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THE VEHICLE DEALER'S NEWS SOURCE
VOLUME 5 ISSUE 9 APRIL2019



Australian shipping bugbear

The brown mamorated stink bug (BMSB) has put Australian shipping ports on high alert over the 2018-19 stink bug season and the automotive industry has played a role.

According to the Queensland minister of agricultural industry development, **Mark Furner**, Brisbane narrowly avoided a potential outbreak of halyomorpha halys, as it's scientifically known, with 25 different consignments destined for Brisbane detecting the pest.

Three separate incidents occurred in Lytton and Fisherman Islands, and New Chum near Ipswich, where biosecurity officers engaged in an "emergency programme" and "response operations" took place for stink bugs "initially detected, post quarantine on a variety of imported cargo including machinery imported from China", the department says.


Mark Furner

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Attack on the clones

The Victorian government is trialling new technology which will take the fight to registration cloning.

The crime has bugged the automotive industry for years and left dealerships, and motorists more broadly, facing hefty fines and tolls for copied registration plates belonging to vehicles sitting in dealer forecourts.

Between September 2017 to 2018, over 19,000 cases of registration plate theft were recorded by Victoria Police.

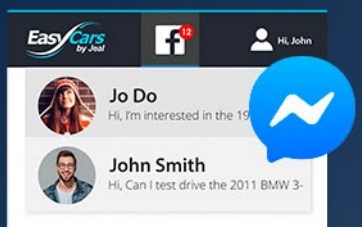
Registration cloning was highlighted by the Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce in 2017, calling for digitisation of vehicle plates, and the Labor government says it will begin a new trial to weed out the problem.

Roads minister **Jaala Pulford** says a radio frequency identification system will act as "a third number plate".

Pulford allays fears of a sticker being removed, with a statement

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Auto intentions follow property declines

New car buying intentions are reportedly on the downward trajectory into the approaching decade.

Automotive consumer intentions are at their lowest in four years and well below the 15-year average, while at the same time, house prices in Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth continue to drop in value.

According to the Roy Morgan quarterly *Automotive Currency Report,* there were 135,000 fewer interested consumers in the automotive market at the end of last year, a drop of 6% on December 2017.

Also, as of December 2018, there were 61,000 fewer consumers considering buying within the next year, and just 2.1 million Australians genuinely looking to buy a new car before 2022.

According to *Finder.com.au* data, house median values – often a guide for how the new car market will fare as consumers lose/gain confidence to purchase outright with savings or take out vehicle finance - are predicted to drop.

Values are expected to fall by as much or as little as 6.21% in Sydney, 6.53% in Melbourne, 2.29% in Brisbane, 3% in Perth and 0.82% in Adelaide.

A property in Sydney worth $930,000 would lose as much as $57,758 in value by the end of 2019, *The New Daily* reports. A Melbournian home owner is expecting to lose $50,000 in value by next year.

Ernst & Young chief economist **Jo Masters** tells *TND*: "The broad consensus is that there's a 20% fall between peak to trough, which means we are halfway there."

"Eight per cent does seem reasonable; it may sound really large, but you need to take into account the rise we've had in house prices," she says.

Independent economist **Stephen Koukoulas** says the worst of the housing value drop is nearly over.

"Armageddon scenarios are very unlikely at this stage ... while credit has tightened, affordability has improved quite markedly ... there seems to be a bit more buyer interest out there and interest rates are low," he explains.

Roy Morgan's report also shows alternative forms of powertrain, such as hybrid, diesel and even fully-electric, are being considered by punters.

Despite VFACTS data indicating 75% of the new retail market was petrol-engined, only 61.7% of intenting buyers in the next four years are considering sticking with 91RON, 95RON and 98RON only for their next buy.

Diesel was among 27.6% of intending buyers' potential shopping lists (up 3.6%), petrol-electric hybrid was up 7.1% among buyers to 8%, and full EVs were tempting 2.1% of prospective buyers.

Norman Morris, Roy Morgan industry communications director, says the booming new car market of previous years has gone in the other direction.

"There is currently some concern about the slowing economy, lack of wage growth, energy price escalation, declining home values and political uncertainty with a potential change of government," he says.



Chief economist Jo Masters, Ernst & Young



Norman Morris, Roy Morgan industry communications director.

"Over recent years there has been considerable growth in the new vehicle market but this is now facing a number of real challenges," Morris explains.

Roy Morgan suggests a number of social factors are also adding to the market's wavering consumer interest, as well as economical contributors.

"Most manufacturers are ramping up their development in areas such as electric vehicles and driverless cars but it will ultimately be the consumer that will determine who the winners are," Morris says.

"Research has highlighted the need to understand the generational differences in likely fuel choice as the market changes," he adds.

"The early adopters of changing motor vehicle fuels are most likely to be millennials as they appear to be more willing to move away from the traditional petrol engine cars," he advises.

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AutoTalk Magazine and **autotalk.com.au** are published by Auto Media Group
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Affordability does not mean a low sticker price - Nissan EV chief

Nissan has big aspirations for its electric vehicle effort. By 2022 it wants to have sold one million electrified vehicles worldwide, and is rolling out the models to get it there.

Between now and 2022 it will launch eight new pure electric models. It has already been showing off its wares with the IMQ concept crossover displayed at Geneva, with more to come.

Leading its efforts is global electric vehicle director **Nicholas Thomas**, who *Autotalk* caught up with last month at Nissan's Electric Futures think-tank in Hong Kong.

Thomas's job of hitting the target has got off to a good start with the new Leaf we also drove during the event.

"We sold more than 100,000 of the new car in our three key regions of the US, Europe and Japan," Thomas says. "But now it's very exciting to be able to be launching it around the rest of the world. Particularly here around Asia Pacific, where we see a great deal of interest in the car."

That tally takes Nissan to 300,000 electric vehicles sold, mostly the successful first generation Leaf.

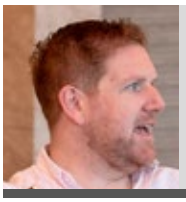
Thomas says the new model is important because of its range.

"It's been really, really well received in terms of firstly the extra range we're able to offer now. Once you've crossed that kind of 150 miles, 280-kilometre barrier, that's quite a psychological barrier. It now means that for a lot of people you can do all of your week's driving on a single charge."

Nissan, he suggests, is at an advantage to other players in the electric vehicle market. As many brands launch their first generation cars, Nissan is selling its second and developing its third.

"Which means our engineers firstly have resolved a lot of the quibbles, if you like, of the first product and the second generation product has really grown."

Broader acceptance of electric vehicles and government pressure are also finally combining to assist the rollout of electric cars.



Nicholas Thomas, Global Electric Vehicle Director

"And then you add the government pressure which is driving for, particularly in cities in Europe, China, California and Japan, cleaner air in cities; trying to reduce air pollution and to take active measures to do that," Thomas says.

"Zero emission cars are just about the most obvious way that a government can take action on those sorts of things."

The much-fabled crossover point for battery cost is also approaching, Thomas says, though not merely from the technology getting cheaper. Emissions regulation is raising the price of internal combustion powertrains up to meet batteries - especially in Europe.

"Batteries will come down to $100 per kilowatt hour, and the price of NOX and CO2, which is driving up the price of petrol and diesel engines will cross over," he explains.

"It doesn't automatically mean that the EV itself will be as cheap as the cheapest petrol car you can buy today, it's still a big battery. At the same time as the cost per kilowatt hour is coming down, the demand for bigger batteries is going up."

Thomas says a big challenge in his job is to convince buyers that affordable electric cars are not necessarily low priced. The battery is essentially an asset that can be used for other things.

"Yes, clearly sticker price is hugely important but then you look at the different things we're able to do. With an EV, as long as you can get electrons into it, which are substantially cheaper than hydrocarbons, in most cases, then you've kind of paid for your fuel already because you're paying for battery life."

The battery can also be used in vehicle-to-grid or home setups, allowing the owner to generate via solar or wind cheap electricity and store it for

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Used market on the rise

Grant Denyer is the new ambassadorial face of Gumtree Cars.

The former Targa racer who's had more than his fair share of close calls, has taken a slightly less dangerous deal with Gumtree Cars as the online auto classifieds business expands further into the dealership space.

General manager of the EBay Classifieds Group, which owns Gumtree Cars, **Martin Herbst,** says not only was the ex-*Family Feud* host an expert at winning the audience, he also knows what it's like car shopping.

"He first and foremost is massively into cars as a former V8 Supercar driver, building go-karts, racing – he also has lots of personal experience buying second-hand," he tells *AutoTalk*.

"Having Grant on board will help people start to take notice and will raise eyebrows in the dealers out there who perhaps don't realise how powerful we can be for them," Herbst explains.

Herbst says the business wants to saddle up with more dealers to provide what he describes as an opportunity to bridge the gap between a value product and a vibrant one.

Gumtree's vehicle classifieds listing is just shy of 150,000 new and used, and of the seven million people on looking at everything else that isn't a car per month, Herbst says Gumtree Cars stacks up well against "the leader in the space".

"We're now working with around 1600 dealers, and we've grown that share quite quickly in the last few years, that's including AP Eagers and AHG dealers who can see the value we offer," he says.

Although he does concede there are different ways to count dealers, whether by location (multiple brands at multiple sites) or groups.

"It depends how the dealer group business itself wants to be counted, either as multiple dealerships or as a single larger operation, but we've still seen double digit growth each year, including 2018 which saw a large uptake," Herbst says.

The main obstacle to that growth, he believes, is perception.



Martin Herbst, Gumtree Cars

"More broadly there is a slight disconnect because people don't realise how many cars we have, or how many leads we can offer the showroom or car yard, or how much traffic we're getting."

That traffic flow, Herbst says, is changing direction toward the used car market.

"Talking to some of our larger dealer groups, they're definitely looking at their used car strategies right now," he reveals.

"I think given some of the anxiety about the economy going forward, what's happening from a consumer side is you're getting more trepidation about how much budget to spend."

"We know that the majority of cars are bought second-hand, so there's a massive opportunity and you can get a customer into with traditional thinking as a new car customer, with a whole life cycle after that."

Gumtree Cars is getting what Herbst describes as fairly good penetration in rural areas, but opportunity is still awaiting in metro areas, especially Melbourne and Sydney.

He says Perth has been something of a stronghold for the business but Gumtree Cars but is keen to expand further into untapped market potential, such as regional centres.

The key to doing that, Herbst suggests, is diving head-first into the data pool, but he also says some dealers could be missing opportunities sitting in the forecourt or out the back.

"We're leveraging as much data as we can to both help dealer businesses and consumers, but also to increase performance on our site simultaneously," he says.

"But sometimes dealers are only publishing a fraction of their inventory up online, when in fact they could be advertising a much greater portion or even their entire listing of vehicles," he advises.

Herbst says feedback to dealers is helping them see how well they're doing on a cost-per-connection basis, and how good the value is they're getting.

"Doing that, they can see what cars work best to sell and what they may be under utilising," he explains.

"We approach dealers as a partner, and data is at everyone's fingertips now, but car shoppers – like any consumer – wants transparency on whatever they're getting.

"Arming our dealer partners with more data to guarantee that conversion is important, to provide those performance insights around what the buying trends are," he says.

With the slowdown in the new car market, Herbst says dealers must shift their attention to used cars, especially to capitalise on the few customers who are looking at their inventory and visiting the dealership.

"Buyers of course want to see the cars that work best for them and our new research indicates 82% of Australians bought their first car second-hand," he says.

"More people buy their cars from a dealer than anywhere else, about 41%, so we want to help dealers get their stock up on to Gumtree because that will get those customers in and start that relationship," he continues.

"We pull the identity and face of the dealership into our platform, because we're facilitating the connection," he says.

"We can break down for dealers where the leads are in makes and models, but also which dealerships and showrooms are performing well."

"That means dealers can accurately get the right stock into their yards at the right price, there's lots of opportunity for us to be that rich database partner."



When speed and awareness collide

Stuart McGregor, a detective inspector from the Victoria Police major collision investigation and heavy vehicle investigation units, has seen it all.

Generations of people scoff at the "speed kills" slogan, probably because they are victims of the human condition and a cognitive state known as confirmation bias.

Confirmation bias is a state which allows us to believe, for example, that we're good drivers, confounded by the fact we don't routinely crash. In other words, we're constantly having our belief affirmed, and therefore don't question if it is actually true.

The fact we rarely become self-aware of our own confirmation bias means it goes undetected and we continue driving the way we have done, without thinking twice or changing bad habits, and thus we don't self-evaluate.

AutoTalk was hosted by the Australasian Fleet Management Association as McGregor spoke to a small group from the fleet management sector, peeling back the layers of road crashes and how the system works.

He runs the Major Collision Investigation Unit, a taskforce called upon when a vehicle collision has involved heavy vehicles and is fatal, or resulted in serious, life-altering injuries.

McGregor admits the task of scientifically and mathematically determining why a crash happened – and how the resulting fatalities and serious injuries occurred – is one his team is so proficient at they can sometimes forget the big picture.

"We have guys in our team with degrees in recreating crash scenarios, they can figure out exactly what speed you were doing, where the car was positioned, how long it took you to react, and we know how that car might have behaved if you'd started braking sooner," he says.

"A lot of us become immune to it in a way; looking at scenes like that just become exhibits to us," he says, pointing to a slide showing skids marks, a twisted vehicle crushed beneath a truck, broken glass everywhere.

"The body, the car, the truck, skid marks, the gauge marks, become second nature, otherwise we wouldn't be very good at our job; but you never forget there's a family and friends connected to the people in these crashes," McGregor says.

"I work in a section of the police force which investigates collisions people are killed in as a result of criminal activity, and I have a responsibility to ensure those major crash investigations are executed properly and brought before the courts," he says.

"We also have a heavy vehicle unit and, generally speaking they [truck drivers] behave themselves and try to work within the law, but when things do go wrong, trucks are really dangerous," he explains.

McGregor describes how a group of specialised detectives now work on "primary duties".

"If someone in a company behaves in a manner or allows something to happen that caused the death or serious injury of someone on the road, then that person is charged," he says.

"If a truck driver goes off the road and is killed hitting a tree, my detectives will go through the records of the company to see what they've done to ensure their driver's safety – if they haven't, that's when we come in and charge them with the offense – it's challenging," McGregor continues.

The detective reminds how grotesque Victoria's roads were back in the 1970s.



Stuart McGregor, Victoria Police detective inspector.

"My team was created back in 1957, and those 70 years ago we had a forthright member come forward and demanded the chief commissioner put together a team of experts to investigate collisions and understand why they happen so we could create solutions," he says.

The unit then took the information to premier **Henry Bolte,** who McGregor describes as a "gruff old bloke".

"It took years to gather data, but it wasn't until 1970 when one of our members went to the premier, who was very comfortable where he was, and said there was a simple way to get the ridiculous road toll down – make seatbelts compulsory," he says.

In 1970, 1061 people died on Victoria's roads, last year it was 213.

"It was carnage on the road every single year. And worse, 50% of drivers killed in collisions in the 70s were drink driving," McGregor reveals.

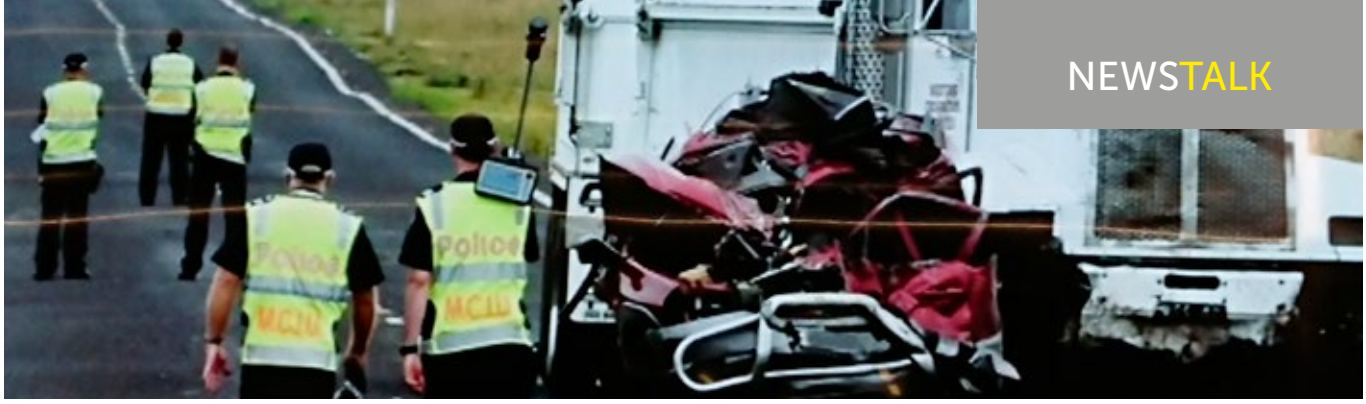
"That was just the 500 or so who died, let alone the ones injured, disfigured, scarred and crippled for life," he recalls.

But the good form is about to come undone, McGregor says.

"Right now, however, we are looking at one of the worst years we've had in a decade," he warns.

"We have to find out what it is in those 213 that's still causing our road trauma – how do we fix that?"

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When speed and awareness collide

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McGregor recounts of the story of **Andrea Lehane**, a 34-year-old mother of two who was struck by then 18-year-old **Caleb Jakobssen** who was riding a "monkey bike" through a Carrum Downs shopping centre.

Jakobssen overtook a car stopped for Lehane at a pedestrian crossing, hitting her at over 30km/h; she was thrown over six metres across the carpark and killed when her head hit the pavement.

Jakobssen fled the scene, was convicted of culpable driving in 2017, and was sentenced to seven years' jail.

"The human body is designed to fall over and not die, not to be hit at 30km/h, not be on a motorcycle and travel at 70, 80, 100km/h," McGregor explains.

"If you hit something at any speed like that, your body stops but your heart basically gets ripped away from the important bits," he tells a silent room in the mezzanine above the bustling intersection of Londsale and Exhibition.

"In the Melbourne CBD, September 2012, the government changed the speed limit from 60km/h to 40km/h, which of course everybody hated at the time, but thinking about the case with Andrea Lehane, you start to understand why," McGregor continues.

In the 36 months following the speed limit reduction, pedestrian deaths dropped from 271 to 187.

McGregor says the major collisions unit could only start convincing people of the danger behind low-level speeding (up to 10km/h above the posted speed limit), with concrete evidence to support the theory.

"Back in 1987, the then-Victorian **[John Cain Jr]** government increased the speed limit on country roads, and some around Melbourne, by 10km/h from 100 to 110, it was small – some would say it's nothing," McGregor recalls.

"After two years they realised they had to take it back because, compared to the two years prior, there was a 24.6% increase in road trauma on those roads specifically," he reveals.

"In 2003 and 2008 we went to as many collisions as we could to just establish what speeds the cars were travelling at leading up to the crash – over those two years we found about 19% of those cars were speeding between one and 10 km/h over the limit," McGregor says.

The message McGregor ultimately wants to make clear is to be aware of the physics at play in a crash, irrelevant of our perception of driver skill – confirmation bias.

"On average the human being will take 1.5 seconds to react to something on the road ahead of you and apply the brakes – the speed of the car, the momentum behind the weight of the car, the level of braking system beneath you will determine how long it takes you to stop – and at a certain point you will be going faster than what you had planned," he explains.

These scenes don't happen in a sterile environment, McGregor says, reminding of the power poles, trees, parked cars and dynamic traffic around you – he then asks you to insert someone you love in front of the car, truck, ute, motorcycle you're operating.

"We scientifically set the speed limits to determine your line of sight, and therefore the distance you need in order to stop in an emergency," he says.

In a 60km/h zone, 70% of the population admit to travelling at up to 10km/h over the speed limit.

Puzzling is that the data is right there in front of our police departments, governments and even motorists, and road trauma costs the economy $3.5 million per road death, according to McGregor.

Yet, during question time Mcgregor is asked: "Have you spoken to the government and VicRoads about putting pressure on practical driver education programmes for licence tests and renewals," which teach about speeding and braking distance.

And his answer was: "It's a valid discussion, we look at other areas for retraining, but it doesn't make any difference; but yes, we do talk about those programmes, but like anything the government does, it costs a lot of money".

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Dinner with distinction

Peter Costello knows how to draw attention, pull a crowd and masterfully hold his audience, but above anything else, the former federal treasurer can also walk the talk.

AutoTalk was hosted by the Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce at the 2019 president's dinner, where the longest-serving treasurer in Australia's 119 years of federation spoke to a field of the state's top dealers.

He likes to start early in the piece by reminding everybody of the legacy both the Howard government brought to Australia's economy, but also how tantalisingly close he came to the top job.

Anybody can google his stats and achievements boasting the GST, capital gains tax and 10 surplus budgets - even his best-selling memoir - but his advice directly to an industry such as the automotive sector with all the ebbing and froing, is a rare opportunity.

"I first addressed the VACC 30 years ago, I don't know what I said but it's taken 30 years to be invited back, and in that time the automotive industry has changed dramatically," Costello jests.

"I was just starting out in politics and have since had that career; you think you get a bad rap when people say you don't have credibility as a car dealer – you ought to go into politics!" he smiles.

Costello points to the 20 years of change in Canberra during his tenure and others since, He touches on the events that change the world in that time, including the September 11 terrorist attacks, the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, and the Global Financial Crisis.

"After 20 years in parliament, a lot changed not only for me personally, but technology changed; as treasurer I didn't have a computer on my desk, we didn't do email, some bloke was talking to me about such things and as he left I asked my assistant who he was – Oh, Bill Gates, I realised."

"The world was changing. The five largest companies on the Australian Stock Exchange were three banks, one miner, BHP, and CSL; venerable companies, some hundreds of years old. The five largest companies on the US Stock Exchange, are Amazon, Alphabet (Google), Facebook, Apple and Microsoft – these companies didn't exist – or barely existed – when I was last here at the VACC," he continues.

"I'm now a chairman of a television company and would have once upon a time said our competitors at Nine were Seven, Ten and maybe the ABC, if people watched it.

"Today our competitors are Amazon because it has Amazon Prime, Google because it has YouTube, Facebook because people now stream themselves live, and another $150 billion company called Netflix – when I wake up in the morning I don't think about Seven, Ten and the ABC – because we're all in competition with Netflix, Facebook, and YouTube," Costello reveals.

Knowing the confidently tall, skillfully-minded, slick-talking former treasurer grapples with the might and influence of some of the most powerful companies in the world, brings an air of seriousness to the room.



Peter Costello, AC.

"Each time I've bought my kids a car, which is roughly every three years apart with their ages, and it's usually the same car each time because it was a bargain," he begins with a chuckle.

"But each time I've bought it cheaper than the one before, and it's not actually the same car each time, because every time it's got features and systems the previous car never had. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics over the last 10 years the price of cars has fallen 10%, about 1% per annum," he explains.

"But when I buy this car for my kids I expect it'll be cheaper, and then we go and register it – and I never expect that to be cheap – and then we go to insure it – and again I don't expect that to get any cheaper – but when I buy my new laptop I expect it to be cheaper, when I get a new phone, I expect that to come down, because the price of traded goods has fallen and has done for a very long time," Costello says.

He says the fact dealers have widely reported being so squeezed on sale margins in recent years is testament to this trend.

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Dinner with distinction

Costello warns today's generation to be wary of a recession.

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"Motor vehicles have fallen 1.3% per annum and home appliances have fallen 1.6% per annum and computing equipment has fallen 11% per annum, all in the last decade," he continues.

"But health has gone up 4.6% per annum, education 4.1%, gas 5.6% and electricity 7.8% every year – anything the government touches is going up – and as you're [dealers] are in the traded goods sector, this is keeping inflation low," Costello says.

Proceeding to acknowledge the efforts of his dealer audience in easing the pressure on family budgets, he then asks why people are feeling financially squeezed in their daily lives when so much has become cheaper.

"You're all easing the squeeze, but is anybody thanking you for it?" he queries, tongue-in-cheek.

"They're an ungrateful lot," he jokes. "I realised that when they threw me out of office in 2007."

Costello says he predicts the rapidly approaching federal election will see some curious ideas put forward by both sides that will change Australia's economic situation once again.

"**Bill Shorten** says in order to ease the squeeze he's going to put wages up, how he'll do that we're not entirely sure; **Scott Morisson** says he's going to put taxes down and I believe those are the battle lines," he summarises.

"The problem is only about half of Australia pays tax, so saying you'll put taxes down, doesn't mean anything to half the population, so you need to appeal to them as well," he advises.

Costello believes the fact we're living in what he describes as a low-inflation, moderate wage growth society, is why people are feeling that squeeze on government services and regulated industries.

He suggests fixing government is the best way to tackle the issue, but says the central world banks are the only ones actively doing something about the global economic uncertainty which is seeing political systems grinding to a halt.

"They have been flooding the global economy with money and you have never lived through a period like this before, where you can get a standard variable home loan in Australia for 5%," Costello says, with pauses between sentences almost on par with **Barack Obama.**

"Our cash rate is 1.5%, and it's never been that low ever; 30 years ago when I was standing here it was 17% back in 1990," he scoffs.

"The Bank of England's cash rate is .75%, Bank of Japan's is in negative – you pay the bank to take your money! And it's not just the price of money," Costello teases on a topic which would leave most audiences asleep on their entree.

His ability to perform his speech as much as research it, is something truly impressive to behold, akin to **Patrick Stewart** becoming a photonegative Othello (not just reciting Shakespeare).

"We've also been printing more money around the world - $3.7 trillion in the US, European bank $2.4 trillion, Japan and China have created an estimated $10 trillion – the global markets are flooded with money," Costello explains.

Where's all that money gone? he asks.

"In Australia a lot of it has gone into real estate, some into infrastructure assets, some has gone into bonds – it's an easy money world – the trouble is you can't find places to get a return on it," he says.

Costello says adaptation is the new paradigm in this context and car dealers are feeling exactly the same shift, citing continuous economic growth for 28 years.

"Young people don't know what a recession is; they've never lived through it, and if one comes along, it'll be a very big wake-up call," he augurs.

"Australia adapts, that's what we do – our mines were built to supply iron ore to Japan, when they tanked, we moved to supply China – and the world knows how adaptable we are, we're renowned for it, they know we're adaptable, despite our challenges, such as the political challenge coming up in May," he says.

Costello then takes the room off the pedestal and brings it back to reality.

"For any of the problems we've got, I say to you, every other country has much, much worse, some in our region; we're adapters and the business changes that are coming are challenges that the automotive industry will have to adapt to."

"While there's time and space, there's going to be transport, and while there's transport, there will be automotive – cars may be delivered in new ways, with new fuels, with new information – but they will be around for a very long time," Costello concludes.

"And I hope the VACC is also around for a very long time to come."



Franchise code reforms to restore balance

The Australian Automotive Dealer Association has praised Australia's Franchising Code of Conduct parliamentary inquiry but says a dedicated automotive code is amiss.

The AADA says extended protections for franchised new car retailers are overdue and a welcome inclusion in the report, with unfair contract terms one of the key issues addressed by the inquiry.

Chapter nine of the report highlights unfair contract terms (UCT) as a key barrier to long-term franchisee sustainability and profitability.

Current Australian Consumer Law outlines small businesses are granted protections from unfair terms where a business employs fewer than 20 staff at the time of signing, and the contract's upfront price is smaller than $300,000, or less than $1 million for a contract duration uner 12 months. These definitions virtually never apply to automotive retailers.

The report cites the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's submission to the inquiry, which says working UCTs into a franchise agreement isn't illegal, and the only enforcement for doing so is court action; an outcome very few dealers can afford financially or reputationally.

"Because there is no penalty for having a UCT in a franchise agreement, there is little incentive for a franchisor to proactively remove them," the report states.

The report draws on submissions from the AADA, Motor Trades Association and FCAI, among others like 7-Eleven, citing "that a large number of franchise agreements are excluded from the UCT provisions due to the current threshold for small business", it says.

"In particular, some franchisees in the fuel and car dealer industries are unlikely to meet the small business threshold due to the upfront investment amount exceeding $1 million."

The MTA also backed the AADA's call for an independent automotive franchising code, saying in its submission: "Dealer and franchise agreements are being terminated ... with sometimes less than robust market analysis".

Chief executive **Richard Dudley** says the fact MTA members have collectively stood before the committee shows the seriousness of the franchise code's ineptitude.



David Blackhall, AADA

"This is the first time in an unprecedented manner that we have actually had member businesses from our constituency nationwide appear before any committee with regard to the franchising code," he explains.

"Such is the fear of reprisal, retribution and intimidation.

"I think it's a reasonably good indication that something's not quite right with this regulatory instrument," Dudley says.

The MTA says it wants a dedicated code to have clarity on the size of dealer operations, franchisor limitations on unilateral changes which vary from contract to contract, stronger termination provisions around notice periods, breach remedy requirements, and timeframes for those remedies, as well as penalties for breaches of agreements.

AADA chief executive **David Blackhall**

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Franchise code reforms to restore balance

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says the report vindicates what situation dealers have been subjected to.

"While the report stopped short of recommending our preferred approach of a standalone automotive code, we are prepared to discuss with government the committee's proposal for a core franchising code with greater powers, and schedules to the code that address specific industry considerations," he says.

The Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries submission, also included in the report, says unfair contract term laws, as they stand, are "sufficient".

"The code is currently more than adequate to handle the challenges that may arise from time to time across a very diverse set of businesses," the FCAI says.

The FCAI describes the relationship between dealers and distributors as "not a "true" franchisor/franchisee relationship" for various reasons.

"Dealers in the automotive industry are not required to pay to the distributor any upfront or ongoing franchise fees.

"The automotive sector is more akin to a distribution model, rather than a "pure" franchise ... [and] most dealers are operated by experienced commercially minded people and many are large, multi-franchised corporations," it explains.

The FCAI uses Automotive Holdings Group (AHG) as an example of an "ASX listed ... $3.7 billion" dealer group which "employs 7500 people".

Also acknowledged are "even smaller regional and rural dealers [whom] are financially and commercially sophisticated on the basis that they are also often multi-franchise entities," the FCAI adds.

Both calibre of dealers "often own key real estate ... often concentrated in key strategic locations, [where] the land holding is extremely valuable and highly sought after".

The FCAI says dealers and distributors need each other equally but the code needs to simply be enforced, not changed.

"To highlight instances of franchisee failures [whether financially or in terms of compliance with workplace laws] is not a reason to demand amendment to the code," it says.

"However, it is a reason to demand enforcement of the law as it is written."

The federal Labor party disagrees, with member for Oxley in Queensland, **Milton Dick**, telling parliament in November last year the franchising code had "failed to protect dealers".


Milton Dick.

"It does not account for the highly technical nature of the automotive industry and the scale of both dealers and manufacturers relative to regular franchisees and franchisors," he says.

"The Australian car industry has seen a shift and change faster than perhaps any other industry in Australia ... An influx of imported models and the need to adapt to constant change has meant that the pressure placed on dealerships continues to grow," Dick explained to the private members meeting.

"This is not helped by the uneven playing field, which is tipped heavily in favour of the multinational manufacturers whilst local family-owned dealerships do it tough," he added.

In collaboration with shadow assistant treasurer **Andrew Leigh,** Dick says "a future Shorten Labor government, if privileged to be elected, will implement an industry-specific, auto dealership code to better support new car dealers."

Franchise law academic **Dr Jenny Buchan** says UCT provisions should apply to every single franchise agreement with no exclusions based purely on financial income.

"I suggest that the unfair contract terms provisions should apply to all franchise agreements, irrespective of size of the investment or number of employees," she says in the report.

"Return on investment for car dealers takes many years and often spans multiple contracts that include no security of tenure.

"This makes negotiating more balanced commercial terms extremely difficult," the report adds, taking into account the AADA's submission.

The AADA says the government now needs to follow through.

"It is now very important for the Government to respond to the Inquiry Report quickly," Blackhall says.

"This will maintain momentum and address the power imbalance between overseas vehicle manufacturers and local new car dealers, which currently leaves Australian businesses and their many employees extremely vulnerable," he concludes.



Dealing with change

Hyundai Australia says more of its 160 franchised dealerships will join its Blue Drive low and zero emission vehicle sales and servicing strategy.

Only 18 dealers in metropolitan Australia are able to sell and service what is the widest range of electric vehicle models of any manufacturer available in Australia, equal with Renault.

Hosting *AutoTalk* at the launch of the Kona Electric in Adelaide put the most affordable electric SUV in front of lord mayor **Sandy Vershoor** and energy and mining minister **Dan van Holst Pellekaan**, Hyundai says it isn't afraid to call on governments to take a lead in fleet transition.

Hyundai Australia's director of customer experience, **Oliver Mann**, tells *AutoTalk* more Blue Drive dealers will put their hands up in 2019.

"The broad plan is to expand this progressively across 2019 and beyond, as supply of Blue Drive vehicles increases," he says.

"Ultimately, we foresee every Hyundai dealer being Blue Drive enabled, the next phase will occur from June 1, at which point we expect 12 more Blue Drive dealers to become operational," Mann reveals.

Hyundai Australia says it has a lot planned for its dealers and electric vehicle models in the coming months and proceeding year.

"We've invited expressions of interest in becoming a Blue Drive dealer from the Hyundai dealer network, and built our roll-out plan primarily around strategic location and market opportunity," Mann explains.

Hyundai says it is "progressively reviewing the roll-out plan for Blue Drive dealers" beyond 2019, citing the "high global demand" has "limited supply of Blue Drive products" like Kona Electric and Ioniq.



Oliver Mann.



Scott Nargar.

"Demand for Blue Drive vehicles has been healthy," Mann says.

Confirmed Blue Drive dealers include four in Sydney (booths in Gosford, Col Crawford in Brookvale, Ryde Hyundai, and Paul Wakeling in Cambelltown) and Wagga Wagga; three in Melbourne (Penfolds in Doncaster, South Morang, Lakeside in Caroline Springs), plus Baker Hyundai in Wodonga; Maughan Theim in Adelaide; three in south-east Queensland (Brisbane: Zupps in Aspley, Keema in Moutn Gravatt; plus Gold Coast); three in Perth (Wild West in Wanagara, Osbourn Park, and John Hughes, Victoria Park); plus Lennock in the ACT and Hobart Motors in Tasmania.

Hyundai says while it does not have special identification for Blue Drive such as Toyota's "Synergy Drive" dealer façade branding, it is rolling out a stylish new Global Design Space Identity (GDSI) programme across Hyundai dealerships, with around 100 completed so far.

A new marketing campaign for Kona is also on its way, which will include the Electric model, and launches on April 7 across several mediums, including television.

Hyundai further mobility and Government relations and corporate communications manager **Scott Nargar** says dealers are in the midst of upgrading their service departments in preparation for the Blue Drive programme.

"We've got around 40 dealers who've already put their hands up to be Blue Drive deals in the near future which tells us there is a lot of buzz in the market if dealers are asking for it," he says.

"Dealers need to meet a number of criteria in order to become a Blue Drive dealer, which includes technician training – they need to be a master technician – as well as high levels of customer service, but we're not rushing out to make everybody one straight away," Nargar explains.

"Of course we're working with those who want to, but we have to not rush out and train everybody, they need to

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Dealing with change

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understand what's required to successfully sell and service them.

"But also we need to get the best customer engagement because we've gathered feedback from past EV owners whose experience wasn't the best; we want those passionate, champion dealers who really believe in electric vehicles and will get the most out of the training," he says.

Nargar has spoken directly with multiple state and federal governments in recent years – including in Adelaide for the Kona Electric launch. He says it's an exciting time for change.

"Both the Adelaide mayor Vershoor and minister van Holst Pellekaan are very keen to continue supporting us, as have previous governments, which is why South Australia has been such a leader for so long – and surprisingly the new government still has focus on the projects we're working on, and the ACT has done a great job saying it'll replace 100% of their fleet by 2021 with electric vehicles," Nargar says.

"We're close to getting hydrogen production going here [in SA], and credit has to go to the NRMA for putting $10 million of their own into free DC charging in NSW, which incentivises eco-tourism and money to be spent in regional areas."

Nargar also says he doesn't want big fleet procurement teams to show up to the EV party with delusions of grandeur.

"Those bigger fleets, we're asking to consider transitioning their first 3%, 5% or 10% by a certain time – but don't make big outlandish statements and promises if you don't have the capacity to do that," he advises.

"The NSW government announced a couple of weeks back they'd go for 10% fleet transition by 2021 in EV and hybrid, and a *Channel Nine* reporter asked the question, 'How many hybrids have you got in the fleet now, and can you meet the target?'."

"They responded saying they can already meet their 10% with just the fleet vehicles in the education department. So, why are we here if you can already meet those targets? Take hybrid out and make it an EV target," Nargar encourages.

"If 10% isn't sexy, make it 2%, something achievable, something you can say is a genuine target you can strive for," he says.

Hyundai says it's also talking to several energy retailers who want to be part of the change.

"They're very interested; I'm asking what their internal fleet is doing, if they want to be a leader selling green energy through an EV charging station, asking what they're doing with their own vehicles," Nargar says.

"A lot say they're already 'working on it'.

"The tuning and pricing we've managed with Hyundai executives here and overseas is a job well done. We're looking forward to the next cars our tuning guys are starting on, we've got some more eco cars coming in the future – can't say what they are – but there are more electric cars coming."

Nargar says it's only very early days for Hyundai's all-electric offerings, but they secured as many units as they could get.

As Australia powers toward the federal election in May, it seems electric vehicle strategy is coming to the fore as the Greens respond with ambitious targets to stop selling internal combustion by 2030 and increase the tax on expensive oil burners, while the Coalition's electric vehicle "plan about a plan" - as described by Electric Vehicle Council's **Behyad Jafari** - has been delayed until mid-2020.

Nargar says he's just waiting on the Labor party, which he is expecting something from soon. "

It's been said 2019 is the year of the electric vehicle, and in an election year, we'll have to wait and see which government intends to make that a reality.



Mixed feelings for electric policy

The Australian Automotive Dealer Association and Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries warn that The Greens' internal combustion tax goes too far.

In the lead-up to the May federal election, The Greens want to see the "phase out" of internal combustion new car sales and the "phase-in" of zero emission vehicles new car sales by 2030.

The Labor Party has also this week announced it will commit to a national electric vehicle target of 50% new car sales by 2030 and a government electric vehicle target of 50% by 2025.

"It would finally see Australia accelerating from the back of the global pack as we should," Electric Vehicle Council chief executive **Behyad Jafari** tells *AutoTalk*.



"We are a well-resourced, modern nation full of people who care about their local environments and ... Labor's 50% target will finally show industry that Australia is committed to an electric transition and allow greater investment to follow," he says.

The Greens want Australia to join Norway, The Netherlands, India, the UK and France in committing to electric vehicle sales deadlines, and back the Ministerial Forum on Vehicle Emissions in mandating a fuel efficiency standard of 105g CO2/km, except three years earlier, by 2022.

"We don't believe the rationale exists to delay implementation of this measure until 2025," the policy says.

"Strong vehicle emission standards will incentivise manufacturers to bring their EV models to Australia and prioritise their sale, and encourage greater uptake of more efficient petrol and diesel vehicles," The Greens say.

The party also wants to see required EV sales from manufacturer brands – and their dealership networks – to sell a proportion of their vehicles with electric, hybrid or fuel cell drivetrains.

Annual targets of 2% by 2020, 5% by 2021 and 10% by 2022, The Greens suggest, "approximates the change in EV sales in Norway between 2012-2014, which we believe demonstrates what is possible with a comprehensive EV package and strong government ambition".

The Greens policy would also remove the 5% import tariffs on new vehicle sales from non free-trade countries, which the AADA says it would support. The Greens would also like a 10% GST on all new electric, plug-in hybrid and other zero-emission vehicle sales, deletion of stamp duty and the first three years of registration.

The Greens would use a 17% fossil fuel car tax on all internal combustion vehicles over a $65,000 threshold to pay for the incentives between now at 2024. This could see roughly $5000 added to a petrol/diesel vehicle costing $75,000, up from the $3300 previously imposed by the Luxury Car Tax.

"If Australia is serious about the climate commitments that we made at Paris, to play our part in keeping global warming to less than two degrees and zero-net emissions by 2050, we must transform the transportation sector," The Greens say.


David Blackhall, AADA.

AADA chief executive **David Blackhall** says it's a nice idea in theory, but has flaws.

"Australia's two top-selling vehicles are the Toyota Hilux and the Ford Ranger, both utes which are used to carry heavy loads and tow trailers significant distances," he begins.

"These vehicles can only perform to these standards with an internal combustion engine and it is uncertain whether an alternative powertrain will be available to satisfy their role in a decade," Blackhall explains.

He says forcing consumers into going electric won't work.

"The proposal to ban new internal combustion engine vehicles by 2030 could do serious harm to tradespeople and the retail car industry," he continues.

"The industry does not need another luxury tax on vehicles – car buyers already pay hundreds of millions each year to the federal government for a tax that falls on some of the safest and cleanest vehicles, including many electric vehicles," Blackhall points out.

"Any time you use the word 'ban' and 'force' then you've got to go, 'Wait a minute — do consumers have a say in this'?" Blackhall told the *ABC* this time last year about similar policy suggestions from The Greens.

"When you're not even within shooting distance of price parity, consumers are going to vote with their wallet," he added.

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Facing the future together

As the fleet management industry faces ongoing change, collaboration and knowledge sharing are the ultimate keys to success.



Mace Hartley
Executive director – Australasian Fleet Management Association

We've officially hit April and it's both exciting and crazy to see how the 2019 year is already flying before our very eyes. But before the months continue to float by it's important for us all to take a breath, assess what our future goals are and to work on tangible ways to achieve those targets.

At the moment, the Australasian Fleet Management Association (AfMA) is working on a variety of strategies to enhance and grow the knowledge and professionalism of the fleet industry.

It's our pleasure to share with you a brief update on what's going on at a broader and local industry level in several key areas so far in 2019:

1. AfMA has participated in an industry stakeholder meeting for an Austroads project exploring the feasibility of integrating advance driver assistance systems (ADAS) into driver training. Most five-star vehicles include a range of ADAS technology and whilst their designed to increase safety and reduce accidents there are challenges with drivers understanding how the technology works. Meanwhile, most manufacturers have their own terminology to describe their ADAS features, thereby making comparisons and education even harder.

2. AfMA had the recent pleasure of participating at a fleet conference hosted by our Malaysian member Tenaga Nasional Berhad where 150 internal and external stakeholders listened to a range of speakers discussing technology and fleet management issues. The following day AfMA attended the launch of ASEAN NCAP's new vehicle labelling programme. Australia (ANCAP) hasn't managed to achieve a labelling programme yet but we are miles ahead when it comes to the safety technology required to qualify as a five-star vehicle.

3. Charge Together Fleets is a programme funded in partnership by Australian Renewable Energy Agency (Arena), Evenergi and NRMA facilitated by Electric Vehicle Council and Evenergi. The aim of the programme is to develop an online platform to assist fleet and sustainability managers transition to electric vehicles and future mobility models. The online platform will consist of three areas, a learning management system, fleet toolbox and communications centre. CTF is all about getting interested stakeholders involved, so don't hesitate to contact our office to find out more.

You'll be able to hear a more detailed update about all of these things and more at this year's 2019 Fleet Conference & Exhibition on Melbourne on May 22-24.

The conference is about looking at the future and then dialling it back to "what and how does it affect me?". The conference is for all people involved in the broader operations of fleet management – not just fleet managers. Sustainability officers, WH&S officers and procurement officers all have a role to play. Remember these important roles can attend the conference at heavily discounted prices.

This year is set to be our biggest conference with a larger contingent of delegates, speakers and suppliers coming.

The conference itself has been supersized and now includes an all-new Safety Field Day at Sandown International Raceway on May 22, sponsored by Pedders, followed by two days back at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre on May 23 and 24.

The event's Fleet Networking Dinner will also feature the annual Fleet Awards where we recognise an individual as Fleet Manager of the Year and award the Fleet Safety and Fleet Environment awards to leading organisations.

This is a chance to hear case studies from organisations and individuals which having a massive impact in fleet.

The time spent now, could really save you and your organisation a fortune in the future! As Australia pushes toward major automotive change, it's our responsibility to stay informed and network with others from right across the industry.

AFMA is a member based, non-profit peak fleet industry body throughout Australia, New Zealand and South East Asia. Visit *http://conference2019.afma.org.au/* for more information.

Affordability does not mean a low sticker price - Nissan EV chief

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times when demand and cost is high then dramatic savings can be made. The battery could also be used by energy companies for load balancing, and the owner paid for offering this service.

"When there's extra energy, when there's solar being generated during the day, let's put it into all of the EVs.

"And then in the evening when there's an excess of demand, when everybody turns on their AC, cookers, lights etc, there's a big peak in demand, we can actually give a small amount of the energy in each battery back to the building or to the grid. And again, customers can get paid for that.

"So, affordability is not just about how much does the car cost at the beginning, it's about what are all the different things I can do with it during the life of the car."

This technology is not necessarily cheap, though Nissan is working to bring the cost down.

It is talking with third parties to offer such bi-directional charging units, and want to bring one to market later this year for as low as $3000. This could then be packaged with the vehicle at sale as part of the finance or lease.

In Australia, it is working with Jet Charge on such units.

Utes a long way off

What is not likely to come soon is an electrified version of New Zealander's favourite type of vehicle - the ute. Thomas suggests the way such vehicles are used makes them a challenge.

"Most people buy a car to use it fairly lightly and make the occasional long distance trip," he explains. "People use commercial vehicles to carry heavy loads, driver longer distances - they use them intensively."

They are also - generally - low cost vehicles.

"Those are hard-working vehicles, and they are also very low-cost vehicles," Thomas says. "We're not there with battery technology yet. We need to wait for batteries to become more affordable."

Cooling not required

When challenged by *Autotalk,* Thomas stands by Nissan's decision not to fit the new generation Leaf with active cooling, despite it putting restrictions of frequent DC fast charging. Cost and usage being the reasons behind Nissan going against the trend of other manufacturers.

"What we have found is, again, most customers buy the car to drive relatively short distances and perhaps occasionally want to do that longer journey where you've got 280 kilometres of range. And then you have the ability to quick charge," he says.

"You can still do 500km in a day quite comfortably - which is more than enough to cover 90-95% of all driving needs for pretty much every customer.

"Battery cooling is not something that we feel we need," he asserts. "We have active thermal management to protect the battery. We have provided an eight-year warranty. We're very comfortable and confident in the quality and durability of the battery."

"Simply speaking it's not a cost that most customers need us to add to their vehicle."

Mixed feelings for electric policy

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Tony Weber, FCAI

FCAI chief executive **Tony Weber** mirrors the dealer association, while appreciating The Greens' ambitious intentions to sell more EVs, but agrees taxing the most efficient vehicles is misguided.

"It's great to see the environmental focus of The Greens, and the fact that they are ticking some strong low-emission friendly boxes, the FCAI supports a considered approach," he says.

"Emissions on ICE vehicles have been steadily reducing through the introduction of new technology developed and delivered by the automotive industry – this reduction will continue.

"Make no mistake – we certainly need a focus on encouraging low emission vehicles here ... [and] there is a large number of battery-electric, hybrid and hydrogen fuel cell vehicles becoming available in Australia," he adds.

Weber also says the automotive industry will continue to do the "heavy lifting in reducing transport emissions", but helping that cause he agrees would be to see "across the board removal of the Luxury Car Tax, including on low emission vehicles", as well a tax and duty relief, lower registration and priority parking and transit lanes.

He also suggests the "adoption of innovative technologies in government fleets and government agencies" would also champion the zero-emission cause in a "pragmatic" way to meet carbon reduction targets.

Australian Automobile Association chief executive **Michael Bradley** said in a statement last year it, "supports vehicle emissions standards that deliver meaningful abatement, while minimising price rises for consumers and protecting vehicle choice".

But he hints that Australia still has a carbon pollution problem further upstream of the electric vehicle.

"The effectiveness of electric vehicles as a means of reducing CO2 is clearly linked to the carbon intensity of the power source, which is why many nuclear and renewable dependent nations are so supportive," Bradley adds.

AADA's Blackhall says: "Regulations seeking to reduce vehicle emissions should avoid dramatic price increases and restriction of choice".

"This [increase and restriction] may lead to reduced new car sales which will hurt industry and result in poor environmental outcomes," he says.

"The focus should be on making greener vehicles more affordable and convenient, not making new vehicles more expensive."



Australian shipping bugbear

Continued from page 1

"Biosecurity Queensland officers worked in close partnership with staff from the Australian Department of Agriculture and Water Resources to respond to the threat," Furner's department says.

"Insecticide was applied to fruiting vegetation at each site and large insect traps set," it reveals.

With an unconfirmed number of roll-on-roll-off cargo ships turned away during this stink bug season (September to April), Furner's office says the potential for ecological disaster is getting worse every year.

"Some interceptions involve entire ships with hundreds of vehicles and many hundreds or possibly thousands of BMSB throughout the holds," the department concedes.

"Some of these large infestations generated multiple quarantine management actions as the infested ships brought cargo to several ports around Australia."

Delays by stink bug detection have caused significant supply delays for OEMs in Australia, as reported by Carsales in January. Volkswagen had 1800 vehicles held up due to stink bugs, and Mercedes-Benz Australia says its vehicles have been affected; and Nissan Australia says its supplies have been held ransom to the pests as far back as 2015.

VW Group Australia managing director **Michael Bartsch** says: "The galling and frustrating part is that it's not us, our cars are clean.

"It has come from somewhere else ... because the boats have picked up cargo from somewhere else," he tells *Carsales*.

Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries chief executive **Tony Weber** has acknowledged the problem is rampant.

"There are a lot of brands involved. It's where the brands manufacture, not just where their head office is. And there can be issues of contamination ... through trans-shipment," he says.

***AutoTalk* has pressed the department about what it plans to do to stop the situation turning for the worse as the pest spreads overseas and in Australia's imports – including vehicles from host countries of manufacture.**

In the year-to-date ending February, nearly 125,000 new cars manufactured in Japan, Thailand, Korea and China were reported sold in Australia, plus there's the number of specialist enthusiast imports including late-modern and classic cars, more of which will be able to enter under new legislation.

Wallenius Wilhelmsen Logistics, according to the *New York Times*, operates RORO cargo ships which can carry up to 8000 vehicles packed inches from each other on 13 decks in a single voyage. That's roughly 15 journeys from those countries where the stink bug is native.

Worse still, as recently as November last year, homes in Paris over winter were found with hibernating masses of stink bugs in the Jardin des Plantes gardens – over 1000 French-built cars were reported sold in Australia in the year to February - meaning there's a chance vehicles brought into Australia from European factories also have the potential to bring the pest.


Photo by Barbara Knapp

The brown mamorated stink bug emits a foul stench when squashed.

The BMSB is one of the targets in the department's National Plant Health Surveillance and National Border Surveillance Programmes, which uses odorous lure techniques to trap and destroy the critters which can kill maize and soybean seedlings, malform fruit and vegetable crops, and cause premature fruit to drop.

They most commonly hitchhike in large numbers seeking shelter from cold weather in crevices or protected areas of imported shipping containers, vehicles, boats, caravans, machinery or even car parts.

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources says the automotive industry – including car manufacturers and exporters – can assist by working to "reduce the likelihood of vehicles being exposed to BMSB and ensuring any mandatory offshore treatments are preformed effectively".

DAWR says shipping lines are in a "difficult position" but can assist by ensuring risky cargo is "managed and treated to reduce the likelihood of live BMSB being present".

"They can also manage cargo onboard through segregation, so that potentially problematic cargo can be identified," DAWR says.

Attack on the clones

Continued from page 1

saying it "self-destructs when removed, enabling police to identify vehicles that are suspected to have a stolen or cloned number plate."

Holographic patterns similar to those used on driver licences and passports will also be trialled, and matched with new digital identification techniques.

According to the minister's statement: "New digital identification methods would make it harder for an offender to hide a vehicle's identity as the additional identifiers will not match a stolen or cloned number plate."

In partnership with La Trobe University, Pulford says "this Australia-first research and technology trial ... will go a long way to help reduce number plate theft and cloning."



Jaala Pulford.





Stephen Lester.

Could electric van be next as Leaf heads for Australia?

The head of Nissan in Australia and New Zealand has suggested the e-NV200 van could follow the Leaf as the second electric vehicle to arrive in local dealerships.

Nissan plans to release eight electric models by 2022, though it is unclear which of those we will see in this corner of the world.

Nissan Australia and New Zealand managing director and chief executive **Stephen Lester** sat down for a chat with *Autotalk* and told us the electric van is very much on the radar for both markets.

"For both Australia and New Zealand, we'd love to see a broader LCV range, and the e-NV200 I think would make perfect sense in the metropolitan markets, and even to a degree in some of the more rural markets as well."

Lester says he is requesting access to the model, which last year received a bump in battery size from 24kWh to 40kWh.

"Unfortunately, I don't always get what I ask for. We have got to build a business case for it."

Lester notes the move globally is to restrict access to city centres for fossil fuelled vehicles, which creates a strong need for such vehicles.

"The e-NV200 offers a perfect solution for a variety of local delivery for small business."

Nissan is unlikely to get into the charging market other than its work with Jet Charge on home, dealership and limited commercial developments. For a start, he feels it is not necessary with cars like the new Leaf having enough range to meet the needs of most buyers without regular charging away from home base.

"The reality is that for most Australians and New Zealanders, the ownership of a house and therefore a driveway, or a carport, or a garage allows for the basic infrastructure to be met simply via the external outlets on all of our houses that exist today," Lester says.

"And that charging capability, without having to add any extra infrastructure, without a wall box, is actually where we see in our research - based on the hundreds, if not billions of kilometres, I think they've said now of EV-driven kilometres - will actually be where people charge and utilise that infrastructure."

"Even in my own situation, having lived with a Leaf in my family for weeks at a time, not only do I enjoy the fact that I've never visited a petrol station, but it's two seconds for me before I walk into the house or walk out of the house to plug in and unplug the vehicle."

"I don't have that personal feeling that ownership of an EV would be compelled only if I knew where all the DC charging stations were in Australia."

Lester believes while the industry should promote infrastructure, ultimately it will be other parties who take control.

"I think we will see the industry continue to promote infrastructure. And I think we'll see energy companies get behind the game very strongly, and that will support the adoption rate."

An area where Nissan could be involved is in vehicle to grid technology. In a solar-friendly country like Australia it could be vehicles are packaged with a V2G unit and be seen as an alternative to buying a car and a battery storage system - a Leaf can act as both.

Lester believes Nissan can successfully sell electric cars without government subsidy, but direction from governments is required.

"I think the most important role the government plays in both countries is providing direction. A plan, a policy that means something, a policy that sets the direction so that everybody involved can understand where we're really headed," he explains.

"Some of that comes certainly in the form of monetary, non-monetary subsidies or incentives - but that is used as a way to accelerate towards a direction. In the absence of that direction, subsidies or incentives don't do anything to drive an understanding - from a consumer or industry standpoint - where they're going."

The last time Nissan brought the Leaf to Australia it arguably didn't go well. The car sold in very low numbers and was ultimately dropped, the remaining stock shifted to New Zealand for sale at a discounted price. Lester believes the situation will be very different this time.

"The fact is, we're five years removed from that, and we're in a different time," he notes. "A different mindset for consumers, a different understanding of the impact an EV could have on your life.

"And I think, the technology - when you look at the output of the engine, when you look at the efficiency of the engine, the battery capacity, etc, and so forth - everything is moving in the right direction."



Mitsubishi brings a new weapon to ute battle.



Holden nears a historical top-10 drop-out.

New car sales slide

The Australian new car market watched the weather change during March, as leaves fell so too did the figures.

According to VFACTS figures provided by the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries, new car sales dropped 7.1% in March compared with the same period in 2018, down 7546 reported sales.

Despite having exactly the same number of days open for business, Australia's dealer network and their respective distributor brands saw a March 2019 market of 99,442 new vehicle sales, well behind the 106,988 reported sales for this time last year.

Passenger car sales continued their tumble (down 17.8%), the usually popular SUV category recorded a 3.5% deflation of reported sales, and the hard-to-stop light commercial category was down too, but only by 0.4%.

Toyota Hilux, Ford Ranger and Mitsubishi Triton may remain the top three best-sellers, but they too recorded drops.

Hilux 4x2 was down 4.6% year-to-date but 4x4 sales rose 5.4% for March and 4.5% for the year, **Ranger 4x2** was down 19% year-to-date and down 36% for March, and **4x2 Triton** was down 2% year-to-date despite a March 27.4% gain over March 2018. **Triton 4x4,** now into its second round of "Built Beyond Tough" advertising, was down 19% last month compared with March 2018, but is up 17.4% for the year.

Top-dog **Toyota** keeps an iron grip on 18.5% market share, second-placed **Mazda** holds to a resolute 10.6% market share and third-placed **Mitsubishi,** the interloper brand of 2019, sits pretty with 9.4% market share.

Hyundai holds fourth on 7.6% market share, above **Ford's** 6.1%, and **Kia's** growing 5.5% share. **Nissan** is down, holding a 4.8% market share a nose above **Volkswagen's** 4.6% and **Honda's** equal eighth spot with 4.6%, all ahead of **Holden** which barely scrapes into the top 10 with just 4.4% market share.

Market share has teetered in March too, with light commercials and SUVs now representing 67.5% of the Australian new car sales.

Only three models in the top 10 were passenger cars, signalling an overwhelming about face on the traditional definitive motor car.

In light of the huge windfall for hybrids last month, petrol sales have slowed, dropping nearly 20% for the year-to-date and 15% for March specifically in the private passenger segment, comparatively, private petrol SUV sales were up 6% for March and 0.8% for the year-to-date.

Diesel told a similar story, dropping 47% for the year and 41% in private passenger sales (suggesting diesel sedans are struggling to sell), and in private SUV sales, diesel was down 16.8% year-to-date and 4.3% for March.

Business and government fleet sales cracked 44,149 sales of passenger, light commercial and SUV. Business fleet sales are down 8.5% for March and 9.8% year-to-date, and government sales, presumably reluctant ahead of the May election, were down 8.5% for March and down 3.4% year-to-date.

FCAI chief executive **Tony Weber** says it's a sign of the times.

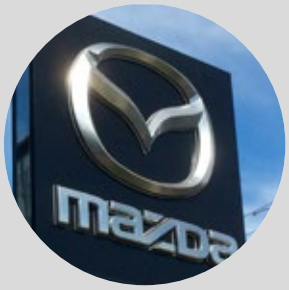
"We are seeing a cautious consumer approach at the moment, and this is not surprising given the number of economic headwinds in the Australian market," he says.



Top 10 Brands



1. Toyota 49,618



2. Mazda 28,343



3. Mitsubishi 25,299



4. Hyundai 20,365

Top 10 Brands ***continued p20***

2019 sales in March

Small Passenger under $40K



1. Mazda3 2642



2. Toyota Corolla 2499



3. Hyundai i30 2402



4. Kia Cerato 1873



5. Volkswagen Golf 1361



6. Honda Civic 994



7. Ford Focus 536



8. Mitsubishi Lancer 450



9. Holden Astra 440



10. Hyundai Elantra 273

SUV Large Under $70K



1. Toyota Prado 1665



2. Mitsubishi Pajero Sport 1231



3. Subaru Outback 929



4. Toyota Kluger 854



5. Isuzu Ute MU-X 835



6. Mazda CX-9 746



7. Mitsubishi Pajero 659



8. Hyundai Santa Fe 545



9. Volkswagen Tiguan Allspace 445



10. Ford Everest 437

Top 10 Brands *continued*



5. Ford 16,259



6. Kia 14,810



7. Nissan 12,841



8. Volkswagen 12,366



9. Honda 12,242



10. Holden 11,825



Ford's Escape PHEV SUV is due in Australia in 2020.



Global EV options are expected in droves during the next few years.

Hybrids and electrics make gains in sagging auto market

Hybrids have it over electrics and plug-in electric vehicles (PHEVs) in the latest VFACTS figures for March.

Hundreds of hybrids feature in the private and non-private passenger categories compared with just double digits in the same sectors for electric/PHEV vehicles.

The only EV category to show a massive jump is the SUV non-private passenger market which shows 355 sold in March 2019 compared with 61 for the same month the previous year – up 482%.

Year-to-date (YTD) totals for the SUV non-private passenger area illustrate the trend with 425 for 2019 as against 112 for the same period in 2018 – a 279.5% increase.

In contrast, the SUV non-private passenger category for hybrids drops off in both the monthly and YTD comparisons. Just 62 hybrid SUVs sold in March 2019 compared with 87 in March 2018 (28.7% drop), and 173 YTD in 2019 as against 254 for the same period in 2018 (down 31.9%).

Private passenger SUVs have a small rise in the hybrid sector with 74 sold for the month of March 2019 – just 11 more than the 63 recorded for March 2018. YTD totals reveal that category continues to climb steadily with 213 sold so far this year compared with 158 for the same period last year (34.8%).

Nearly 70 electric and PHEV SUVs sold in the private category in March 2019, 51 more than the 18 sold in March 2018 (283.3% up), with YTD totals in that segment showing 127 this year as against 34 YTD 2018 – a 273.5% rise.

Little change is shown in the electric/PHEV private passenger sector with 23 sales for March 2019 – just one ahead of the same month last year. YTD totals are better, showing 101 sales this year - 80.4% more than the 56 recorded for the same time in 2018.

Triple figures show in both the hybrid private and non-private segments – 561 and 844 sales respectively recorded in March 2019. That's up 49.2% and 24.9% on March 2018 when 376 and 676 sold respectively. YTD totals for both show big jumps – 1635 private passenger and 2788 non-private passenger hybrid sales were reported – up 96% and 70.2% respectively.

Just two light commercial non private electric/PHEV vehicle sales were recorded in March 2019, as against none for March 2018, with YTD sales now five in 2019, also compared with none for the same time last year.

So, it's a bit of the proverbial swings and roundabouts throughout the electric/PHEV and hybrid markets, with generally good results.

Hybrids still lead the way overall, but electrics and PHEVs are not that far behind.

And many more electrified models and options are expected in Australia within the next few years, including a Ford Escape PHEV SUV due in 2020.

All but two categories among the nine listed for hybrid and electric/PHEV sectors show gains, whereas new vehicle sales overall in Australia fell during March.

The Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries (FCAI) says new vehicle sales reached a total of 99,442 during March 2019 - a decrease of 7546 vehicles sales, or 7.1%, on the same period in 2018.

FCAI chief executive **Tony Weber** says current economic conditions have contributed to the market's position.

"We are seeing a cautious consumer approach at the moment, and this is not surprising given the number of economic headwinds in the Australian market," he says.

The three top selling vehicles for the month confirmed the market's appetite for light commercial vehicles, with the Toyota Hilux reporting 4527 sales, followed by the Ford Ranger with 3721 sales, and the Mitsubishi Triton which registered 2666.

Only three passenger vehicles were among the top 10 vehicles sold in March, further illustrating the growth of SUVs and LCVs in the Australian market.

In total, SUVs and LCVs represented 67.5% of new vehicle sales in the Australian market during March - 4.5% higher than March 2018.

NEW VEHICLE SALES BY BUYER TYPE AND FUEL TYPE — MARCH 2019

	Month		YTD		Variance +/- Vol. & %			
Total Market	2019	2018	2019	2018	MTH	YTD	MTH	YTD
ELECTRIC								
Passenger Private	23	22	101	56	1	45	4.5%	80.4%
Passenger Non-Private	29	65	66	159	-36	-93	-55.4%	-58.5%
SUV Private	69	18	127	34	51	93	283.3%	273.5%
SUV Non-Private	355	61	425	112	294	313	482.0%	279.5%
Light Commercial Non-Private	2	0	5	0	2	5	-	-
Sub Total	95	91	95	91	4	4	4.4%	4.4%
HYBRID								
Passenger Private	561	376	1,635	834	185	801	49.2%	96.0%
Passenger Non-Private	844	676	2,788	1,638	168	1,150	24.9%	70.2%
SUV Private	74	63	213	158	11	55	17.5%	34.8%
SUV Non-Private	62	87	173	254	-25	-81	-28.7%	-31.9%
Sub Total	1,541	1,202	4,809	2,884	339	1,925	28.2%	66.7%
TOTAL	**1,636**	**1,293**	**4,904**	**2,975**	**343**	**1,929**	**26.5%**	**64.8%**





Mazda tweaks MX5

Usually when a carmaker updates a model, typically it's new chrome up front, new dash lighting and seldom does anything meaningful or mechanically ever happen beneath the sculpted bonnet.

But the second most popular sports car on the market was in desperate need of more pep in its step, according to many who seemingly and wrongfully expect a fire-breathing roughhouser. This is to miss the creative mystique of the MX-5.

Mazda has gone ahead and upped the ante anyway, but when you look at the figures on paper, it's hard to see why they bothered.

Firstly, the 2.0-litre has gone from 118kW to 135kW and torque's up to 205Nm from 200Nm. Sure, on a track, with telemetry, I'm sure it'll make a 10th of a second's difference given they've raised the redline limiter to 7500rpm.

But why bother with the 1.5, as pictured and tested here. It's a beautifully-built car, make no mistake – it's silky to shoot up and down your favourite backroads in, and even more fun to hurtle into the bends – but it's hard to see how anybody, apart from Mazda's brainiac engineers, could notice the difference going from 96kW to a staggering 97kW.

Clearly pessimistic here, that's because the RF GT tested mid-2018 was such a perfect device for putting smiles on faces both inside and outside the car, there was literally nothing needing to be changed. Don't mistake this for ungratefulness; two drops of Tabasco is always more fun than one, it's just a question of being bothered.

According to Mazda's press kit they've bothered to do lots of very detailed, fiddly things to the engines that mere mortals would barely be able to understand, let alone interpret them or register them as they drive along.

They've increased valve diameter, optimised intake shapes to strengthen something called tumble swirl, the piston head height has been lowered, and the crankshaft counterweights have been re-aligned with better balance and minimal weight increase.

Still inside the engine, the fuel injectors now perform a higher diffusion, with finer fuel atomisation, and inside the combustion chamber it's an exclusive design for smoother bang – yes, that's correct.

Oh, and there's a larger diameter on the exit side of the exhaust ports, in case you needed to know.

There's a reason **Dr Ellie Arroway** is the one who picks up the alien signals in 1997's *Contact;* not just because she has the brains to know what she's looking for, but also because she understands, in a way nobody else does, exactly what the hell to do with the signals once recorded.

The 1.5, it must be said, feels like a different personality to the RF GT altogether, despite being so anatomically familial. Yours truly can't really notice those kinds of Ellie Arroway differences in how a SkyActiv engine is tweaked from one version to the next.

Having noticeably less power at the right foot than its feistier sister (and yes, the MX-5 identifies as female – it told me), means you drive it with that fact in mind.

Rather than exiting a corner, pointing it at the next and then pulling the trigger for slightly belated gratification, you stay on longer, almost trailing throttle while gently edging for the brake pedal depending on the corner.

Then the instant you can see and feel the car's weight is in the window, you immediately get back on the power well before you would have in the RF-GT, or most other sports cars, it would seem. You're literally holding the power on as constantly, frequently and persistently as possible to keep the revs up, momentum pushing you forward and filling your gums with gnats.

Doing this with both flavours of MX-5 personality on exactly the same course – the official (but secret) *Auto-Talk* road testing route – teaches you to not only appreciate the incredible skill the scientists, engineers and doctors of the world are, but also to know your place.

There's nothing the MX-5 can do wrong; it doesn't apologise for the preposterously small boot, and nor should it have to, because just looking at the most elegant hinge design you're likely to see on a car, more than makes up for not being a tri-turbo, all-wheel axe-murderer.

The MX-5 will never, and should never, be anything more than it is. Nobody expects sequels or updates or modifications in the art world, and the *Fast & the Furious* films only got worse as is the trend with pretty much all sequels.

That's the difference between a masterpiece and a mere accessory. A brilliant film like *Contact* does not need a sequel and never will, because the script, director and **Jodie Foster** captured and told the story perfectly the first time, which makes it unique. But it also holds your attention, your wonder and keeps you asking questions years after the credits rolls and it fades to black.

The MX-5 needs no sequel.



AUSSIE TALK DIARY

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



March 1

Insurance industry backs Townsville flood claim strategy

The Insurance Council of Australia and Suncorp Group says insurance companies are doing what's in the best interest of their customers.

ICA responded to *AutoTalk's* inquiries following our developing story on Townsville flood victims' vehicle insurance claims sourcing replacement cars from outside the local dealership network by third-party fleet procurement agents.

March 4

MiX Telematics signs Australian deal

MiX Telematics, a provider of fleet and mobile asset management solutions, has signed a deal with a leading global energy services provider for its vehicles in Australia.

As an existing MiX customer in the US, the energy services company will have 200 vehicles subscribed to MiX's fleet management solution in Australia.

March 6

Lorbek rips the silk off Australia's new Koenigsegg

Lorbek Luxury Cars director Srecko Lorbek has pulled the covers off the world's first build number of the Koenigsegg Jesko hypercar.

Revealed at the Geneva Motor Show overnight, Lorbek tells *AutoTalk* the first of 125 units, at a cost of roughly A$4.2 million each, will be coming to the first Koenigsegg dealership in Australia.

Renault's top dealers lauded

Essendon and Ballarat Reanult are the brand's 2018 dealers of the year.

Seven "dealer brilliance" awards went to Peninsula Renault, Village Renault, Rex Gorell Prestige, Neil Buckby Motors, Brighton Renault and Watson Renault.

Mazda dealer network on-song

Mazda Australia has heaped praise on its dealer network which delivered the brand more than 111,000 sales to finish 2018 as the second best-selling brand in Australia.

The Mazda Master Dealer Awards were bestowed upon two new franchised Mazda dealerships for 2018, Wide Bay Mazda in Pialba, Queensland, and South Morang Mazda from Victoria.

March 7

Carlos Ghosn released from Tokyo jail

Ex-Nissan chairman Carlos Ghosn has been released on bail after 108 days in his Tokyo jail cell for alleged financial misconduct.

According to reports, a French ambassadorial car picked up a poorly-disguised Ghosn from the prison and took him to his Japanese residence where strict bail conditions say he must remain, possibly for months, until his trial, The Guardian reports.

March 8

VACC releases 'forward-thinking' election plans

The Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce says the next federal government needs a blueprint for the Australian automotive industry.

If the incoming Shorten Labor or resuming Coalition governments want to continue generating $37 billion of annual economic value, the VACC says clear policy intentions and a "master plan" are vital.

March 12

RACQ putting indigenous teens in driver's seat

The Royal Automobile Club of Queensland and the Former Origin Greats organisation want to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teens to get their driver's licence.

RACQ says it will donate $60,000 a year to the FOGs drivers licence programme until 2021, as part of the Achieving Results Through Indigenous Education (ARTIE) academy.

Takata airbag website now multi-lingual

The IsMyAirbagSafe website is now available in multiple languages.

The Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries has modified IsMyAirbagSafe.com.au which now offers information in Arabic (Semitic) and Farsi (Persian), Bahasa Indonesian, both simplified and traditional Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Spanish, Dari and Hindi.

March 14

Deloitte Digital appointed as Suzuki transforms brand

Suzuki Australia is undertaking a major brand transformation and is appointing Deloitte Digital to handle its creative business alongside media agency Noisy Beast.

The new For FUN's sake! brand platform will be visible via a through-the-line campaign spanning TV, online and print.

March 15

Franchising overhaul sees welcome dealer protections

The Australian Automotive Dealer Association has praised Australia's parliamentary inquiry into the effectiveness of the Franchising Code of Conduct.

The AADA says extended protections for franchised new car retailers are a welcome inclusion in the report, however, makes clear the lack of a dedicated franchising code for the automotive industry has gone amiss.

Toyota holds onto AFL naming rights

Toyota Australia will continue as the naming rights sponsor of the Australian Football League until 2023.

The AFL's 2019 launch at Melbourne Town Hall last night, where a twilight grand final timeslot has been put off for another year, was balanced by the confirmation Toyota would continue its now 20-year support for the sport.

March 18

Tasmania's biggest dealer business up for auction

Seven dealership sites from the Motors Tasmania business are going to auction on Wednesday, April 3.

According to estate agents Burgess Rawson, owners AP Eagers is selling the seven sites which range in size from 2919 square metres to 30,270

Continued on page 24

Continued from page 23

sqm, with per annum net rent ranging from $186,151 for the Main Road, Glenorchy site, up to $972,641 for the Hobart CBD premises per annum.

March 19

Ateco dealer expansion cause for relocation

Ateco Automotive has been forced to upgrade and expand its technical training and distribution business operations base.

According to VFACTS sales data, RAM and LDV brands finished 2018 on 723 (up 81%) and 6064 (up 135%) sales respectively, that spike means the distributor's local operations needed to expand significantly.

Toyota Altona reborn as Australia's first hydrogen station

Australia will turn its decommissioned Altona manufacturing plant into Australia's first hydrogen refuelling station.

The Hydrogen Centre will use 100% renewable energy to offer Australia's first commercial grade hydrogen fuelling facility and will be built for just $7.4 million, with $3.1m in funding from the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) project.

March 21

Exxon reported Australia's top tax-dodger

ExxonMobil has been reported by investigative journalist Michael West as Australia's top tax-dodging company, although it says it has a long history of paying its fair share of taxes.

Topping the list of 40 companies evading paying their share of tax, ExxonMobil, with its refinery based in Altona, in Melbourne's west, has reportedly returned zero on a $33.1 billion four-year income.

Road safety delays are 'killing us'

The Australian Automobile Association says next month's federal budget needs to take a more "ambitious approach" to road safety.

A video report from associate professor Jeremy Woolley and Royal Australian College of Surgeons chairman Dr John Crozier, appointed to co-chair the National Road Safety Strategy, reveals further delays in responding to road trauma increases is a "silent epidemic".

March 24

Landmark Land Rover court victory in China

Jaguar Land Rover has won a landmark legal case in China against a copycat carmaker.

Jiangling Motor Corporation has been ruled by the Beijing Chaoyang District Court as copying the "five unique features" of the Land Rover Evoque in development of the Landwind X7, which has caused "widespread consumer confusion".

March 25

Hyundai embarks on Australia-first motorsport programme

Hyundai Australia will contest the Targa Tasmania tarmac rally in the brand's first official foray into elite-level Australian motorsport.

Hyundai driver Brendan Reeves will expertly steer a rally-prepped i30N hatchback through the picturesque hills of the Apple Isle this week, from April 29 to May 4. ■

THE DIARY

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



March 3

Audi NZ awards high achievers

The achievements of the Audi New Zealand dealer network were celebrated last Friday at the 9th Annual Audi Excellence Awards.

The awards recognise 2018's outstanding achievements in sales, parts, finance, service, marketing and customer satisfaction across nine Audi dealerships nationwide.

March 4

NZTA appoints regulatory manager

The NZ Transport Agency has appointed **Kane Patena** to its newly created role of regulatory general manager.

NZTA chairman Michael Stiassny says Patena was the outstanding candidate in a strong field.

March 11

Car dealer wants crash prevention

A New Plymouth car dealer wants safety barriers installed outside his yard after yet another crash brought further warnings someone will be killed there.

Amber and Black Quality Cars owner Darryl Macdonald is concerned not just for the safety of his staff but any visitors and people using the footpath at the Northgate and Watson Street intersection.

March 12

Blackwells takes Mazda Dealer of the Year

Christchurch's Blackwells Mazda has won Mazda's 2018 Dealer of the Year – among six dealerships acknowledged for their efforts.

The title of Mazda's Dealer of the Year does not come lightly. All areas of the dealership operation are evaluated, including vehicle and parts sales, service department performance and customer satisfaction results.

March 19

Giltrap Volkswagen named top dealer for 2018

Volkswagen New Zealand has named Giltrap Volkswagen its top dealer for 2018.

The announcement was made at the third Volkswagen Dealer of the Year awards at Eden Park in Auckland last week.

March 21

ABS rule will cost customers – Suzuki

The New Zealand Transport Agency has proposed changes to rules that will require most motorcycles entering service to carry anti-lock braking.

The NZTA released the draft rule today. It will require all motorcycles entering service in New Zealand, after a specified date, to be equipped with either an anti-lock braking system (ABS) or a combined braking system (with some exceptions). ■

EV TALK DIARY

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



March 8

New Nissan Leaf here August

The new Nissan Leaf will be in Australian showrooms in August, priced from $49,990 plus on road costs and other charges.

Potential customers can pre-order the EV from March 8, with Nissan saying the five-seat car offers a premium electric driving experience at an affordable price.

March 12

IKEA Australia to have all electric delivery trucks within six years

Swedish flatpack furniture giant IKEA is switching to electric delivery trucks in Australia as part of its global move to electrics by 2025.

It revealed two of the first seven electric trucks it has operating in Australia at a launch in Sydney on March 8.

March 13

First Australian customers see Mercedes-Benz EQC

The electric Mercedes-Benz EQC SUV was launched in Australia at a special unveiling for first customers on March 12.

The function at Melbourne's Mercedes me store was held well ahead of the on-sale date, expected to be later in 2019.

March 22

Kona Electric details released

Hyundai's first all-electric SUV, the Kona Electric, is now available in Australia with a long-range battery-electric powertrain and advanced safety and connectivity, selling for about $59,990 (manufacturer's list price).

It has a 150kW powertrain producing 395Nm torque with 449km range, can get to 100km/h in 7.6 seconds, ultra-fast 100kW DC charging can bring the battery to 80% in 54 minutes, has a 7.2kW on-board charger for plugging in at home, and is offered in Elite and Highlander model grades.

March 25

Tesla Model 3 due soon in Australia

The Tesla Model 3 may be in Australia earlier than expected, although the cheapest standard range version isn't expected until later.

Australia builds (right-hand drive models) will probably start in late May or June and start arriving "in winter", Tesla chief executive officer Elon Musk tweeted.

March 26

Free tool enables Aussie motorists to go electric

A new online calculator will help Australians assess the real cost of moving to an electric vehicle.

Prospective car buyers considering the switch can access the new tool to help them decide through electricvehiclecouncil.com.au at the Electric Vehicle Council (EVC) of Australia.

TRANSPORTTALK DIARY

Transporttalk Australia editor Scott Murray looks at the month gone by on **www.transporttalk.com.au**



March 13

Hino to showcase 500 Series

The new Hino 500 Series Standard Cab range will headline the brand's stand at the upcoming Brisbane Truck Show.

The all-new 500 Series Standard Cab features pre-collision system which includes autonomous emergency braking, pedestrian detection and safety eye, as well as adaptive cruise control and lane departure warning.

Scania New Truck Generation on display

Scania's New Truck Generation will have fresh editions on display for the first time in Australia at the 2019 Brisbane Truck Show.

Leading the charge will be the new 650 hp V8 Euro 6 engine fitted in an R-series prime mover, complete with 3300 Nm of torque, and ideally suited to long-haulage work.

March 14

Mainfreight opens new warehouse

Mainfreight has opened a new food grade and dangerous goods certified third-party logistics warehouse in Sydney.

The 13,000 square metre Kookaburra site adds to the company's two previous existing Sydney warehouses, Mainfreight Logistics Erskine Park and Mainfreight Logistics Moorebank, have been integrated into the new Kookaburra site.

March 19

Penske Truck Leasing gets Fuso eCanter

Fuso has delivered its fully electric eCanter model to Penske Truck Leasing for urban delivery use in California.

It's the second electric truck for the leasing company, having received its first electric Freightliner eM2 from Daimler Trucks North America at the end of last year.

Volgren bus deal

Australia's largest bus body manufacturer Volgren has signed the biggest bus supply deal in its four-decade history.

It has extended its contract with Volvo and the Public Transport Authority (PTA) of Western Australia, the state's government-run transport operator.

March 20

New Fuso heavy at Brisbane Truck Show

The new generation Fuso heavy truck range will be revealed at the Brisbane Truck Show in May.

An Australian testing and development regime has been part of the new Fuso heavy range, which has only be referred to by its "Black Panther" working title.

March 22

Scania reports highest sales

Scania has reported its full year earnings for 2018 in what was the "biggest industrial transition in the company's history", boss Henrik Henriksson says.

The company saw operating income increase to 13.8 billion Swedish Krona (SEK) for the 12 months to December 31. This compares to SEK 12.4bn in the previous year.