vehicle market trend is again illustrated in VFACTs January sales figures released by the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries (FCAI), now extending into 22 months of a decline in sales of new internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles.

Private passenger electric/PHEV sales have risen 54.5% in January 2020 and 2019 comparisons, from 22 to 34, while non-private passenger electric/PHEV sales have rocketed 180.8% from 26 in January 2019 to 73 last month.

In the popular SUV sector, private electric/PHEV sales have risen 218% (16 to 51) and non-private sales have gone up 34.5% (29 to 39).

Electrics and PHEVs also account for a doubling of sales from two in January 2019 to four in January 2020.

And it should be noted that VFACTS figures don't include Tesla, which doesn't report its sales yet accounts for a good proportion of the new EV market in Australia.

Hybrids are also packing a heavy sales punch, particularly in the SUV category – 963% up (54 to 574) in the non-private area and more than 999% (54 to 902) in the private sector in the January comparisons.

A more modest rise for hybrids is recorded in the private passenger category – up 41.4% (603 to 853) and the non-private market – 1.6% (1054 to 1071).

The ICE market has dived, recording drops of anywhere from 7% to 38.1%, the only increases a measly 1.4% for petrol non-private SUVs and 12.3% for petrol light commercial private vehicles.

Yet EVs don't rate a mention in FCAI chief executive **Tony Weber's** comment on the sales result.

"Given the broad range of environmental, financial, international and political issues facing Australia during January, it is no surprise to see the new vehicle market has reported a conservative start to the year," he says.

Toyota was the market leader in January with 14,809 sales and 20.6% market share.

The Toyota Hilux, with 2968 sales, again claimed the title of Australia's best-selling vehicle, closely followed by the Ford Ranger with 2624 sales.

Visit *www.fcai.com.au* for more information.

NEW VEHICLE SALES BY BUYER TYPE AND FUEL TYPE	JANUARY 2020							
	Month		YTD		Variance +/- Vol. & %			
Total Market	2019	2018	2019	2018	MTH	YTD	MTH	YTD
ELECTRIC								
Passenger Private	34	22	34	22	12	12	54.5%	54.5%
Passenger Non-Private	73	26	73	26	47	47	180.8%	180.8%
SUV Private	51	16	51	16	35	35	218.8%	218.8%
SUV Non-Private	39	29	39	29	10	10	34.5%	34.5%
Light Commercial Non-Private	4	2	4	2	2	2	100.0%	100.0%
Sub Total	201	95	201	95	106	106	111.6%	111.6%
HYBRID								
Passenger Private	853	603	853	603	250	250	41.5%	41.5%
Passenger Non-Private	1,071	1,054	1,071	1,054	17	17	1.6%	1.6%
SUV Private	902	54	902	54	848	848	>999%	>999%
SUV Non-Private	574	54	574	54	520	520	963.0%	963.0%
Sub Total	3,400	1,765	3,400	1,765	1,635	1,635	92.6%	92.6%
TOTAL	3,601	1,860	3,601	1,860	1,741	1,741	93.6%	93.6%