

THE AUSTRALIAN VEHICLE DEALER'S

NEWS SOURCE

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IT'S AWARDS SEASON 2023

Hello there,

Once again the season of dealer of the year (DOTY) awards or retailer of the year (ROTY) awards in the case of Mercedes-Benz, is upon us and it's a time to celebrate achievement and consider the road ahead.

BMW Group Australia, Mazda Australia, Harley-Davidson Australia, Mercedes-Benz Australia and the Volkswagen passenger and commercial vehicle brands have all celebrated the best of the best in their national networks.

DOTY awards serve two very important functions for the new car retail industry.

One is that the distributor sets a standard for its network to achieve.

And it's not just about who sold the most cars, finance, service, and parts.

It's now about who achieved the best customer experience for the brand, and some other intangibles.

As we move into a greater digital age with car owners interacting with dealerships via their laptops and mobile devices, it's so much easier for the OEMs to monitor dealer performance through these digital touchpoints.

Some people, like my introverted millennial husband, would rather communicate with a dealership by email or by text. Hell will freeze over before he chooses to deal with a human being.

And he's not alone. There are growing numbers of people who won't talk on the phone but are happy to communicate by text

or instant messenger.

The second and most important function of DOTY awards is that they provide a good opportunity for the OEM to have a friendly face to face meeting with its dealer network.

Celebrating your network with a good old-fashioned party is certainly very important for building goodwill and good relationships.

But more important, is the opportunity to discuss the business and the way forward for both parties.

I don't understand why some distributors believe they should have adversarial relationships with their dealers.

What's the point of such animosity when you're both trying to achieve a common goal – sell cars, finance, service, and parts?

I particularly liked the comment made by BMW Group Australia boss **Wolfgang Buechel** at his brand's function that dealers are the backbone of a brand's retail operation and are integral to its valued customers and the overall automotive industry.

There's a man who understands and appreciates the investment and commitment that dealers make in land and buildings, plant and equipment, recruitment and training of staff, and often supporting their local sports teams, community groups, and charities.

Dealers do a hell of lot more than just sell cars, utes, vans, trucks, and motorbikes, so I think we should celebrate their achievements more often than just one night a year.

Enjoy your reading this month,

Best regards,

Robert Barry
EDITOR AUTOTALK



ROBERT BARRY
EDITOR AUTOTALK

CAREXPERT OVERTAKES DRIVE ON YOUTUBE

New car marketplace, CarExpert.com.au, has overtaken Drive to become Australia's largest new car automotive reviewer on YouTube.

CarExpert says it hit 300,000 subscribers on YouTube in March, overtaking several media-backed players to become number one.

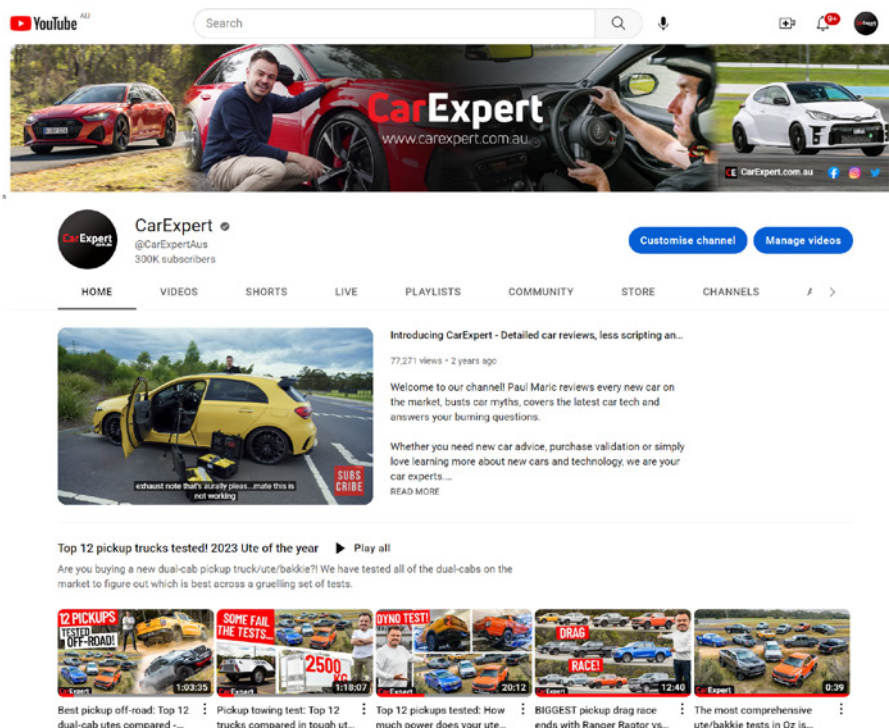
It says this achievement comes off the back of another record month for views in which CarExpert got more than three million views and 360,000 watch hours in 30 days.

Intelligence platform, SocialBlade says those figures place CarExpert well ahead of the direct competition and show that the brand isn't far from being able to claim more views than its competitors combined.

CarExpert says Australia's most comprehensive Ute of the Year award helped the achievement with the numerous pieces of video content associated with judging surpassing one million views.

"These figures prove that Aussie car buyers love video content that's independent, interesting, comprehensive and, most importantly, unbiased," says CarExpert co-founder and YouTube presenter, **Paul Maric**.

CarExpert says this success follows a further extension of its content syndication, with an additional 100-plus Australian Community Media publications now using its content.



Syndication is bolstered by Seven West Media, which features CarExpert's content across the 7News, The West, Perth Now, and regional publications.

CarExpert chief executive **Damon Reilly** is ambitious about future growth.

"For a marketplace that's only just hit three years' young, it's a tremendous achievement to have already overtaken

the establishment who've been on the platform for more than 15 years," he says.

"Now firmly in the leadership position, we look forward to becoming the first automotive channel in Australia with more than one million subscribers."

SANTANDER AND CARSALES REVERSE EQUITY POSITIONS IN WEBMOTORS

Banco Santander Brasil and carsales.com have signed an agreement where the Australian company will increase its equity in Brazilian automotive marketplace webmotors from 30% to 70% becoming its majority shareholder.

At the same time carsales will launch a \$500 million equity raising. The online automotive marketplace was founded in Australia in 1997 and has since expanded to countries, including New Zealand, Brazil, and South Korea.

carsales says the acquisition price is approximately \$353m to increase its stake in webmotors to 70%, while Santander retains a 30% stake. The acquisition price values webmotors at approximately \$883m.

Banco Santander Brasil will continue to be the credit and financial partner for finance and insurance transactions made through webmotors.

The companies believe the equity change will allow webmotors to benefit further from carsales' digital marketing, customer experience, products, and service expertise.

webmotors will be able to strengthen its market position while retaining the support of Santander, Brazil's automotive loans market leader.

That will improve its offering for dealerships, franchises, OEMs and consumers.

"We believe that the new format of the agreement will allow us to further expand the volume of car financing

made through the portal and to access technological innovation that will certainly result from this partnership", says Santander Brasil CFO **Angel Santodomingo**.

"Santander and carsales have developed a strong working partnership over the last 10 years of joint ownership in webmotors, which is reflected in its market leadership in one of the largest and fastest growing car markets in the world," adds carsales chief executive **Cameron McIntyre**.

"Closer alignment to the carsales business makes strategic sense for both carsales and Santander to ensure webmotors' continued long-term success..."



ISUZU UTE APPOINTS NEW MANAGING DIRECTOR

After four years leading Isuzu Ute Australia (IUA) managing director **Hiroyasu Sato** is passing the mantle to **Junta Matsui**, who has led various Isuzu and Mitsubishi divisions for the last 15 years.

After working as a leader in various retail and new business development divisions internationally, Matsui began as IUA's new managing director on March 20.

A native of Yokohama, Japan, Matsui joined the Isuzu business division of Mitsubishi Corporation in 2008, overseeing operations at Tri Petch Isuzu Sales Co until 2012.

He then began working on new business developments in the auto and mobility divisions of Thailand, Indonesia, Russia, India, and Africa.

The leadership change will help IUA continue its retail sales growth as operations recover from the effects of the COVID pandemic.

It will also develop Isuzu's customer-centric approach which won it awards for customer satisfaction, an area that Sato set his focus on during his tenure.

In 2022, Isuzu Utes became one of Australia's top-10 automotive brands for the first time and was the ninth best-selling brand, delivering 35,323 vehicles.

Isuzu says that growth can be attributed to the commitment to customer satisfaction, and updated versions of the D-Max ute and MU-X SUV.

Growing alongside new D-Max and MU-X sales has been IUA's growing customer satisfaction index, which received acclaim from Australia's consumer research organisations, Roy Morgan and Canstar Blue.

Isuzu won back-to-back Car Manufacturer of the Year titles, at the 2020 and 2021 Roy Morgan Customer Satisfaction Awards and the 2021 Canstar Blue Customer Satisfaction Award for New Cars.

Sato is returning to Thailand to be president of Mitsubishi Company (Thailand) and Thai-MC Company in Bangkok.

During the announcement of the leadership change at the annual IUA national dealership meeting, Sato said he was proud of IUA's "resilience and tenacity during the last few turbulent years".

"IUA's position in the market has never been as strong as it is today, and we have our dealers and customers to thank for that."

He said his successor Matsui's appointment comes at the right time for IUA: "his experience is key to IUA's

future success".

Matsui will lead IUA's board of directors, which includes **Takeshi Yasui** who oversees parts, aftersales and accessories operations, **Koichiro Yoshida** who oversees sales, marketing and product planning functions, and **Reiko Sato**, who leads the finance, IT, HR and administration areas.

"The leadership team have been instrumental in steering the brand through one of the most challenging periods in the last decade," Matsui says.

"Under Mr. Sato's watch, there have been clear results thanks to the continued focus on sustainable sales growth, whilst also concentrating on customer satisfaction and retention—three crucial areas that I plan to continue driving forward.

"With the market showing promising signs of recovery and both the D-Max and MU-X proving popular towards the top of their respective segments, I'm hopeful we can build on the momentum that Sato-san has set for IUA," he says.

Currently, IUA is Australia's 10th best-selling automotive brand, with 1931 D-Maxes and 2053 MU-Xs delivered in the first two months of 2023.

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POHANKA A KEYNOTE SPEAKER AT AADA CONVENTION

North American Dealers' Association (NADA) chairperson **Geoffrey Pohanka** will be a keynote speaker for the 2023 Australian Automotive Dealer Association (AADA) convention and expo on June 14 and 15.

News anchor, **Anjali Rao**, will be returning to host the 2023 AADA convention and expo at the Sydney International Convention Centre.

The AADA has confirmed the program for the convention and expo, the theme of which is Retail Auto – The Road Ahead.

It says Pohanka brings a wealth of experience and knowledge which will benefit Australian dealers as they map out the road ahead.

He's the chairperson of the Pohanka Automotive Group which is headquartered in Capitol Heights, Maryland, USA.

Pohanka started in the automotive business in 1971, working during the summer month in his father's dealership. The company was founded by his grandfather in 1919 selling and servicing Chevrolets.

The Pohanka Automotive Group sells 15 different vehicle brands from sites in Maryland, Virginia, Texas and Delaware.

As well as being the NADA chairperson, Pohanka represents the metropolitan Washington, D.C., area franchised new-car dealers on the board of directors. He previously served on the NADA board from 2001 to 2009.

Further speakers will include philanthropist, **Sir Bob Geldof**, adventurer, **Jessica Watson**, and economist, **Stephen Koukoulas**, amongst others.



GEOFFREY POHANKA

The program will explore topics such as digital marketing and its impact on the industry, new trends in customer service, and developing effective sales strategies.

There will also be 25 workshop sessions across the two days.

"The retail automotive industry is rapidly changing. As dealers and retailers, we need to lead this change and meet the demands of today's automotive consumers with a new era of technology, innovation, and service," AADA says.

It says the 2023 convention will forecast the road ahead and showcase an informative and relevant program of keynote sessions and workshops that will provide dealers with actionable ideas and processes to improve their operations.

And the 2023 AADA expo allow dealers to explore the latest automotive technology and innovations for every dealership department.

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BMW BOSS SAYS DEALERS ARE INTEGRAL TO THE INDUSTRY

BMW Group Australia chief executive **Wolfgang Buechel** says the group's 46 dealers are integral to the brand's success.

He made the comment at the annual dealer of the year awards held at the InterContinental Sorrento on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula.

Buechel says the dealers performed admirably, achieving notable results throughout the year.

"Our valued dealer partners performed at a very impressive level in 2022... achieving success in numerous areas of business while providing convenient services and memorable brand experiences for our customers.

"Our dealers continue to be the backbone of our retail operations and are integral to our valued customers and the overall automotive industry.

"We appreciate their continued commitment in the areas of digital transformation, sustainability, and customer excellence, which supports our RetailNext strategy to provide a completely new brand experience for our customers," Buechel added.

Four BMW and four Mini dealers

received awards for achieving the highest scores in demonstrating excellence in numerous areas. The awards reward the dealers' strong performance in customer service, sales, marketing, and overall business operations.

Three new individual awards put the spotlight on accomplishments in digital transformation, sustainability, and customer excellence.

The Digital Transformation Award honoured the seamless integration of digital elements to enhance the customer experience, from effective deployment of apps to online sales platforms.

North Shore BMW was the inaugural winner of the Digital Transformation Award.

The Sustainability Award recognised efforts in recycling, reducing wastage and working towards a net-zero future while engaging with the community and developing transparent business practices.

The local award evokes the BMW Group's commitment to sustainability, with the company working towards

achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 through a strategic plan to reduce CO₂ emissions across all operations, from production to the supply chain.

Shepparton BMW was the inaugural winner of the Sustainability Award.

The Customer Excellence Award for going above and beyond to deliver exceptional, multi-faceted customer experience went to Brighton BMW.

BMW Sydney won the Major Metro BMW Dealer of the Year award for 2022, while Waverley BMW was runner up.

Hornsby BMW won the Metro BMW Dealer of the Year award for 2022 while Col Crawford BMW was runner up.

Worthington BMW took out the Provincial BMW Dealer of the Year award for 2022 with Coastline BMW the runner up.

Symes Motors was announced as the Rural BMW Dealer of the Year for 2022 with McGuigan BMW runner up.

In the Mini Excellence Awards, Hobart Mini Garage won Group 4, Geelong Mini Garage won Group 3, Auto Classic MINI Garage won Group 2, and Motorline Mini Garage won Group 1.



MAZDA'S TOP-PERFORMING AUSTRALIAN DEALERS

Fifteen dealers won the coveted title of 2022 Master Dealer in Mazda Australia's 2023 Mazda Master Dealer Excellence awards.

For the first time in three years Mazda Australia hosted the winning dealer principals at an event in Sydney. Founded in 1994, the awards go to dealers who achieve a gold standard in client experience and business excellence.

This year, winners were split into five different categories – Metro 1, Metro 2, Metro 3, Provincial, and Rural.

Wippells Autos in Toowoomba Queensland claimed a record-breaking 29th consecutive award, while Aspley Mazda in Queensland scored its 26th, and Ringwood Mazda in Victoria earned its 25th. Pakenham Mazda in Victoria received its first award.

Mazda Australia sales director **Jarrold Gieschen** says the recipients of this



PIERRE AND HELEN CARUANA, SOUTH MORANG MAZDA VIC AND FRANK AND ANNDRIANA ARGEETES, PENRITH MAZDA NSW

year's awards had done an admirable job considering the trying conditions of the last 12 months.

Last year, Mazda and its dealers had to adapt to supply and distribution disruptions, Gieschen says.

"But despite these challenges, this year's award winners have proven that through hard work and going the extra mile, excellence can still be achieved.

"And this is evident when reviewing our very strong customer satisfaction



DAVID RUSSELL - WIPPELLS AUTOS

results."

THE 2022 MASTER DEALERS AND THEIR TEAMS ARE:

Aspley Mazda; Darwin Mazda; Edwardstown Mazda; Grand Prix Mazda Caboolture; Parkland Mazda; Pakenham Mazda; Penrith Mazda; Nowra Mazda; Ringwood Mazda; Wide Bay Mazda; Mawson Lakes Mazda; Mareeba Mazda, and South Morang Mazda; Wippells Autos.

MORGAN & WACKER HARLEY-DAVIDSON DEALER OF YEAR

Brisbane's Morgan & Wacker has won the 2022 Harley Davidson Australia and New Zealand (ANZ) dealer of the year award.

Established in Brisbane in 1917, Morgan & Wacker is the second-oldest Harley-Davidson dealer in the world, the oldest outside the USA, and Australia's oldest motorcycle dealership.

Harley-Davidson says Morgan & Wacker provides its customers with the full range of Harleys from its Newstead

dealership.

Harley-Davidson ANZ says the winner of the 2022 large category was Harley-Heaven Dandenong, the 2022 medium category winner was Geelong Harley-Davidson, and the compact/small category award was shared by Bundaberg Harley-Davidson and Gleeson's Twin City Harley-Davidson.

Richardson's Harley-Davidson was recognised for its 45 years as a Harley dealer. Harbour City Harley-Davidson was recognised for its 40-year tenure

and Quick Fix Harley-Davidson was recognised for its 35 years with a dealer.

In the awards, Harley dealers are assessed on strict criteria including customer satisfaction, business reporting, marketing and events, commitment to training, sales, service, parts, accessories, and general merchandise performance.

The ANZ Dealer of the Year receives a \$20,000 contribution towards its business.

VOLVO ANNOUNCES TOP-PERFORMING DEALERS

For the fifth successive year Volvo Cars South Yarra has been named the Swedish brand's Major Metro Retailer of the Year.

The win was announced at Volvo Car Australia's Pinnacle Awards of Excellence.

Volvo Cars Penrith took out the Metro Retailer of the Year award for the third successive year, while Volvo Cars Central West was named Rural Retailer of the Year.

Runner-up awards went to Volvo Cars Parramatta (Major Metro); Volvo Cars Five Dock (Major Metro second runner-up), and Volvo Cars Mosman (Metro).

"Volvo's Pinnacle Awards of Excellence are judged on a rigorous set of criteria, including outstanding customer experience, sales and developing and retaining outstanding staff," says Volvo Car Australia managing director **Stephen Connor**.

"Our retail network across Australia performed brilliantly in 2022. They played a massive role in delivering 10,715 vehicles nationally, which was the best result in the history of Volvo in Australia.

"Volvo Cars South Yarra thoroughly deserve their record-breaking success. We're delighted to recognise the outstanding efforts of one of our best and most dedicated retailers for a record fifth successive time," Connor says.

Volvo Cars South Yarra dealer principal **Sue Alford** says winning the award for the fifth time "reinforces our belief in the Volvo brand, and our desire to deliver on the brand promise to our customers every day through an outstanding level of service".

Founded in 1927, Volvo Cars operates in more than 100 countries and aims to become a fully electric carmaker by 2030.

It's committed to an ongoing reduction of its carbon footprint, with the ambition of being climate-neutral company by 2040.

As of December 2022, Volvo Cars employed approximately 43,200 full-time workers. Its head office, product development, marketing and administration functions are mainly in Gothenburg, Sweden.

Volvo Cars' factories are in Gothenburg,



MAJOR METRO RETAILER OF THE YEAR WINNER – VOLVO CARS SOUTH YARRA – SUE ALFORD (CENTRE) WITH NICK CONNOR HEAD OF REST OF ASIA PACIFIC (LEFT) AND STEPHEN CONNOR (RIGHT).



RURAL RETAILER OF THE YEAR WINNER – VOLVO CARS CENTRAL WEST – BEN DAVIS (CENTRE).



METRO RETAILER OF THE YEAR WINNER – VOLVO CARS PENRITH – JOHN DUNN (CENTRE).

Ghent (Belgium), South Carolina (USA), and Chengdu, Daqing and Taizhou (China).

The company has R&D and design

centres in Gothenburg, Camarillo (USA), and Shanghai (China).



VOLKSWAGEN PASSENGER AND COMMERCIAL VEHICLES DIRECTORS MICHAEL SZANIECKI (FAR LEFT) AND RYAN DAVIES (FAR RIGHT) CONGRATULATE ANDREW MIEDECKE (LEFT) AND NICK BROOKS (RIGHT) FROM TAREE VOLKSWAGEN.

MAWSON LAKES IS VW DEALER OF THE YEAR

A green fields business that began building at the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, was a double winner at the Volkswagen's Dealer of the Year (DOTY) awards.

In DOTY's first physical gathering since 2019, Mawson Lakes Volkswagen – located in Salisbury 12km from Adelaide's CBD – took out the awards for National DOTY and Metro DOTY.

Helmed by Nick Fiorenti (owner and co-principal), Tony Morganella (dealer principal) and Hanna Combe (general manager), the Mawson Lakes Volkswagen dealership opened while the strictures of the pandemic were in force.

Volkswagen's brand directors **Ryan Davies** (Commercial Vehicles) and **Michal Szaniecki** (Passenger Vehicles) said Mawson Lakes' leadership had built "a great team so quickly".

"This is a very agile, customer focused business, entirely deserving of its double accolade," they said.

"Their focus, vision and determination has been inspirational."

Taree Volkswagen (NSW) was awarded Provincial Dealer of the Year, while Wippells Autos of Toowooba (Queensland) was Rural Dealer of the Year.



VOLKSWAGEN PASSENGER AND COMMERCIAL VEHICLES DIRECTORS MICHAEL SZANIECKI (FAR LEFT) AND RYAN DAVIES (FAR RIGHT) CONGRATULATE HANNA COMBE (LEFT) AND TONY MORGANELLA (RIGHT) FROM MAWSON LAKES VOLKSWAGEN.



VOLKSWAGEN PASSENGER AND COMMERCIAL VEHICLES DIRECTORS MICHAEL SZANIECKI (LEFT) AND RYAN DAVIES (RIGHT) CONGRATULATE BRETT BUCKLEY (CENTRE) FROM WIPPELLS AUTOS.



JOHANNES SCHOEN (DIRECTOR OF SALES), GAVIN ALLEN (DIRECTOR OF MARKETING), TIM HARTY (GENERAL MANAGER, MERCEDES-BENZ BERWICK & WAVERLEY), BEN HAYWOOD (DEALER PRINCIPAL, MB TOOWONG/MACGREGOR), DAVID UPTON (DEALER PRINCIPAL, MB ADELAIDE/UNLEY), ANGUS YOUNG (DEALER PRINCIPAL, MB HORNSBY/TOOWONG/MACGREGOR), CAMERON BERTALLI (CEO & MD, PATTERSON CHEANEY MOTORS), JEFF SIMON (DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER SERVICES), PETER GAZZARD (DEALER PRINCIPAL, CARLIN & GAZZARD), FLORIAN SEIDLER (MD MB CARS & CEO MBAUP), JASON NOMIKOS (DIRECTOR OF NETWORK DEVELOPMENT)

MERCEDES-BENZ HAILS RETAIL TRANSFORMATION CHAMPIONS

Mercedes-Benz has paid tribute to four dealers who embraced successfully a fundamental change in the way it sells cars.

The accolades came during Mercedes' 2022 Australian Retailer of the Year awards which recognise business and individual excellence in its Cars, Vans and Financial Services networks.

Retailers gathered at a gala event in Melbourne to celebrate a year in which Mercedes-Benz Cars remained Australia's top luxury brand.

It was also a year in which Mercedes-Benz Australia continued the transition to be one of the first vehicle brands in Australia to implement the agency sales model.

The 2022 awards are listed below.

TRANSFORMATION CHAMPIONS

A special tribute to four retailers who exceeded all targets under the new sales model, hailing them as the Transformation Champions of 2022 for Mercedes-Benz Cars Australia:

- Carlin & Gazzard (SA).
- Mercedes-Benz Adelaide (SA).
- Mercedes-Benz Berwick (Vic).
- Mercedes-Benz Toowong (Qld).

RETAILERS OF THE YEAR AWARDS 2022

- Mercedes-Benz Finance Vans Retailer of the Year: **Mercedes-Benz**



PETER GAZZARD (DEALER PRINCIPAL, CARLIN & GAZZARD) & BENJAMIN COLLINS (SERVICE MANAGER)

Melbourne.

- Mercedes-Benz Finance Cars Retailer of the Year: **Mercedes-Benz Brisbane.**
- Mercedes-Benz Vans Rural Retailer of the Year: **Mercedes-Benz Bendigo.**
- Mercedes-Benz Vans Metro Retailer of the Year: **Mercedes-Benz Melbourne.**

OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCES BY INDIVIDUALS

Several awards for outstanding individual performance in 2022 were presented across the company's operations.

MERCEDES-BENZ FINANCIAL SERVICES

- Financial Guild for Vans (runner-up):

Mercedes-Benz Unley.

- Financial Guild for Cars (second runner-up): **Mercedes-Benz Melbourne.**
- Financial Guild for Cars (runner-up): **G Brothers.**

MERCEDES-BENZ VANS

- Service Advisor of the Year: **Matt Cole**, Mercedes-Benz Geelong.
- Rural Service Manager of the Year: **Ben Collins**, Carlin & Gazzard.
- Metro Service Manager of the Year: **Scott Ussia**, Mercedes-Benz Macarthur.
- Rural Parts Manager of the Year: **Darrell Benfield**, West-Star Motors.

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- Metro Parts Manager of the Year: **Stavros Konstantinos**, Mercedes-Benz Brisbane.
- Rural Sales Executive of the Year: **Andrew Harrison**, Mercedes-Benz Geelong.
- Metro Sales Executive of the Year: **Luke Vrettos**, Mercedes-Benz Sydney.
- Rural Sales Manager of the Year: **Richard Sullivan**, Mercedes-Benz Mornington.
- Metro Sales Manager of the Year: **Jonathan Hooper**, Mercedes-Benz Brighton.

MERCEDES-BENZ CARS

- Rural Parts Manager of the Year: **Jarrold Adams**, North Jacklin.
- Metro Parts Manager of the Year: **Mahmut Baran**, Mercedes-Benz Brighton.
- Rural Service Manager of the Year: **Ben Collins**, Carlin & Gazzard.
- Metro Service Manager of the Year: **Anthony La Pierre**, Mercedes-Benz Berwick.
- Autobody Manager of the Year: **Andrew Duncan**, Perfect Auto Body.

STAR GUILD

Star Guild awards recognise outstanding achievements in sales in the Mercedes-Benz Cars network.

- Rural Pre-Owned Vehicle Sales Consultant of the Year: **Barry Churcher**, Mercedes-Benz Bunbury.
- Metro Pre-Owned Vehicle Sales Consultant of the Year: **Rukie Wickramasinghe**, Mercedes-Benz



Waverley.

- Rookie Salesperson of the Year: **Metehan Korkut**, Mercedes-Benz Sydney.
- EQ Vehicle Consultant of the Year: **Isaac Yang**, Mercedes-Benz Brisbane.
- AMG Brand Manager of the Year: **Daniel Bey**, Mercedes-Benz Berwick.
- Rural New Vehicle Sales Consultant of the Year: **Reme Irvine**, Mercedes-Benz Wollongong.
- Metro New Vehicle Sales Consultant of the Year: **Kevin Wu**, Mercedes-Benz Toowoong.
- Rural Pre-Owned Vehicle Sales Manager of the Year: **Troy Neal**,

Mercedes-Benz Wollongong.

- Metro Pre-Owned Vehicle Sales Manager of the Year: **Jake Buxton**, Mercedes-Benz Berwick.
- Metro New Vehicle Sales Manager of the Year: **Shaun Gross**, Mercedes-Benz Berwick.

SNEAK PEEK

At the conclusion of the evening, retailers were given a sneak peek at the 2023 Mercedes-Benz GLC SUV, a new model that's expected to become one of the most significant in Mercedes' passenger car range.



PODIUM LAUNCHES CHATGPT INTEGRATION

Podium has launched Review Response Suggestions, a feature designed to help Australian businesses manage their online reputations.

Powered by ChatGPT, the feature uses AI technology to generate response suggestions for businesses to reply to customers' online reviews.

The integration comes as businesses continue to investigate tangible ways of building Artificial Intelligence into their operations and Google Reviews grow in influence.

Podium research shows 84% of Aussies are influenced by Google Reviews when choosing a business.

What's more, 51% say that a business' responses to reviews have changed their perspective on the business.

And 46% are more likely to look at a local business' Google listing before visiting than they were pre-COVID.

Among local businesses, 45% say that online reviews are "very important" to their business' success.

Podium's Review Response Suggestions gives Australian businesses a way to respond to online reviews in context.

It generates customised response suggestions that businesses can quickly edit and personalise.

It supports Google and will be followed by Facebook reviews, allowing businesses to respond to customer feedback across multiple platforms.

"As a business owner myself, I understand how crucial online reputation management is to businesses in Australia," says Podium chief executive **Eric Rea**.

"Launching our new Review Response Suggestions feature, will make it easier for businesses to manage their online reputation.

"Online reviews have never been more influential, but as a business owner staying on top of them – good or bad – can be a daunting and time-consuming task.

"Our integration with ChatGPT is designed to unburden businesses enabling them to manage their online reputation more efficiently and spend



PODIUM CHIEF EXECUTIVE ERIC REA

more time working on other tasks."

Podium's Review Response Suggestions feature has been designed to provide quality review response recommendations, with a focus on responding in the context of the review.

By responding promptly to reviews, businesses can build trust with customers, which leads to greater brand loyalty and improved customer retention.

"Our feature provides businesses with the tools they need to respond to customer reviews with confidence, while saving them valuable time and effort."

Phil Gilbert Motor Group marketing and brand manager **Rebecca Browne** says that since the company started using Podium four years ago, it has seen "the platform grow and offer us new enhancements which have always been beneficial to our dealership".

"The ChatGPT integration with Reviews, has been one of the most significant. The AI Assistants suggestions are

incredible.

"Given the vast amount of data we've generated by using Podium over the years, the tone and language suggested for the review replies are so consistent to what I would write myself.

"I feel the quality of the review replies are more diverse and there would be no way for people researching our business online to know that the feedback to our guests was generated by AI," she says.

Rex Gorell Group marketing general manager **Marcus Tomczak** says that since getting the new Review Response Suggestions feature, "we've been using it almost daily".

"It's been fantastic to respond promptly and professionally to our reviews through the power of ChatGPT."

Podium's Review Response Suggestions has been beta tested and was made available from March 21. Podium is used by 4000 businesses in Australia and 100,000 globally.

CORPORATE AUSTRALIA CAN LEAD THE EV CHARGE

Management consultancy Partners in Performance (PIP) says moving light commercial fleets to electric vehicles is crucial to the Labor Government's National Electric Vehicle Strategy (NEVS).

PIP says it works with corporations to facilitate their transformation towards sustainable practices and decarbonisation goals through implementable solutions.

Apart from pledging that its fleet purchases and leases will be 75% electric by 2025, PIP says two factors stand out from Labor's announcement, the Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) and salary sacrifice.

The Government will allocate \$345 million to the Electric Vehicle Discount, exempting eligible EVs from FBT and the 5% import tariff.

That translates to savings of \$9000 a year on a \$50,000 EV for an employer, or savings of \$4700 for an individual on a salary sacrifice arrangement.

PIP asks if the Aussie ute, deemed a tax write-off, will be replaced with its cleaner and greener EV counterpart.

"A burgeoning economic case with the change to the FBT rules and incoming of utes in a few years, is to look at the total cost of ownership," says PIP partner **Brian Innes**.

"This is for both corporate fleets and salary sacrificing programs, to engage and rapidly increase the uptake of EVs.

"The critical point lies in corporations understanding and managing EV charging infrastructure and home to work charging with EVs.

"Furthermore, corporations will have to get up to speed rapidly, by getting on board with EVs in ways that suit their respective business offerings.

"They need to be ready to incorporate charging in a way that is feasible to their duties, and wholly understand their role in transitioning to EVs," Innes says.

Australia's transport sector is the fourth biggest contributor to overall carbon emissions. EVs powered by green energy, stand to reduce Australia's carbon emissions by six to 7%.

Australian industries expected to drive the first batches of mass EV uptake include food logistics companies, delivery businesses, and mobile service



providers like mobile bankers.

Many carmakers have committed to increasing the number of EV freight and logistics vehicles, and IDTechEx forecasts electric trucks will make up 9% of the global medium- and heavy-duty market by 2030.

However, the lack of, and cost of, charging infrastructure must be addressed.

PIP says the Federal Government's \$500 million Driving the Nation fund, which includes improving charging infrastructure at 117 highway sites, and hydrogen highways for key freight routes, is a move in the right direction. Labor plans to deliver 16 hydrogen refuelling stations on Australia's busiest freight routes.

EV charging stations will be installed at an average interval of 150 kilometres on major roads. They'll be compatible with all EV models and charging networks.

"EVs can alleviate the pressure on the grid, as they gain popularity," Innes says.

"Corporations can enhance EV uptake by having them charged while they're parked, in the hours between 10am to 3pm at work.

"Doing this will mean the excess solar energy from the grid can be stored in EVs, ensuring stability in the system while reducing infrastructure spend.

"The key to successfully transitioning to EV fleets is harnessing available resources and utilising it to capacity."

Additionally, \$20 billion has been allocated to upgrading the electricity grid. That includes investing in the Marinus Link to connect Tasmania's Battery of the Nation pumped hydro and renewables to the East Coast transmission network.

But as the number of EVs increases, and act as mobile sponges, Innes questions whether it makes sense to invest \$20 billion in the immobile grid.

PIP says Western Australia has come a long way in adopting renewable energy: 82% in an isolated gigawatt (GW) scale grid, presumed to be the highest for a GW grid globally.

PIP says that's a "commendable achievement by the state" because no government incentives or regulations drove it.

Instead, people power was the driving force, with 65% of this energy harnessed from solar panels on the rooftops of Western Australian homes.

Innes says Australia needs to mirror WA's people power effect.

"It's not just about government incentives, but the motivation to do it because people are informed and want to."

A positive side effect of the electricity grid getting greener and EVs soaking up the excess solar energy generated from rooftops, is a significant reduction of greenhouse gases, he says.

SOLITAIRE OPENS CUPRA GARAGE ADELAIDE

Cupra has completed the first quarter of its first full calendar year of sales in Australia with the opening of its official Adelaide Garage.

Located at 11 Waymouth Street, Cupra's new home in Adelaide is operated by Solitaire Automotive, a retailer of European and prestige automotive brands established in 1971.

After operating from temporary premises, Cupra's new South Australian home's opening coincides with the release of the Born BEV hatchback.

"The commitment of Solitaire Group and the impressive facility in a busy CBD area combining business interests and high-quality dining, is a glowing endorsement of Australia's newest and most dynamic brand," says Cupra Australia director **Ben Wilks**.

He says Cupra's national network is growing in size and experience.

"The biggest players in Australian automotive have taken a stake in a challenger brand that combines design, performance and – increasingly – electrification."

Solitaire's new Adelaide home joins the Cupra Garages owned by AP Eagers (Indooroopilly, Gold Coast, Perth), Zagame's Melbourne pair (Chadstone and Richmond), Sydney's Alto Prestige (CBD and Artarmon), and Canberra's Lennock Motors.

Wilks says further Cupra Garage announcements will be made shortly.



"Cupra is run along the agency model with online transactions," he says.

"Our garages embody the modernising of customer transactions. Typically, Cupra is found not only in traditional auto alleys but also where people live, shop, and dine."

Having launched in its newest market six months ago, Wilks says Cupra has hit its stride with 2200 orders.

The addition of the Born to the existing range – Formentor, Ateca and Leon – has been immediately successful.

The factory in Barcelona has added 200

Borns to the 400 made available for order a few days before Christmas.

Strong customer response to the first 100 Formentor and Leon VZe Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEVs) means more can now be ordered ahead of delivery later this year.

Currently, Cupra's single best-selling variant is the range-topping ormentor VZx crossover, which has been released in a Rojo edition of 30 uniquely red-coloured and black-upholstered examples.



NEW FINANCE PROVIDER FOR ALFA-ROMEIO, FIAT, AND JEEP DEALERS

Non-bank lender Allied Credit and Stellantis Australia have established a new automotive finance partnership.

Allied Credit will provide captive branded financial services for Australian Alfa Romeo, Fiat and Jeep dealers.

Stellantis Australia managing director **Michael Filazzola** says Allied Credit has a strong market reputation and the

partnership will benefit the brands, dealers, and customers.

Allied Credit head of alliances and acquisitions **Jim Giles** says a key factor in the partnership is "the clear alignment between the two companies – our respective strength and reputation in the market and our mutual drive to support the dealer network through enhanced technology systems and a focus on brand awareness. Each will underpin a strong

future.

"Everything is moving at pace. While the partnership is new, significant progress has already been made with the majority of the 100 or more dealers nationally already onboarded."

The first campaign for Jeep Financial Services has been launched, and the campaigns for Alfa and Fiat are expected to commence soon, he says.





WHAT DO WOMEN WANT IN A CAR?

Safety is the most important feature women want in cars, according to a global survey commissioned by South African insurer 1st for Women with members of the Women's World Car of the Year (WWCOTY) jury.

Carried out by South African WWCOTY juror **Charleen Clarke**, the survey found that practicality, performance, and space are all tied for second place.

"Female motorists are becoming more aware of the environmental impact of cars," Clarke says.

"Accordingly, women are studying emission data and, wherever possible, they're selecting a greener motoring option."

The WWCOTY jurors have also highlighted other features important for women.

"I recently conducted a survey into the most wanted automotive features by women and around 14,000 female motorists participated.

"The outcome was the seating position (the higher, the better) is extremely important to women," says WWCOTY Serbia juror **Tina Vujanovic**.

Vietnam WWCOTY juror **Mebi Nguyen** says safety is key for women in many countries.

"Women look for safety features like a back-up camera, blindspot monitoring, and ABS. They also look for convenience features such as storage pockets, cupholders, and air-conditioning," she says.

USA juror **Elana Scherr** also rates safety highly. "I know many of my female friends prioritise safety ratings and fuel economy, followed by appearance and interior," she says.

Women say the buying decision is based on multiple factors including behaviour and performance.

Hungarian juror **Kurcz Erzsébet Magyarorszag** says that handling and reliability are critical to women.

"The following qualities are important in a car: handling, ease of operation, safety, power, an aesthetic interior, and environmental impact. The most important consideration for me is reliability."

All this shows that women's approach to the automotive world is more rational than emotional.

Chilean juror **Fran Munoz** says that – contrary to popular belief – women rely on their heads rather than their hearts when it comes to choosing a car.

"Women are increasingly well informed

and are always interested in having as much information as possible at hand when deciding to buy a car," she says.

Another American juror **Nicole Wakelin** says women look for features that simplify day-to-day life.

"That's not the same set of features for every woman. Those who commute want comfort and a responsive yet fuel-efficient car.

"Moms seek out room for the kids and all their stuff, as well as easy access to buckle squirming toddlers into car seats. It's all about making life easier."

United Arab Emirates juror **Shereen Shabnam** believes that some women – who play multiple roles in the family – look for power, as they need a car that can get them to their destination faster.

"In summary, the study conducted on our behalf clearly shows rationality to be very important in car purchase decision-making by women, while safety, functionality, reliability, performance, and the environment are among the most important factors to be taken into account," says head of 1st for Women **Seugnette van Wyngaard**.

FBT EXEMPTION SEES EV ORDERS SURGE 331%

Novated lease, fleet and salary packaging provider, **McMillan Shakespeare** says a surge in EV orders highlights growing demand and the significant impact of the FBT exemption.

In the first half of the 2023 financial year, its combined Maxxia and RemServ businesses saw a 331% increase in the number of EV orders as a percentage of total novated leases compared with the prior corresponding period.

During the period EVs represented 6.9% of total novated lease orders across Maxxia and RemServ, up from 1.7% in the same six months of FY22.

This Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) exemption applies to battery electric cars, hydrogen fuel cell electric cars, and plug-in hybrids.

McMillan Shakespeare says the exemption is available for eligible EVs with a first retail price below the luxury car tax threshold for fuel efficient cars (\$84,916 for 2022-2023) first made available for use on or after July 1, 2022.

If a model valued around \$50,000 is provided by an employer through this



arrangement, the FBT exemption would save the business up to \$9000 a year.

For individuals using a salary sacrifice arrangement(i.e., a novated lease) to pay for the same model, the saving would be up to \$4700 a year, says McMillan Shakespeare.

Under this legislation, it says that organisations have greater financial incentive to transition their fleets to EVs in line with their sustainability commitments.

Similarly, novated lease holders now can own and operate an eligible EV at a cost in line with, or potentially more favourable than, a comparable

traditional internal combustion vehicle.

AUSTRALIAN EFV FAST FACTS

- As at the end of December 2022, there were 29 EV models eligible for the EV FBT discount.
- 79% of EVs on Australian roads are Battery Electric Vehicles.
- There are more than 83,000 EVs on Australia's roads.
- In 2022, 3.8% of all new vehicles sold in Australia were EVs, up from 2.1% in 2021. This compares with the global average which is estimated to be between one to 14% of new car sales in 2022.

SCOTTISH DEALER GROUP SETS UP WA FINANCE ARM

One of Scotland's major car dealers, Peter Vardy Group, has established CarMoney, a finance operation in Perth, Western Australia.

It's the first international foray for the group which operates eight used car supermarkets across Scotland and represents BMW and Mini, Jaguar Land Rover, and Porsche at six sites.

The Peter Vardy Mobility division offers rental and leasing options to businesses and consumers.

The portal www.carmoney.net.au went live in Perth on April 3.

This milestone coincides with the 100th year of the Vardy family trading in the British motor trade and comes as the company experiences a 200% annual rise in car sales.

CarMoney provides finance to car

buyers, applying user-friendly technology to simplify the process. By collaborating with some of Britain's largest brands, including Autotrader and Motors.co.uk, the company has had significant success.

Former Vardy Group employee **Stuart Mackay** has been appointed chief executive of the Australian operation, CarMoney Oceania Pty Limited.

CarMoney Oceania aims to have up to 15 members by the end of 2023 and 20 by the end of next year.

A CarMoney expert from Scotland will also be present in Australia to ensure a successful launch.

"The Australian market is quite traditional in terms of securing financing, so we believe CarMoney is perfectly positioned to shake up



STUART MACKAY

the market; providing a simplified and consistent financing journey for customers looking for mobility solutions," says CarMoney franchising and international growth managing director **Robert Lujan**.

"It's very exciting for us to be making our first step overseas in Perth, Western Australia, not least because it was in Perth, Scotland, that we opened our first dealership in 2006," says Peter Vardy Group chief executive **Peter Vardy**.



VOLKSWAGEN PURSUING ATTAINABLE PRICING FOR ID.3 BEV

Volkswagen Australia says it has set a target price of less than \$60,000 for its Volkswagen ID.3 electric line up to "maximise national and state-based electric vehicle incentives".

The ID.3 is one of five new Volkswagen BEVs destined for Australia before 2025.

They include the Golf-sized ID.3 hatchback, the Tiguan-sized ID.4 and ID.5 family SUVs, and the ID.Buzz minivan and ID.Buzz Cargo commercial van.

VW is scheduled to start building Australia-bound BEVs in 2024 and deliver them within the next 20 months, at an average of one model every five months.

Most importantly for Australian customers all of VW's more than 100 Australian dealerships will sell and service each BEV "from the off".

Volkswagen Passenger Vehicles

director **Michał Szaniecki** says that "as Australians have long expected that a Golf or Tiguan will lead their segment for premium feel and the most enjoyable driving characteristics, we're ensuring the ID.3, ID.4 and ID.5 launch with these same attributes top of mind".

"Upgraded product such as the more premium ID.3 and a 500km-plus range for ID.4 and ID.5 will gel with our ability to sell these vehicles nationwide, no matter which dealership is closest to you. This is an advantage that not all start-up companies are able to match.

"Our message for customers thinking about switching to a BEV is this – we're here in 2024, and here in a big way."

Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles director **Ryan Davies** says that technical approval for the ID.Buzz and ID.Buzz Cargo means both are locked in and ready to go for production to start at

the end of 2024.

"The ID.Buzz is a people mover that stops traffic – people stop, stare and smile. It's an incredible blend of style and function that will capture the imagination of Australians – and is reflected by our ambitious sales volumes.

"We expect the ID.Buzz Cargo to sell at least as well, and it's incredibly appealing for sole traders who want to reduce their emissions in the most fun way possible.

"This is a proper, from the ground up tradies' BEV – not a reverse engineering of an existing diesel vehicle."

The Volkswagen ID.4 and the coupe-style ID.5 will provide customers with three choices in the Tiguan SUV segment – BEVs with a 500km-plus range, or high-performance efficient turbocharged petrol engines.

TOYOTA NZ BOSS CRITICISES CLIMATE POLICY CRITICS

Toyota New Zealand chief executive **Neeraj Lala** says critics have failed to understand the impact of the NZ Government's climate policies on the automotive landscape and cost of living crisis.

The two government policies causing challenges for the Kiwi car industry are the Clean Car Discount (CCD) and more importantly the Clean Car Standard (CCS), he says.

"You'll hear that the CCD has been successful; so successful that it's about to undergo a major redesign," Lala says with more than a touch of irony.

"The reason it's struggling is because it doesn't have enough money. It's not sustainable, so it needs to be changed."

The issues with the CCS are more complex. With the CCS every carmaker has its CO₂ target reduced.

Toyota must go from 180g to 91g by 2027. Carmakers can accumulate credits now and where required, and pay penalties at some later point, when the credits run out.

"The credits aren't cash," Lala says. "They're credits with a three-year expiry, so our 25 million credits will expire in 2026."

"So, if I had a penalty of five to six million, I could use these credits and with the remaining balance, I can either sell to some of our friends in the industry or need to use elsewhere [before they expire]."

That might sound straightforward, but Lala says the problem is less transparent.

"As an example, based on the balance of our current car sales, we don't have any pressure to increase the price of our Hilux."

"But the challenge occurs if our competitors choose to (or have to) increase the price of their cars because they don't have any credits, and we do."

He says that if Toyota doesn't increase the price, it won't be able (because of the CCS) to satisfy the inevitable increased demand.

"We have a cap on how many [polluting] vehicles we can sell, so if [our competitors] put their prices



NEERAJ LALA

up and we don't, we can't take the increased demand.

"And the penalties are harsh, \$45 to \$65 per gram above the target. So, if our target is 91 and we got to 100, it would be nine grams x \$65 x 40,000 cars that we sell. So, it runs into the multi-millions of dollars."

Lala says that ultimately it will impact vehicles' affordability, and in turn that will worsen the cost-of-living crisis: "and we can't seem to get this message across to the Government."

He's also cynical about the CCD saying it should be renamed the "EV fund for rich people".

"If the objective is to reduce carbon from our fleet you can achieve it in lots of ways, not just BEVs."

"The emissions that go into generating one EV, is equivalent to six PHEVs and 90 hybrids, which means that you'll get the biggest bang for your buck in the shorter period with a hybrid."

Although Lala says he's not advocating that all New Zealanders drive hybrids, he believes that there is no one size fits all.

"We (Toyota) are firm believers that there's no silver bullet. Our ambition is a minimum of 46% reduction from our new and used cars."

"We've looked at what it will take to reduce that carbon footprint and we've looked at carbon as the enemy, not mobility."

"From a mobility perspective, we're confident that we can exceed all those targets with a range of powertrains."

"We're working with government agencies to see how these can be applied."

Climate change is rewriting how people live their lives and how they behave, Lala says.

"There's a stronger shift of customers genuinely concerned about climate change. So, the mode has gone from a concern around car shaming, to genuine guilt of using something that's high emissions."

Lala believes that guilt is causing an increase in cars per household, with BEVs being an 'additional car.'

"NZ, along with the US, has the most cars per household, around four cars. So, decarbonisation will be achieved with lowering congestion on the road, but in the short to medium term we'll be increasing it."

Lala says creating a more connected and seamless "mobility ecosystem" will be the catalyst for decarbonising the light vehicle industry.

"But for this to work successfully we've got to introduce a range of new technologies and systems."

Lala reckons that carbon neutrality can't be achieved by the car industry alone or by BEVs alone.

"They'll make a massive difference but will not fix the problem alone. We have the challenge of infrastructure, the supply of products. The future will see less of us owning cars and using the likes of share vehicles and beyond."

MTA NSW WELCOMES NEW STATE GOVERNMENT

NSW's Motor Traders' Association (MTA NSW) welcomes incoming premier **Chris Minns** and the Labor Government but says urgent action is needed to invest in training to tackle the automotive industry skills shortage.

MTA NSW wants to work with the new government to achieve the priorities highlighted during the election campaign.

They include help for small and medium automotive businesses, delivery of on-the-job training packages, transitioning to new technologies, and upskilling automotive workers to handle and repair EVs safely.

MTA NSW chief executive **Stavros Yallouridis** says there is "a huge deficit of professional automotive workers in

NSW".

"This shortage is only going to be exacerbated with the rollout of EVs, as close to 50,000 auto workers are required to be upskilled.

"Our industry is made up of family-owned businesses who form the backbone of how our society gets from A to B.

"And we need to see a commitment from the state government to step up and invest in more programs to ensure we have enough talent to sustain us now and into the future."

As an organisation that champions the interests of automotive businesses and workers, MTA NSW has engaged with several MPs who have toured its headquarters and training facilities over the past few months.



FMO CALLS ON MANUFACTURERS TO CONFIRM VEHICLE RECALL STATUS

Fleet management company Fleetcare is calling on carmakers to confirm when their cars are under an active or historical recall.

The call follows an initiative by the Department of Infrastructure that all active and historical vehicle recalls will now appear on Personal Property Securities Register (PPSR) reports.

Fleetcare says it's the first fleet management firm to provide customers with transparency about the recall status of vehicles.

"It's important that manufacturers provide transparency on recall information for public safety, as these vehicles are on public roads," says Fleetcare chief executive **Nigel Malcolm**.

"We know that some manufacturers struggle to provide clarity around the status of recalls, leaving the consumer unaware that their vehicle is either

unsafe to drive or non-compliant for sale.

"However, there are other manufacturers leading the way in this space including Mazda and Toyota, who provide clear information as to which of their recalls are resolved or unresolved. We hope to see others following suit soon."

Fleetcare and Evolve Information Services have developed an automation platform to identify recalls and their status, using a customer's Vehicle Identification Number (VIN).

Fleetcare's recall management service features include:

- Identifying vehicles with recalls and their status.
- Informing drivers and owners about recalls affecting their vehicles and linking them to relevant recall

information.

- Tracking the status of customer communication and vehicle recall.

Fleetcare says that since 2008, there have been about 5.6 million recalls in Australia.

Of those recalls, it says 80% of those recalls cannot be confirmed, and there is no easy way for the consumer to check the status of a vehicle.

It says this is a hidden minefield for used car buyers, and the second-hand market is running hot because of the delays in obtaining new cars.

"Resolving recalls is crucial when owners are looking to sell a vehicle, as financial institutions can only secure against an asset that is safe, and a dealership can only buy a vehicle without an outstanding recall," Fleetcare says.

GWILYM IS INTERIM MTAA CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Motor Trades Association of Australia (MTAA) board has appointed **Geoff Gwilym** as the organisation's interim chief executive. "After chief executive **Richard Dudley's** retirement in December 2022, the MTAA board sought a high-level candidate to guide the association. That search remains ongoing," says MTAA chair, **Frank Agostino**.

"In the meantime, the MTAA board approached Victorian Automotive Chamber of Commerce (VACC) chief executive **Geoff Gwilym** and requested he act as MTAA chief executive in the interim period. This arrangement is in effect indefinitely."

Gwilym has headed VACC since December 2014 and brings with him a wealth of auto industry experience.

He began his career in Britain as an apprentice body maker, at age 15 in 1975. He came to Australia 10 years later and continued to work in the automotive industry, before joining the TAFE system as a teacher.

His first stint at VACC followed, with Gwilym running the group apprenticeship scheme for three years. After that, he led the learning and development program at the Real Estate Institute of Victoria.

In the 10 years before returning to VACC, Gwilym ran the Transport Logistics Skills Council, and then Auto Skills Australia.

Gwilym has a master's degree in education and leadership and has wide-ranging media experience having appeared regularly on TV, radio, and in the trade and mass media.



GEOFF GWILYM

He's an influencer in the automotive industry, having a weekly column in the Melbourne Herald Sun newspaper and co-hosts The Grille podcast, alongside **Greg Rust** and **Shane Jacobson**.

VOLUNTARY EMISSION STANDARDS DATA RELEASED

The 2022 results of Australia's voluntary emissions reduction standard for light vehicles show the challenges of transitioning to a zero-emission light vehicle fleet, especially in the absence of a Government-mandated CO2 standard.

So says Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries (FCAI) chief executive **Tony Weber**, when releasing the figures.

The results are mixed. There's been a drop in carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions by passenger cars and light SUVs but a slight rise for heavy SUVs and light commercials.

The MA (passenger cars and light SUVs) result for 2022 was an average of 131 grams (146 grams in 2021) of CO2 for every kilometre travelled, the FCAI says.

The MC and NA (heavy SUVs and light commercial vehicles) result was an average of 212.8 grams (212.5 grams in 2021).

These results are set against a 2022 target of 146 grams for MA and 189 grams for MC and NA.

The car industry developed and adopted the standard in 2020 in the

absence of action from the previous Federal Government.

"Globally, there's currently a limited supply of batteries and supporting technology to meet the demand for all new vehicles and in particular, the bigger vehicles which a large proportion of Australians choose to buy," Webber says.

"Development work is being undertaken by carmakers across the world to overcome these challenges.

"However, we're not likely to see a significant improvement in the availability of these vehicles at prices many Australians can afford until at least the end of this decade," says Weber.

"We have the opportunity to establish a standard which gets us on the pathway to reducing emissions, supports carmakers to attract the best low-emission technology to the Australian market and provides Australian consumers with certainty and clarity around future vehicle availability.

"Attempts to simplify our journey to net zero as one that can only be achieved through electric vehicles ignore the



TONY WEBER

buying preferences of Australian consumers, market supply realities, price, and the very real impact of other low emission technologies," Weber says.

"All FCAI members are aligned on the need for a fuel efficiency standard which considers consumers, the unique nature of the Australian market, product availability, affordability, and the full range of zero- and low-emission technologies."



MODIFICATIONS SUMMIT TO INFLUENCE NATIONAL VEHICLE STANDARDS

A national modifications summit has been created to protect the future of aftermarket manufacturers.

Taking place at Autocare in Brisbane on June 9, the inaugural National Light Vehicle Modifications Summit is an initiative for the aftermarket to collaborate and influence national vehicle standards.

The Australian Automotive Aftermarket Association (AAAA) says the one-day summit will bring together aftermarket leaders, business owners, product developers, entrepreneurs and regulators.

Australian aftermarket manufacturers are renowned for products, technology, and parts that improve a vehicle's capability and performance.

Although aftermarket product developers produce high quality, safe, and compliant modifications, navigating federal and individual state and territory regulations to ensure compliance can be challenging, and restrictive.

"The new National Light Vehicle Modifications Summit will be a

crucial step for our industry to come together and engage with regulators, understand what they're worried about, and work together toward best practice solutions," says AAAA chief executive **Stuart Charity**.

"If we can lead the conversations to regulate our industry, we can control our destiny. This summit will be a big part of these efforts."

Creating the summit was the next logical step for the AAAA, after it formed the Gross Combination Mass (GCM) technical working group and Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) technical group.

The groups, with regulator involvement, have yielded positive results for aftermarket product manufacturers the AAAA says.

"If you work in the vehicle modification space, want to understand what regulators are thinking, and contribute to the discussion on important topics including GCM, ADAS, EV and more, this is a must-attend summit," Charity says.

The summit will run alongside Autocare's Technical Training Program for technicians, and Workshop



STUART CHARITY

Management Program for business owners.

These programs are led by the largest collection of industry experts assembled in Australia. A feature-packed Trade Show with more than 100 of Australia's best brands, and a networking event will complement the training program.

Reserve a place at the National Light Vehicle Modifications Summit at www.autocare.org.au/modsummit

NEW TRITON TO ACCELERATE ASEAN BUSINESS

Mitsubishi wants to accelerate business in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) region in 2023 with the launch of the all-new Triton and an all-new compact SUV, says president and chief executive **Takao Kato**.

Mitsubishi showed the XRT Concept, a preview of the new Triton ute at the 2023 Bangkok International Motor Show in Thailand.

The Triton is Mitsubishi's top-selling model manufactured at the Laemchabang Factory in Thailand and is exported to about 150 countries.

With its first full redesign in nine years, it will be the sixth generation of the brand's midsize ute.

After the launch in Thailand in 2023, it will be released sequentially in the ASEAN region, Oceania and other markets.

MMC says the XRT Concept is characterised by a "fierce expression" on the front and a robust bonnet.



Further, it's fitted with front and rear over fenders and rides on mud-terrain tyres.

The body features a camouflage design inspired by lava rocks, and the sides have been adorned with a graphic of the 10-parallel line Ralliart brand.

At the Asia Cross Country Rally 2023,

Team Mitsubishi Ralliart plans to compete with a prototype cross-country version of the all-new Triton as it seeks a second straight victory.

Hiroshi Masuoka, a double Dakar Rally champion in 2002 and 2003, will stay on as team director.



TYPE R COMPLETES CIVIC FAMILY IN AUSTRALIA

Honda Australia says the all-new 2023 Type-R hot hatch at a national drive away price of \$72,600 completes its new generation Civic family.

The Civic VTi LX was introduced in late 2021, followed by the Civic e:HEV LX and now the all-new Civic Type R.

Based on the 11th generation Civic Hatchback, Honda says the Type R has a significantly more rigid body providing improved dynamics and refinement.

It says the Type R's sharp responses and feel are enhanced by uprated suspension and steering.

The upgraded Brembo braking system provides "a solid sense of control and stability".

Four driving modes, including a new Individual mode, enable drivers to customise their car's handling.

The new Civic Type R is more aerodynamically efficient and generates significantly more downforce.



The cockpit has performance-focused details and features including Type R's iconic red seats, aluminium gearshift knob, and a serialised Type R plate on the dash.

An updated version of the Honda Log-R data logger will be available for the new generation Type R, combining performance data from the onboard computer and in-car sensors with a new built-in vehicle app, rather than just the smartphone app available on

the previous model.

Log-R helps drivers monitor and record performance parameters in real time on the racetrack or other closed courses.

The Civic Type R also comes with five years of Honda Connect complimentary telematics services.

It's a mobile app that allows customers to access vehicle information and interact with their vehicle using a Telematics Control Unit (TCU).





MAZDA CONFIRMS CX-90 RANGE FOR AUSTRALIA

Mazda Australia's new seven-seat CX-90 SUV flagship is available to order now ahead of its arrival in dealerships in August.

There are three CX-90 model grades – Touring, GT, and Azami – with either turbocharged inline six-cylinder petrol or diesel engines.

Both the e-Skyactiv G (3.3-litre petrol G50e) and e-Skyactiv D (3.3-litre diesel D50e) sixes have Mazda's M Hybrid Boost 48V mild hybrid technology.

It supports the engine at lower speeds while delivering enhanced environmental performance by using regenerative braking to replenish the onboard battery.

Increasing the speed range at which lean burn (lean combustion, or high-efficiency combustion with minimal fuel consumption) is possible has contributed to the e-Skyactiv D achieving 5.4 litres/100 km, along with CO2 emissions of 143 grams/km.

There's still plenty of power, with outputs of 187kW at 3750rpm and peak torque of 550Nm from 1500 to 2400rpm.

Mazda engineers have designed the D50e engine to use surplus air to improve combustion, resulting in more

agile acceleration, lower Nitrous oxide emissions at high revs and output, and better thermal efficiency from a greater lean burn speed range.

With 254kW of maximum power and 500Nm of peak torque, the e-Skyactiv G petrol engine with M Hybrid Boost technology is the most powerful mass-production power unit Mazda has developed to-date.

Mazda says it has fuel economy of 8.2 litres/100 km and emits 189 grams/km of CO2.

The gearbox in both cars is Mazda's Skyactiv-Drive eight-speed automatic, developed without a torque converter and transmitting torque directly.

It sends drive to all four wheels via full-time i-Activ All-Wheel Drive – a rear-biased system that gives the CX-90 near-neutral handling.

Drivers can choose among four different switchable driving modes: Normal, Sport, Off-Road, and Towing.

SPACE

At 5100mm long and 1994mm wide, and with a 3120mm wheelbase, the CX-90 is roomier than the current Mazda CX-9 and has matched or greater shoulder and head room in every row.

Load space rises to 608 litres including under-floor storage space. Folding the second- and third-row seats flat increases load capacity to 2025 litres.

TECHNOLOGY AND SAFETY

The CX-90 is the latest model to emerge on Mazda's Skyactiv Multi-Solution Scalable Architecture.

This new core vehicle structure incorporates intelligent mechanical design and a combination of materials to achieve a rigid bodyshell that manages the transmission of suspension forces to improve comfort and sharpen handling.

It also uses Kinematic Posture Control (KPC) to control the attitude of the CX-90 when braking – a technology also found on the iconic Mazda MX-5 sports car.

COLOUR CHOICES

The CX-90 introduces Mazda's fourth Takuminuri paint finish, Artisan Red Metallic, a deeper and darker red.

Other available colours are Deep Crystal Blue Mica, Jet Black Mica, Machine Grey Metallic, Platinum Quartz Metallic, Rhodium White Metallic, Sonic Silver Metallic, and Soul Red Crystal Metallic.



NARROW MARCH SALES LEAD FOR HILUX

The Toyota **Hilux** remained Australia's best-selling new vehicle in March 2023 by a margin of 75 units over the Ford Ranger.

The result came in spite of fewer light commercial vehicle sales to private, business, government and rental fleet buyers.

The Hilux led the Australian new vehicle market with 4583 sales, followed by the Ranger on 4508.

The Isuzu **D-Max** was third with 2789 sales, followed by the Mitsubishi Outlander (2169) and the Tesla Model Y (1938).

Australian new car dealers delivered 97,251 vehicles during March 2023, which represents a 3.9% decrease on the same period in 2022.

Toyota led the market with a total of 13,223 vehicles sold. **Mazda** was second (8243), followed by **Ford** (6485), **Kia** (6403), and **Mitsubishi** (5863).

"March was a solid month for new car sales given the supply constraints car makers are facing both domestically and internationally," says Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries (FCAI) chief executive **Tony Weber**.

"Year-to-date sales have increased 2.5% which is a better indicator of the underlying strength of the market," he says.

Looking at the market in March 2023, the passenger segment (17,182) was down 21.9% for the month and down 6% for the year-to-date. The SUV

segment (53,526) was up 5.2% for the month and 9.4% for the year to date.

The light commercial segment (22,012) was down 9% for the month and down 7.6% for the year to date.

The heavy commercial segment (4531) was up 9.3% for the month and up 20.5% for the year to date.

Across the combined passenger, SUV, and light commercial segments in March 2023, private sales (51,176) were down 7% for the month, but business sales were up 0.8% (34,072).

Government sales were down 0.2% (2632) and rental sales were down 13.5% (4840).

Battery electric vehicle sales grew by 19.5% on March 2022, along with plug-in-hybrids which increased by 33.3%.

Year-to-date, sales of vehicles sourced from China have increased 70.7% with 15,124 vehicles sold in March.

Japan remains Australia's largest source of vehicles (25,538). Thailand is the second largest (21,729), and Korea fourth (12,771).

Sales in the ACT increased by 1% with 1576 vehicles sold; Queensland, 4.9% (22,244); South Australia, 2.6% (6543), and Western Australia, 1.1% (10,129).

Sales in New South Wales decreased by 6.1% (30,256); Northern Territory, 15.3% (776); Tasmania 8.4% (1620), and Victoria 11.2% (24,107).

TOP 10 BRANDS



1. TOYOTA 13,223



2. MAZDA 8243



3. FORD 6485



4. KIA 6403



5. MITSUBISHI 5863

4X4 UTES



1. Ford Ranger
3877



2. Toyota Hilux
3480



3. Isuzu Ute D-Max
2302



4. Mitsubishi Triton
1331



5. Mazda BT-50
1159



6. GWM Ute
1140



7. Toyota Landcruiser
916



8. LDV T60/T60 Max
908



9. Nissan Navara
786



10. Ssangyong Musso
313

SUV SMALL <\$40K



1. MG ZS
1844



2. Mazda CX-30
1337



3. Kia Seltos
1058



4. GWM Haval Jolion
976



5. Mitsubishi ASX
805



6. Mitsubishi Eclipse
Cross
789



7. Volkswagen T-Roc
751



8. Hyundai Kona
722



9. Nissan Qashqai
577



10. Toyota Corolla
Cross
429

TOP 10 BRANDS



6. HYUNDAI 5369



7. ISUZU UTE 4534



8. MG 4007



9. SUBARU 3852



10. TESLA 3578



TESLA MODEL Y FIFTH TOP SELLER IN MARCH

March was a solid month for new car sales in spite of supply constraints, with EVs helping lead the charge.

Though the top three best sellers last month were utes, battery electric vehicle (BEV) sales grew by 19.5% on March 2022 figures along with plug-in-hybrids which increased by 33.3%.

"This growth demonstrates that where Australians can afford a battery electric vehicle which suits their lifestyle, they will buy them," says Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries (FCAI) chief executive **Tony Weber**.

"It's notable that there are no passenger sedans in the 10 top selling vehicles for March," he adds.

"The consumer preference for utes and SUVs is an important factor to consider as we journey to a zero-emission light vehicle fleet because these vehicles are more difficult and expensive to electrify.

"If we want more zero- and low-emission vehicles on our roads, then we must provide the necessary recharging infrastructure and move to implement an ambitious yet achievable fuel efficiency standard which will encourage manufacturers to allocate more of the limited supply to Australia."

The Tesla Model Y was the fifth top selling model with 1938 sales in March.

The Toyota **HiLux** was the highest selling model with 4583 sales, followed by Ford's **Ranger** (4508), Isuzu's **D-Max** (2789), and Mitsubishi's **Outlander** (2169).

Year-to-date, sales of vehicles sourced from China have increased 70.7% with 15,124 vehicles sold in March. Japan remains Australia's largest source of vehicles (25,538). Thailand is the second largest (21,729) and Korea fourth (12,771).

"Year-to-date sales have increased 2.5% which is a better indicator of the underlying strength of the market," says Weber.

EVs increased to 17,394 year-to-date (YTD) compared with 6752 last time – up 157.6%, with March 2023 recording

6612 electric sales – up 19.5% on March 2022's 6532.

Sales were down in most other fuel categories apart from plug-in hybrids (PHEVs) which were up 33.3% in monthly comparisons (569 March 2023, 427 March 2022) and 39.5% in YTD comparisons (1401 from 1047).

Electrics rocketed in the popular SUV category, up 528.5% in March comparisons (4412 from 702) and 444% YTD (8894 from 1635).

Passenger electrics showed a drop in March comparisons (2187 from 4823, down 54.7%) but a 65% increase in YTD comparisons (8477 from 5108).

ELECTRIC, PHEV AND HYBRID SALES					MARCH 2023			
Total Market	Month		YTD		Variance +/- Vol. & %			
	2023	2022	2023	2022	MTH	YTD	MTH	YTD
ELECTRIC								
Passenger Private	2,187	4,823	8,477	5,108	-2,636	3,369	-54.7%	66.0%
SUV Private	4,412	702	8,894	1,635	3,710	7,259	528.5%	444.0%
Light Commercial Non-Private	13	7	25	9	6	16	85.7%	177.8%
Sub Total	6,612	5,532	17,396	6,752	1,080	10,644	19.5%	157.6%
HYBRID								
Passenger Private	1,466	2,295	4,097	6,999	-829	-2,902	-36.1%	-41.5%
SUV Private	3,781	5,179	12,004	13,586	-1,398	-1,582	-27.0%	-11.6%
Sub Total	5,247	7,474	16,101	20,585	-2,227	-4,484	-29.8%	-21.8%
PHEV								
Passenger Private	32	34	76	88	-2	-12	-5.9%	-13.6%
SUV Private	537	393	1,385	959	144	426	36.6%	44.4%
Sub Total	521	272	2,749	1,236	249	1,513	91.5%	122.4%
TOTAL	12,380	13,278	36,246	27,337	-898	8,909	-6.8%	32.6%