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# WILL THE NVES AFFECT SUV AND UTE SALES?

Hello there,

The Federal Government's request for submissions on the proposed New Vehicle Efficiency Standard (NVES) certainly garnered a mixed reaction from the automotive industry and other stakeholders.

**For the OEM new vehicle distributors, the devil will be in the details.**

Large brands with a comprehensive model mix such as Toyota will be able to offset higher emission SUV and ute models with hybrids and battery electric vehicles.

But Isuzu Ute Australia with its two-model line-up of the D-Max and MU-X may find itself trading credits with another brand such as BYD or Tesla or pay a penalty.

**Under the Government's plan, an Australian NVES is expected to come into effect from January 1, 2025, and will see Australia catch up to comparable markets, including the United States, by around 2028.**

The Government's preferred option will reduce 369 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> by 2050.

That's equivalent to the last six years' worth of total emissions from light vehicles in Australia –and close to 100 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> abatement by 2035.

Under NVES, it says each vehicle manufacturer has a set average CO<sub>2</sub> target for the vehicles it produces, and which it must meet or beat.

Over time, the CO<sub>2</sub> target is lowered and to continue to meet or beat the target, companies must provide more choices of fuel-efficient, low-, or zero-emissions vehicles.

The target is applied nationally on average.

The Government says manufacturers

can still sell any vehicle type they choose but they'll need to sell more fuel-efficient models to offset any less efficient models they sell. If suppliers meet or beat their target, they'll receive credits.

If manufacturers sell more polluting cars than their target, they can trade credits with a different OEM, make it up over the next two years, or pay a penalty says the Government.

For example, if a manufacturer generates debits in 2025, it will be able to work in 2026 to generate credits to offset those debits.

## UTES AND 4X4S

The Government says the NVES will allow manufacturers to choose how they meet the emissions reduction target.

It says in other countries with a fuel efficiency standard, 4WDs and utes are still widely available.

Even though the EU has a stringent standard in place, vehicle models such as the Toyota HiLux, Toyota Land Cruiser and Ford Rangers continue to be sold. It says the situation is similar in the US.

## MORE ELECTRIC VEHICLES?

For Australians who want to buy EVs but currently can't afford them, the Government believes that the NVES will encourage car companies to bring more affordable options.

For example, it says though there are around 150 electric and plug-in hybrids available in the US, there are fewer than 100 on the market in Australia and only three battery electric vehicles are available in Australia with a retail price under \$40,000.

## THE NEW ZEALAND SITUATION

Depending on your point of view, the Clean Car legislation in New Zealand has been a massive success or an

exercise in why a government shouldn't interfere in a market.

The past 36 months have seen artificial highs in the sales of high and low-emission vehicles as New Zealand buyers rushed in to avoid paying fees on utes by a certain date or gather rebates on battery electric, plug-in hybrid, and hybrid vehicles by a prescribed date.

The New Zealand system was unique in that both the consumer and the manufacturer were rewarded/penalised, with the government taking a cut at the wholesale and retail end.

**At the retail end buyers of battery electric vehicles, plug-in hybrids, and hybrids received a subsidy of up to \$7000 under the Clean Car Discount while high emitters such as SUVs, utes, and luxury cars garnered a Clean Car Fee that was capped at around \$7000.**

At the wholesale end, in a similar vein to the proposed NVES, the previous Labour Government devised a national average target under the Clean Car Standard for the OEM with debits and credits applied but at a draconian level that would exceed US and European standards rather than catch up with them.

The incoming National coalition Government scrapped the rebate and the fees last December 31. It has now also proposed a review of the Clean Car Standard to hopefully bring the required scale of average emissions reduction back to a more real-world and achievable figure.

**The Albanese Government would do well to look at the New Zealand situation as a lesson in how not to implement an NVES, and ensure that the Government works with the OEM and stakeholders to ensure a fair and equitable outcome for all motorists.**

Kindest regards,

*Robert Barry*  
EDITOR AUTOTALK







# WOELDERS FAMILY SELLS MOTORAMA TO SERVCO

**H**awaiian company Servco Pacific Limited has acquired Queensland's Motorama Group from the Woelders family.

**However, Woelders will continue to operate the Madill Automotive Group on the Sunshine Coast.**

The Motorama Group's 18 locations will continue to operate under the Motorama name and will join Servco Australia's 23 dealerships.

Motorama Group was founded by **Jan and Anita Woelders** in 1960. Their son **John** then ran the company for 30 years, before passing it on to **Mark**, the third-generation managing director in 2007.

**The group has sold and serviced vehicles in Southeast Queensland for more than 63 years. It represents Toyota, Ford, Mitsubishi, Kia, Mazda, Nissan, MG, Jeep, and Chery.**

Motorama also pioneered large-scale used car retailing in Australia and sells used vehicles through its store, Big Box Cars.

The group generates revenues exceeding \$800 million per year and employs more than 700 staff across Brisbane; no jobs will be affected by the acquisition.

"We've always been proud of the Motorama Business, from a small Holden car dealership in Beenleigh with five employees to what has become one of Queensland's largest automotive groups," says **Mark Woelders**.



"The decision to sell was right for the family and we feel confident that the company is in great hands with Servco Australia.

"Servco has a similar ethos to business, which is to look after its employees and customers – key ingredients of our success," he says.

Servco Australia managing director **Nick Pappas** says the two companies' histories, values and goals are well-aligned.

Founded in 1919, Servco Pacific Inc. is Hawaii's largest private company with operations in mobility and musical instruments.

The company ranks among the top 15 automotive dealer groups in the America, with exclusive distributorships of Toyota, Lexus, and Subaru in Hawaii

and is the largest Toyota dealer group in Australia.

Servco's musical instruments businesses include Fender Musical Instruments Corporation, the global maker of Fender, Gretsch, Jackson, Squier, and EVH guitars, basses, and amplifiers, the Fender Play app, and Presonus, a music technology business.

Servco invests in Hui Car Share, hydrogen-based mobility, and Roland Corporation, manufacturer of electric keyboards, synthesizers, percussion and guitar amplifiers and sound effects.

**The company was recognised as a 2023 US Best Managed Company and one of the Best Places to Work in Hawaii for 19 consecutive years.**

# GOVERNMENT SETTING NEW VEHICLE EFFICIENCY STANDARDS

**A**ustralian automotive industry representatives have voiced mixed reactions to the Federal Government's proposed New Vehicle Efficiency Standard (NVES).

**Public submissions on the proposed standard close at 11.59 pm on March 4.**

Most welcome the move, but the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries (FCAI) and the Australian Automotive Dealer Association (AADA) want time to digest it, saying the matter is complicated.

Referring to the three options proposed by the Government, FCAI chief executive **Tony Weber** says the automotive industry has been seeking a fuel efficiency standard for many years but that the industry will take time to study the potential impacts.

"On the surface, the targets seeking a 60% improvement in emissions are very ambitious, and it will be a challenge to see if they're achievable taking into account the total cost of ownership," he says.

**"The preferred option suggests that Australia considers adopting the type of targets that are currently in place in the United States."**

"The targets in that country are supported by significant financial incentives yet the (Australian) discussion paper doesn't refer to any additional incentives to support the uptake of low-emission vehicles," Weber says.

"There's further analysis to do and we look forward to continuing to work with the Government on the development of a standard that's right for Australia and supports Australian consumers."

**The AADA says the NVES impact statement is very technical and considers various options, but the Government has said that it has a preferred option of reducing the emissions by more than 60% for passenger vehicles and light commercial vehicles in just five years.**

"On the surface this is an incredibly ambitious target which will be difficult to achieve especially for utes and large SUVs," says AADA chief executive **James Voortman**.

"This could have consequences for affordability and vehicle choice.

"Other countries have reduced new vehicle emissions over a much longer



timeframe, with credits built into their standards.

"They have also offered generous incentives universally available for consumers to buy low-emissions vehicles – the (Australian) Government's preferred option couldn't be more different," says Voortman.

**"We're concerned that this policy goes too far too fast and that consumers will be the big losers, as will the local automotive businesses."**

The AADA says it will study the impact statement to understand the findings and consult with its members, Australia's more than 3000 new car dealers.

The Motor Trades Association of Australia (MTAA) scores the Government's fuel efficiency standard seven out of 10, saying it will work to ensure settings allow for the adequate supply of utes and commercial vehicles in the early years.

**It calls for further apprentice and training support to service the two million electric vehicles (EVs) forecast by 2030 and for the Government to implement a fit-for-purpose Automotive Industry Code to ensure a smooth and fair transition.**

"The Government has had to balance two extremes – the car companies and the single focused EV lobby," says MTAA chief executive **Matt Hobbs**.

"It has taken three governments and 12 years to reach this point."

Hobbs says the argument is just about the fine details.

"Some adjustments are needed in the early years, especially in the treatment of utes."

Hobbs says that as stakeholders resolve EV supply and range issues in Australia, the next challenge is to implement the required workforce.

"A good first step is to make more apprentices eligible for the New Energy Apprentices Program."

The MTAA says it's concerned not all car companies will make the transition.

Australian automotive workers and small businesses need the Albanese government to have their back in this period of change with an Automotive Industry Code of Conduct to protect workers who are at the mercy of multinational companies, says the association.

"The Government must develop an Automotive Industry Code to give Australian workers and businesses a fair go," says Hobbs.

Meanwhile, the Australian Automobile Association (AAA) says the fuels and technologies driving the global car fleet are changing rapidly and have the potential to offer Australians greater vehicle choices, cleaner air, improved fuel security, and cheaper household bills.

AAA managing director **Michael Bradley** says the AAA and its members want Australians in the best possible position to adopt new vehicle technologies and choose the transport technology options that best suit their lifestyle, household budget, and commuting needs.

"The AAA encourages the Government to release its modelling so the millions of Australians to be affected by this change can understand exactly what it means for them."

The Electric Vehicle Council says the NVES' introduction promises greater choice and lower fuel bills for Australian motorists, adding it will incentivise car manufacturers to ensure all new cars they sell, on average, meet benchmarks for efficiency.

**"This means manufacturers can still sell vehicles with heavy emissions, but they must be offset by sales of low or zero-emission vehicles," the EVC says, adding Australia's cars use a third more petrol than American cars on average.**



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HAMDY ELSHANTOURY

## MASERATI RESTRUCTURES WAY IT SELLS CARS

**M**aserati is creating a new Overseas Region, to reconfigure the structure of its global market organisation.

It has appointed **Hamdy Elshantoury** as the new head of the Overseas region, while maintaining interim responsibility for the Middle East and Africa.

**Wong Yi Mui Wallace** becomes responsible for the Southeast Asia, Pacific, and India markets and **Marco Spadaro** takes responsibility for Eastern Europe and Latin America.

Maserati's new market organisation now consists of five regions: US and Canada (North America), Europe, China, Japan and Korea, and the newly created Overseas.

Maserati is redistributing some of the markets that previously were part of former regions and has merged them into a completely new one, with a marketing team.

The decision to add the new Overseas Region resulted from Maserati's commitment to serving every market, to implement focus, growth, and expanding relationships.

The aim is to seize every opportunity

and meet the differing requirements of the various business structures.

The region head and the regional functions will be based in Italy, at Maserati's headquarters in Modena.

**The central management team will connect to the new Overseas Region leadership team to make market support and decision-making faster and more effective.**

Conversely, the market management team will remain in the region with close contacts to its countries.

"We're pleased to begin the year with the announcement of a new global region and the appointment of Hamdy Elshantoury as its head," says Maserati chief executive **Davide Grasso**.

"Maserati operates in more than 70 markets around the world and the creation of a fifth region confirms the intention to give our business an even more precise configuration at a global level."

**It will allow Maserati to "better cover and respond to individual market requirements, and to give each area the attention it requires to improve its development and efficiency".**

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## GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES ELECTRIC VEHICLE TRANSITION INQUIRY

**T**he Government's Standing Committee on Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water has begun an inquiry into the transition to electric vehicles (EVs).

"Australian motorists are increasingly choosing EVs when purchasing a new car. The percentage of EVs sold is growing every year, moving to 7.2% of all new cars sold in 2023 up from less than 3% in 2022," says committee chair **MP Tony Zappia**.

**"The inquiry will consider the necessary resources, systems and infrastructure for this transition and the impacts of moving away from traditional vehicles."**

"The committee will also explore opportunities such as fuel savings and affordability for residents in outer regions to make this shift beneficial for

everyone.

**"Our focus will also be on the future of EV battery manufacturing, and we'll consider challenges on electricity consumption and demand and our limited EV supply compared to other countries."**

The committee will examine:

- the establishment of resources, systems and infrastructure required for the transition to EVs.
- the impact of moving from internal combustion engines vehicles, including fuel excise loss, existing auto industry component manufacturers, and the environment.
- the opportunities for fuel savings, such as by combining EVs with other consumer energy technologies and savings for outer suburban and

regional motorists.

- the impact on electricity consumption and demand.
- the opportunities for expanding EV battery manufacturing, recycling, disposal, and safety, and other opportunities for Australia in the automotive value chain for the ongoing maintenance of EVs.
- the impact of Australia's limited EV supply compared to peer countries, and any other relevant matters.

The committee is seeking written submissions providing recommendations relating the inquiry terms of reference by Friday, March 22.

**Further information about the committee's inquiry is available on the inquiry webpage.**



## MTAA WANTS INDUSTRY INPUT INTO INQUIRY

**T**he Motor Trades Association of Australia (MTAA) says it has long called for a zero- and low-emissions vehicle commission with a focus on industry transition.

**It hopes the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Waters inquiry will go some way to delivering a similar outcome.**

"Australians are buying more EVs each year, so MTAA encourages a robust discussion on how motorists can best move to a lower emissions future," says MTAA chief executive **Geoff Gwilym**.

"It's essential, however, that those who know EVs best – the automotive industry – contribute to the inquiry.

**"MTAA welcomes direct engagement with the inquiry to ensure the committee considers issues related to the automotive retail industry transition – which is made up of predominantly small businesses."**

"The inquiry must consider not only consumers and energy providers but also the automotive service, retail, and repair sectors, which are best placed to make the transition successful.

"Electrification is the biggest technology shift the automotive

industry has experienced in over 100 years and will substantially affect those working in it.

"It's vital, then, that the inquiry considers the requirements of Australia's automotive workforce of around 380,000 people as motorists transition to this new technology.

**"MTAA recommends a strategic approach to transition and that the Federal Government allocates adequate resources – including funds for upskilling the automotive workforce – to ensure its success," he says.**





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# MERCEDES CONSIDERS SELLING GERMAN DEALERSHIPS

**E**uropean media report that Mercedes-Benz is considering selling off its company-owned network of dealerships in Germany.

**This follows the 2015 sale of its retail branches in seven east German cities to Stern Auto which is part of the LSH Auto Group based in Hong Kong.**

Currently, Mercedes operates 20 German dealerships which run at a profit and employ more than 8000 people.

In 2016 Mercedes sold its English dealerships in Birmingham and Manchester to LSH Auto.

According to Reuters and Handelsblatt since then it sold all its showrooms in Britain, Italy, Spain, Belgium, and the Czech Republic to independent retailers.

**Mercedes told Reuters that the review is open-ended and step-by-step and its supervisory board must reach an agreement with the employees for the sale, but a fundamental agreement could be hammered out by mid-year.**

The process is likely to take several years because Mercedes-Benz Group is ruling out a sale to purely financial



investors.

It says potential buyers should have demonstrable expertise in car sales, pursue long-term perspectives, be prepared to invest significant money, and be open to works councils and unions.

Mercedes told Handelsblatt there are no plans to cut jobs or close branches.

"There will be no lay-offs in the event of a possible reorganisation," read a statement from the company.

**All Mercedes-Benz Group AG retail branch employees who are covered by a collective bargaining agreement are also protected from operational dismissals until the end of 2029.**

## COMMITTEE FINALISES CODE REWRITE BRIEF

**T**he Motor Vehicle Insurance and Repair Industry's Code of Conduct Committee (CAC) says it's made "significant progress" in response to the independent review conducted by **Dr Michael Schaper**.

The CAC has finalised a brief for a rewrite of the Code and is seeking legal advice on governance options to external parties who will report to the committee early this year.

"Dr Schaper's review called for improvements to the Code which would see it simplified while remaining legally rigorous," says CAC chair **Stephen Jenkins**.

"To this end, the CAC has sought input from external advisors.

**"The review also called for the appointment of an independent chair and deputy chair, as well as clarifying the committee's governance and voting.**

"It's prudent the committee is

informed with sound legal advice to ensure reform of the Code achieves the best possible outcomes for all industry participants."

In response to Dr Schaper's recommendation and industry feedback to update the Code website, the committee is working on improvements to the user experience.

**Since the report was received formally in May 2023, the CAC has met several times to discuss Dr Schaper's 15 recommendations.**

Dr Schaper's report provided recommendations which focused on:

1. The effectiveness of dispute resolution processes under the MVIRI Code.
2. Awareness and accessibility of the Code.
3. Compliance with the Code.
4. Governance of the Code and the CAC.

5. Other issues pertinent to the effective governance and operation of the Code.

During the review, stakeholders were consulted, including government bodies, regulators such as Small Business Commissioners, members of the Code Administration Committee, and the insurance and repair industry.

**Since its inception in 2006, the MVIRI Code of Conduct has undergone multiple reviews to ensure it remains fit for purpose. The last review was in 2017.**

A copy of Dr Schaper's report can be found on the Motor Vehicle Insurance and Repair Industry Code of Conduct website at [www.abrcode.com.au/](http://www.abrcode.com.au/) resource-centre as well as the MTAA website at [www.mtaa.com.au](http://www.mtaa.com.au) and the ICA [www.insurancecouncil.com.au](http://www.insurancecouncil.com.au).



# USED CARS OUTSELL NEW BY 1.7 - REPORT

**L**ast year, 1.7 used cars were retailed for every new car sold in Australia, a new report says.

**The Australian Automotive Dealer Association and AutoGrab released their first annual Automotive Insights Report (AIR) at the end of January.**

It shows that 2,074,535 used cars were sold in Australia in 2023.

"This data demonstrates the significance of the used car market in Australia with more than two million used cars sold in 2023," says AADA chief executive **James Voortman**.

"For every new car sold 1.7 used cars were sold, confirming that most Australians are deciding to purchase used cars,

"The combined new and used car market saw almost 3.3 million cars sold in 2023 and it's important for industry participants, regulators and policymakers to look at the entire market when making decisions" he said.

AutoGrab chief commercial officer **Saxon Odgers** says demand for used cars remained "robust in 2023, attributed to our growing population and cost of living pressures reducing buying power".

"The good news for those looking to purchase a used car is that we've seen a clear downward price trajectory since March 2023 following a surge of new vehicle supply, with this pattern anticipated to persist through the first half of 2024.

**"This represents a win for consumers who now have a choice when looking to buy their next car as new cars are available for delivery and used cars are more accessible."**

The Automotive Insights Report shows that for 2023:

- Across Australia 2,013,465 vehicles were listed for sale in 2023 and in that period 2,074,535 were sold.
- Exceptional demand for used cars, with 34.4% growth since January, hitting its peak in November 2023.
- Petrol and diesel vehicles accounted for more than 96% of used car sales, with hybrids, (2.7%), EVs (0.7%) and PHEVs (0.1%) growing from a low base.
- Toyota was the top-selling used car

brand with a 16.6% market share, followed by Mazda (8.2%), and Ford (8%).

- The Ford Ranger was the top-selling vehicle with 65,938 units, pipping the Toyota HiLux (65,852) by only 86 units.
- Used car prices declined 1% to 1.5% monthly, which was accompanied by a rise in days to sell.
- The used EV market saw an almost doubling in supply and sales. However, EVs represent only 0.7% of the market share, have below-average retained value; and take longer to sell than petrol and diesel cars.

**"When diving into retained values of vehicles, a topic that interests many consumers and dealers, we can see that across all age groups, uses and light commercial vehicles held their values above the average.**

"Passenger vehicles across all age groups tracked close to the average, while SUVs were the worst performing vehicle segments in terms of retained value, sitting well below average for all age groups," he says.

## AUSTRALIA'S YOUNG AND VOLATILE USED EV MARKET

Australia's used electric vehicle market has been categorised as "young and volatile" by the 2023 Automotive Industry Report (AIR) compiled by the Australian Automotive Dealers Association (AADA) and AutoGrab.

"Prices of used electric vehicles dropped more than conventional fuel-type vehicles in 2023," says AutoGrab chief commercial officer **Saxon Odgers**.

"The days taken to sell also increased by 50% from March to December, moving from 50 days to 75.

**"In spite of a 0.7% market share, we've seen a significant increase in available volume compared to the previous year.**

"We expect to see the volume of used EVs increase in the upcoming months as the market share for new EVs continues to expand and this flows through to the used car market," he says.

EV sales amounted to 12,051 units and took 0.7% of the total used car market in 2023.

Tesla constituted 36.4% of used EV

sales followed by MG with 46%, and Nissan with 8.2%.

The AIR says the volatility of the used EV market is potentially attributable to several factors.

**The implementation of the FBT exemption in November 2022 applicable solely to EVs and PHEVs first sold and delivered after July 1, 2022. That prompted owners to sell their non-exempt vehicles and potentially acquire newer or identical vehicles through novated leasing for more economical ownership. That surge in supply contributed to an increase in the availability of EVs.**

Uncertainty surrounding the battery health of used EVs deterred prospective secondhand buyers.

Pricing competition among major EV manufacturers coupled with the introduction of more new models in Australia led to a reduction in the prices of new EVs impacting used car prices negatively.

**As a result, EV prices experienced the most substantial decline in 2023, accompanied by prolonged days to sell compared to conventional fuel vehicles.**

For EVs aged less than two years, the price peaked in February at 98.1% RV but fell by 15.6% to 82.8% RV in December 2023.

This considerable drop in value is significant, considering that typically EVs have higher recommended retail prices than equivalent internal combustion engine models.

During this time the number of days needed to sell a used EV increased by 25 days to 75 days.

Used EVs aged between two and four years also experienced a substantial decline, dropping by 23.4% in price from the March peak of 75.2% (excluding an anomaly in January) to a December low of 57.6%.

They have also witnessed the highest days to sell compared to any other fuel types and age groups as of December 2023.

**It's important to note that the price trend of EVs can be quite volatile every month largely attributed to this smaller sample size compared to other fuel types, the report says.**

# BMW PREMIUM CERTIFIED USED CAR SALES UP 33%

**T**he number of pre-owned vehicles sold in BMW Group Australia's Premium Certified program last year grew rapidly.

**Total Premium Certified used car sales reached 7949, a 33% increase on 2022.**

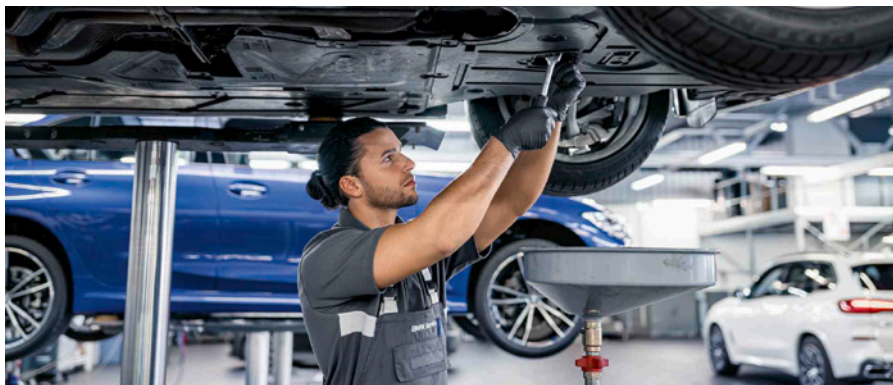
The result added to BMW Group's overall strong year when new car sales rose more than 15% and enabled BMW to reclaim the lead as title bestselling German premium car brand in Australia.

BMW says Premium Certified pre-owned vehicles undergo a stringent assessment including a 360-degree mechanical and safety check and come with a verified service history.

They also have a six-month/10,000km service-free period, and 24 months of roadside assistance and accident management.

**The program encompasses vehicles with all powertrains, including fully electric BMWs.**

BMW X range vehicles accounted for more than 50% of used car sales share in 2023 with 3993 vehicles sold. The 3 Series sports sedan recorded



1422 sales and nearly 18% of the total share.

**There were also 28 BMW 6 Series with an average age of nearly seven years sold as BMW Premium Certified cars, endorsing "the thoroughness of the program's vehicle check and service history validation", BMW says.**

Late last year, BMW Premium Certified used cars were made available with Full Circle finance from BMW Financial Services.

The chief feature of Full Circle finance is the Guaranteed Future Value (GFV).

When customers sign a finance

contract, they commit to a lump sum final payment equivalent to the GFV. Then the customer then has the option to return the vehicle at the end of the finance period, provided fair wear and tear and kilometre requirements are met.

Also, customers can tailor their loan by choosing finance terms, annual kilometre allowance, and repayment frequency.

**At the end of the loan, BMW buyers can retain the vehicle by paying out or refinancing the GFV amount, return it, or trade it on another BMW.**

## IVECO DAILY SALES SOAR IN 2023

**T**ruck Industry Council data shows that last year the Iveco Daily achieved 1199 sales, up 319 units or 36.25% from 2022 in a segment that contracted by 1.6%.

**The total includes sales of Iveco's 70C cab/chassis with a seven-tonne GVM, a four-tonne payload, a weight classification no other European manufacturer offers in Australia.**

The strong overall performance resulted partly from a model refresh last year that saw Daily provide additional safety and comfort features, and revised styling.

Given its configuration where the driver and front passengers are seated behind the front wheels rather than directly on top – as happens in traditional cab-over-light trucks – the Daily offers a more supple and compliant ride and car-like dynamics.

Those features and its robust truck underpinnings and a full suite of safety equipment are attracting more

buyers to the Daily range, says Iveco national manager – light sales, **Ben Osborn.**

"There's a growing awareness in the market about the advantages that Daily provides owners compared to many of its competitors.

**"Along with having the right specifications for a range of demanding applications – including the availability of features such as rear differential lock and rear airbag suspension – the Iveco Daily is also extremely comfortable, ensuring less fatigue for owners who spend long hours behind the wheel..."**

"Variants such as the work-ready single and dual cab Tradie-Made models which come with fully built aluminium trays straight from the dealership, are also providing flexibility and extra convenience for buyers."

Osborn says a growing range of support offerings, including optional extended warranties, Iveco



Maintenance Agreements, and in-house financing are available for the Daily.

"This interest in a hassle-free ownership experience extends to the way (customers are) purchasing their vehicles – customers who don't require a specialist body are increasingly opting for the efficiency of a completely built truck. Iveco is looking to do more in the 'work ready' space in 2024."

**Soon, Iveco will add to the new seven-tonne 4x4 range, and a preliminary allocation of the electric eDaily will begin work with selected customers.**





# GENESIS OPENS NEW SHOWROOMS IN BRISBANE, GOLD COAST, AND MELBOURNE

**G**enesis Motors Australia has opened three new retail showrooms: Genesis Melbourne, Genesis Brisbane, and Genesis Gold Coast.

**The new showrooms complement the brand's flagship Studios in Sydney and Melbourne, and existing retail outlets in Perth and Parramatta.**

Like a Genesis vehicle, the minimalist showrooms each embody a Korean aesthetic philosophy that emphasises the "Beauty of White Space".

Starring against this backdrop, under bright lights, are the Korean lines and contours of Genesis' range of vehicles (G70, G80, Electrified G80, GV60, GV70, Electrified GV70 and GV80), which are also available to test-drive.

The Genesis X Convertible Concept, which is set to make its Australian debut at the international sailing competition SailGP (February 24 to 25 in Sydney), will embark on a roadshow across the eastern seaboard.

The award-winning droptop will be displayed in the Sydney and Melbourne

Studios, before heading north to the Brisbane and Gold Coast showrooms.

The brand's first folding-hardtop concept, the X Convertible completes the X concept trilogy. It's built on EV architecture shared with the X Concept and X Speedium Coupe Concept and recently was named a winner at the Good Design Awards in America.

The expansion of the Genesis retail network is in line with the growing Genesis model range, and Australia's increasing appetite for the luxury Korean brand.

"Our new showrooms showcase the Genesis line-up in a stylish, minimalist

environment, where customers can experience the unprecedented luxury that's at the core of everything our brand does," says the head of Genesis Motors Australia, **Justin Douglass**.

"We warmly invite our guests in Queensland and Melbourne to the new Genesis showrooms to experience our vehicles for themselves."

**The Genesis retail network allows every customer to interact with the brand in the way that suits them, whether that's online, in a flagship Studio, or at one of five showrooms.**

## FLAGSHIP GENESIS STUDIOS

Genesis Sydney Studio	185 Pitt St, Sydney NSW 2000
Genesis Melbourne Studio	287 Lonsdale St, Melbourne VIC 3000

## GENESIS SHOWROOMS

Genesis Melbourne	405 High St, Prahran VIC 3181
Genesis Brisbane	825 Ann St, Fortitude Valley QLD 4006
Genesis Gold Coast	78 Nerang St, Southport QLD 4215
Genesis Perth	826 Hay St, Perth WA 6000
Genesis Parramatta	87 Church St, Parramatta NSW 2150



## OPTIMUS GROUP TO ACQUIRE AUTOCARE SERVICES

**O**ptimus Group Australia has agreed to buy 100% of the shares of the Autocare Services business from LINX Cargo Care Group.

**Autocare Services is one of Australia's largest integrated automotive logistics providers and has been providing comprehensive end-to-end automotive solutions for more than 60 years.**

Those services include vehicle transport, storage, and processing for some of Australia's largest manufacturers, automotive dealerships, rental and fleet companies, and other automotive customers.

Aligning with Optimus Group's diversification strategy, the acquisition of Autocare is a significant milestone for the group, reinforcing its commitment to expanding its business portfolio and enhancing its capabilities.

**Autocare brings expertise, a strong customer base, and a talented team to the Optimus Group.**

Optimus Group Australia spokesperson **Darren Bowler** says the strategic move "aligns with our vision to grow and diversify Optimus Group".

"We're excited by the opportunities

that Autocare Services brings to Optimus Group, and we look forward to integrating their expertise into our operations to better serve our current, and future business partners across the entire automotive supply chain."

Under the agreement, Optimus will leverage its resources and industry knowledge to invest in enhancing Autocare's capabilities and services.

**It's anticipated to bring synergies that will create operational efficiencies and enable the group to deliver additional value-added services to Autocare's customers.**

"Optimus Group operates a global business model in the automotive sector, with operations spread across Japan, New Zealand, and Australia offering a full range of end-to-end automotive solutions," says Optimus Group president **Nobuya Yamanaka**.

"This acquisition demonstrates Optimus Group's dedication to expanding its presence and delivering innovative solutions to meet the evolving needs of the automotive industries within Australia."

Recently, Optimus bought Autopact one of Australia's largest privately



owned automotive dealer groups, and announced its acquisition of the controlling interest in the digital online automotive sales platform, Auto Trader New Zealand.

**Also, it holds a 30% stake in the OzCar used car business in Australia, and a 60% stake in Blue Flag, an automotive data supplier to the industry.**





## NINE ISUZU TRUCK DEALERS AWARDED FOR EXCELLENCE

**N**ine of Isuzu Trucks' top-performing dealerships are being rewarded with Dealer Excellence Awards as the brand marked its 35th consecutive year as Australian truck sales leader.

**Isuzu's annual Excellence Awards evaluate overall yearly performance and scrutinise dealerships across key elements, including sales, parts, customer experience, training, and business management.**

The nine winning dealerships for 2023 came from a mix of metro and regional locations with four from Victoria, two from Western Australia and one each from South Australia, New South Wales, and the ACT.

The Isuzu Trucks 2023 Dealer Excellence Program winners were:

- Ballarat Isuzu (VIC)
- Canberra Isuzu (ACT)
- Geelong Isuzu (VIC)
- Major Motors (WA)
- Northeast Isuzu (SA)
- Patterson Cheney Trucks (VIC)
- South West Isuzu (WA)
- Wagga Motors (NSW)
- Westar Truck Centre (VIC)

Isuzu Australia director and chief

operating officer, Andrew Harbison, praised the dealers for their efforts to provide the best buying and aftersales experience for Isuzu truck owners.

The network exceeded expectations with 13,658 new trucks sold during 2023.

"IAL is committed to delivering the very best truck experience for customers across the country, evidenced by our accomplishment of 35 years as Australia's truck market leader," Harbison says.

**"And it's the consistent professionalism and expertise of the dealer network that helps to achieve these great results for the company and for our customers."**

"We're delighted to award nine of the top dealerships in 2023 and acknowledge their efforts in going above and beyond."

"It's great to see winners from previous years returning but I'd like to extend my congratulations to all dealerships who participated and earned a top spot in the rankings," he says.

"The Excellence Program plays an integral role in cultivating Isuzu Trucks' industry-leading sales and aftersales approach."

"It serves to remind dealerships to constantly improve their standards across all areas, while promoting healthy competition within the network."

"This all works to the greater good of ensuring Isuzu customers receive outstanding service—and that Isuzu remains a popular brand of choice for both new and returning truck buyers," he says.

IAL sales and aftersales chief Ben Lasry said that with more than 70 locations in the Isuzu dealer network, the awards are hard to come by.

"The standards and criteria we set are very high—which is a testament to how hard these teams are working for their customers and businesses in the local region."

**"Isuzu Trucks recently introduced a reinvigorated Care program, which has been helping to take the ownership experience to a whole new level and showing that as always, Isuzu has the customer front of mind."**

"2024 is well and truly underway with everyone at Isuzu revved up to support trades, services and businesses great and small across the Australian states and territories," he says.

# MTAA SPEARHEADS INDUSTRY RESPONSE TO COVID-19 INQUIRY

**T**he Motor Traders' Association of Australia (MTAA) says it's the sole automotive industry group to respond to the Government's COVID-19 Inquiry.

**The submission follows thorough consultation based on insights across the MTAA network, including perspectives from Victoria, the state affected most profoundly by stringent trading restrictions and prolonged lockdowns.**

In a period where community support and collaboration are paramount, being part of the local Motor Trades Association (MTA) has never been more critical says MTAA chief executive **Matthew Hobbs**.

The MTAA's submission is as a testament to the collective strength and resilience of the automotive retail

sector, ensuring its voice resonates with the Federal Government, he says.

The submission aims to provide valuable insights into how the Government can respond effectively to future pandemics or unforeseen and unexpected events.

"The pandemic had government and industry scrambling for solutions to meet the needs of the community," Hobbs says.

**"There's no doubt, looking back, that the automotive industry played a critical role in keeping people and the economy moving.**

"As we reflect on those years we need to learn from those experiences and ensure we're prepared to move swiftly and effectively if it ever happens again."



## AUSTRALIA POLESTAR 4 ONLINE SALES START

**A**ustralian online sales for the Polestar 4 coupe SUV have begun with a starting indicative price of \$81,500 for the Long-range single motor and \$93,050 for the Long-range dual motor version.

Production is planned to start towards mid-2024 with the first Australian deliveries expected from August.

The Polestar 4 is positioned between Polestar 2 and Polestar 3 in terms of size and price.

Built on the Sustainable Experience Architecture (SEA) developed by Geely Holding, Polestar 4 is a D-segment SUV coupé with a large body and a 2999mm wheelbase. Overall length is 4840mm, width is 2139mm and height 1534mm.

By eliminating the rear window, the standard full-length glass roof stretches beyond the rear occupants' heads.

A secondary media and climate control screen is mounted between the front seats to allow rear occupants to use it.

The rear-view mirror is replaced by a high-definition screen that shows a real-time feed from a roof-mounted rear camera.

That gives a far wider field of view than can be experienced in modern cars. The digital feed can be deactivated to allow drivers to see rear occupants if needed.

The car's colour and material choices include new exterior colours Storm and Electron, and a unique interior colour, Mist.



### PERFORMANCE

The Polestar 4 is the fastest production car the brand has developed to date. It can complete the 0-100 km/h sprint in 3.8 seconds and the maximum power output is 400kW.

The single-motor variant is rear-wheel drive. Semi-active suspension features in the dual-motor version for an additional layer of adjustment between comfort and performance dynamics.

Wheel sizes range from 20 to 22 inches, with tyres supplied by Pirelli and Michelin, depending on configuration.

A 100kWh battery is fitted to both long-range versions. The Long-range Dual motor features 400kW/686Nm and a preliminary range target of up to 580km WLTP[4].

A disconnect clutch allows the car to disengage the front electric motor when not needed, to maximise range and efficiency.

The Long-range single-motor version features a 200kW and 343Nm motor at the rear and a preliminary range target of up to 610km WLTP.





## SUBARU OPENS PRE-ORDERS FOR SOLTERRA

**S**ubaru Australia says the first shipment of its new all-electric Solterra SUV has arrived with demonstrator vehicles being shipped to dealers around the country.

**Solterra, Subaru's first battery electric vehicle is available in two variants, AWD and AWD Touring, priced from \$77,990 and \$83,690 respectively.**

Both variants come standard with a five-year service plan, five-year roadside assistance, carpet mat set, cargo tray and a 2kW (8 Amp) AC charging cable with Ten Amp wall plug for charging.

Powered by a high voltage 71.4kW lithium-ion battery, the Solterra delivers a maximum power output of 160kW and 337Nm of torque.

**Per Australian Design Rules (ADR81/02), the Solterra has an NEDC test range of 485km.**

Charging the Solterra from zero to 80% using a 150kW DC charger takes about 30 minutes.

Using a single-phase 7kW AC charger from zero to 100% takes about nine and via an 11kW three-phase about six and a half hours.

The Solterra can operate on variety of road surfaces, thanks to its 212mm ground clearance and Dual Mode X-Mode that works with Symmetrical All-Wheel Drive (AWD) to provide high levels of grip and control.

Exclusive to the Solterra AWD Touring is a panoramic glass sunroof.

**The Subaru New Vehicle Warranty period on high-voltage batteries for Subaru Electric vehicles is eight years/160,000 kilometres, whichever comes first.**

## TOYOTA HALTS DIESEL VEHICLE SHIPMENTS

**C**ertification irregularities at Toyota Industries Corporation (TICO) which develops diesel engines for Toyota, has caused the manufacturer to halt shipping vehicles equipped with these powertrains.

Ten models are using the affected engines globally, including six in Japan.

Toyota Australia is seeking information from head office in Japan on any impact on local vehicles.

"We've been informed that there's no variation in the power, torque or

other powertrain-related values," a Toyota Australia spokesperson has been quoted as saying.

"In addition, there's no compromise to the emissions, safety, or driveability of the vehicles."

Toyota Japan says it recognises the gravity of the certification irregularities at TICO, which follow some at Daihatsu.

An internal investigation found that irregularities occurred during the horsepower output testing for the certification of three diesel engine models for automobiles that Toyota had commissioned from TICO.

During certification testing, the horsepower output performance of engines was measured using ECUs with software that differed from that used for mass production engines so that results could make values appear smoother with less variation.

Toyota says it had re-verified the mass-produced products manufactured at the plant and confirmed that the affected engines and vehicles meet engine performance output standards.

It says there's no need to stop using the affected engines or vehicles.





# NATIONAL 4X4 OUTDOORS SHOW RETURNS TO BRISBANE IN MARCH

**T**he National 4x4 Outdoors Show will return to the Brisbane Showgrounds from March 15 to 17.

Showcasing products from the 4x4 aftermarket to the latest campers, caravans, and accessories, the event will also feature interactive displays, informative presentations, and live entertainment.

"We're thrilled to be bringing the show back to the Brisbane Showgrounds this March, and have a plethora of new, improved and exciting features bound to excite even the most seasoned outdoor lover," says event director, Jon Perry.

"Aussies love nothing more than hitting the open road and heading out bush for a few days of camping.

**"Our show ensures they're fully equipped with all the right information, tools, and accessories to make their trip easy and enjoyable.**

"To help them on their way, there will once again be a wide range of show-only specials and bargains, together with an array of interactive displays, tips, and insider hacks, reinforcing the event's reputation as a must-attend," he says.

## EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

Serving as a platform for Australia's

leading off-roading personalities, the Outback stage will feature 4WD 24/7 hosts **Shaun and Graham, Pat Callinan, Matt Baker** from The Explore Life, **Jase Andrews** from All 4 Adventure, **Brianna and Bridget** from Red Dirt Diary, and **Tyler Thompson**.

A perennial favourite, the Proving Ground will offer attendees insights into vehicle recovery techniques and tips from the experienced 4WD Queensland team. Motorama's team will provide a unique off-road test drive experience.

**Black Snake Productions will take centre stage with the Wildlife Encounter, presenting informative and hands-on shows, offering attendees the chance to get up close and personal with Australia's unique native animals.**

Following its successful launch at the Sydney and Melbourne shows last year, Mount Maxxis will make its presence felt in Brisbane, featuring driving demonstrations by MadMatt to equip attendees with the skills and confidence to explore challenging terrains.

For thrill-seekers, the Isuzu Iron Summit will showcase an Isuzu MU-X climbing a 45-degree incline, levelling off, and then descending at a

45-degree angle – a fusion of carnival thrill ride and performance test.

The Outback Bar will host live music from Melbourne Country-Rock crooner **Cush Ryder**, offering a refreshing break before diving back into exploring the top products and deals. **Alex Laneway**, the dedicated food truck alley, will cater to culinary cravings.

There will be free entry for kids under 16, with the Kids Zone managed by Physi Kids ensuring continuous entertainment for the younger audience.

Participants can showcase their vehicles and vie for cash prizes and bragging rights during the Club 4x4 Insurance Show 'n' Shine.

Ticket sales will be available exclusively online, with single-day tickets purchased before the show beginning on March 15, attracting a 15% discount using code: **CATCHYA**.

Two-day and three-day passes are also available, with children under 16 years admitted free, by pre-registration.

For ticket sales and further details, visit the interactive website at **4x4show.com.au/Brisbane**.





# NSW APPRENTICE HEADS TO WORLDSKILLS COMPETITION

**M**otor Traders Association of New South Wales (MTA NSW) apprentice **Lockie Hipkins** will represent Australia at the 47th WorldSkills International Competition in Lyon, France, this September.

**Hipkins, from Ballina, was picked for the 2024 Skillaroos Training Squad after his performance in the Autobody Repair category at the WorldSkills National Championships in Melbourne.**

The Skillaroos squad will undergo rigorous training in preparation for the international competition.

The first training camp was held last November, with others scheduled throughout the year.

MTA NSW chief executive **Stavros Yallouridis** says "Lockie's success is a testament to the commitment and expertise our apprentices bring to the automotive industry.

**"We're incredibly proud of him and look forward to watching him shine on the international stage representing Australia.**

"MTA NSW is committed to supporting and nurturing the next generation of automotive professionals.

"Lockie's achievements emphasise the quality of training and opportunities we provide to our apprentices."

Hipkins says he's "honoured to represent Australia at the 47th WorldSkills International Competition and will give my all to make everyone proud on the global stage.

"I've had the privilege of learning from some of the best in the industry, and I owe a debt of gratitude to my mentors who have shared their expertise and guided me on this path."

MTA NSW RTO general manager Ian Price says the group is "immensely proud of Lockie's achievements and the calibre of talent our organisation helps to nurture.

**"Lockie's success is a personal triumph while reinforcing our commitment as an organisation to shaping the future of the automotive industry."**

MTA NSW is funding Hipkin's trip by covering the cost of his flights, accommodation, and training ahead of the event.

MTA NSW was a sponsor of last year's edition of the WorldSkills National Championships, which are seen as the most significant trades and skills competition in Australia.

MTA NSW had six apprentices representing the organisation at the event.

Hipkins took home a silver medal in the Autobody Repair category, Newcastle



apprentice Luke Callaway achieved a bronze medal in Auto Electrical, and spray painting apprentice Neha Singh received a Certificate Of Excellence for her outstanding performance in the Auto Refinishing competition.

# RPM APPOINTS JAFFE CHAIR OF REFRESHED BOARD

**C**urrent director **Lawrence Jaffe** is RPM Automotive Group's new chair replacing Grant Carman who remains on the board as a director.

**Jaffe is a co-founder of RPM Automotive and a major shareholder, with more than 25 years' experience in automotive.**

He was RPM Australasia chief executive until 2015 when the group sold its largest subsidiaries.

Jaffe then became chair until the company listed on the ASX, before re-joining the executive team.

He has extensive expertise in finance coupled with a proven track record of building and scaling businesses.

"This board refresh signifies the company's transition as it matures into a new era of leadership," says RPM managing director and chief executive **Clive Finkelstein**.

It builds on the revitalisation of the senior executive team with the appointment of **Guy Nicholls** as director and chief operating officer and **Rebecca Payne** as chief financial officer. "These changes highlight the increased focus on operational excellence as we scale RPM for our next phase of growth," says Finkelstein.

## CHALLENGING TRADING CONDITIONS

In spite of challenging trading conditions, RPM has reported increased revenue and earnings for the first half of 2021 (1H, FY24).

In a trading update for the six months to December 31, 2023, RPM increased its guidance for FY24, saying revenue is up 4% to \$29 million in Q2 FY24, gross margin is up 280 basis points (BPS) to 34.4% (H1 FY23: 31.6%).

Those increases were driven by ongoing benefits from scale, operational optimisation, and disciplined procurement management.

Earnings growth is \$5.9 million – up 37.2% (H1 FY23 was \$4.3 million).

**RPM's wholesale tyre division has been strengthened with the acquisition of Chapel Corner Tyres.**

Restructuring cost benefits were \$1.5 million in annualised cost savings, revenue is expected to exceed \$130 million, and the EBITDA guidance range increased to \$11 to \$13 million (prior



\$10.5–\$12 million).

"Over the half, we continued our focus on optimising RPM for its next phase of growth," Finkelstein says.

**"We strive for operational excellence and efficiency across the business, and I believe we're now well placed to drive further growth and margin expansion."**

"In the first half of FY24, gross profit margin increased to 34.4%, up 280 BPS on PCP, and we expect to deliver a similar margin for the full year, benefitting from scale, cross-selling opportunities and further diversification of our product range," he says.

"Our wholesale tyre division is actively expanding its geographic reach across Australia, particularly in Victoria through the successful integration of

Chapel Corner Tyres.

"Further, it is pleasing to see growth across our performance and accessories division over the half, as new partnerships and initiatives strengthen our market presence and enrich our product offerings.

"Revenue for the first half of the FY24 was \$57.4 million, up 3.1% on the same period last year, reflecting RPM's success is growing sales in spite of ongoing challenges, with difficult trading conditions impacting the broader market and retail in general," he says.

**RPM intends to release its audited financial results for the six months ended December 31, 2023, on February 26.**





## EXPO ELECTRIFIED ZONE BUILDS ON WORKSHOP OF THE FUTURE

**A** new Expo Electrified Zone at the 2024 Australian Auto Aftermarket Expo and Collision Repair Expo will present EV/hybrid service and repair on a whole new scale.

**The Expo Electrified Zone builds on the Workshop of the Future area which ran at the Expo in 2022.**

Presented by the Australian Automotive Aftermarket Association (AAAA), the exhibition will be held at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre from April 11 to 13.

The Expo Electrified Zone will offer opportunities to learn about EV and hybrid service and repair with hands-on demonstrations including live testing of EV motors and generators. It will be delivered by The Automotive Technician's (TaT) EV and Hybrid Network.

**Designed to give attendees exposure to the latest EV technology and techniques, the zone will feature the latest in EV tools and workshop equipment, EV Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and display a Ford F-150 Lightning EV, provided by the Auto Innovation Centre (AIC).**

"The value of getting ready for the EV evolution has never been clearer,

and excitement around this new and rapidly evolving technology is building quickly," says AAAA director of membership, marketing and events, Tiffany Conway.

"We're providing the Expo Electrified Zone for technicians and workshop owners wanting to get ahead of the curve and seeking the chance to learn from teachers and state-of-the-art equipment."

TaT director **Jeff Smit** says Expo Electrified is a must for anyone looking to make sure they can best service their clients.

**"Electrified vehicles are currently transforming from a trend to the mainstream, reshaping the roads and the way we can service our customers."**

"We're excited to bring hands-on component testing to the Expo Electrified Zone, allowing you to carry out real tests on real EV and Hybrid motors."

Conway says the pace of technological advancement, and with vehicles increasingly becoming hybrid or EV powered the time is right for this field to have its own dedicated space at the Expo.

Also, the Expo will also feature a Technical Training Program, led by



international diagnostic superstars Diagnose Dan, from the Diagnose Dan YouTube channel, and Sean Tipping, host of the Automotive Diagnostic Podcast in America.

The program will train attendees on the most in-demand and challenging automotive diagnostic topics.

Other training programs will be led by industry experts.

The Expo will include the Australian Auto Aftermarket Awards banquet and breakfast, a networking event, a vehicle display area, celebrity appearances, competitions.

The Expo is sponsored by Repco, and to access the Expo Electrified Zone and all the free-to-attend events, visit [www.autoaftermarketexpo.com.au](http://www.autoaftermarketexpo.com.au) to register.



## BRIDGESTONE NAMES 2023'S TOP-PERFORMING STORES

**B**ridgestone Select Tyre & Auto Belmont took the top prize in the Bridgestone Drive excellence program for 2023.

And the Perth store owned by **Martin de Villiers** was named the National Franchise of the Year.

Bridgestone Service Centre Kyneton, owned by **Roger Jukes**, was awarded National Service Centre of the Year – the top prize for regional stores – and **Chris Bollins** and the team at Bridgestone Service Centre Rockhampton, won the National Truck Store of the Year.

**de Villiers and the Belmont team have been on the rise over the past 18 months, winning New Store of the Year in the 2022 Drive program before going on to the highest honour in this year's rankings.**

de Villiers says the Store of the Year title is a reflection of his team's commitment to serving Bridgestone Select Tyre & Auto Belmont's customers.

"Receiving this award is not just a recognition of our hard work and dedication but also a testament to the team that makes our store a success," de Villiers says.

"This accolade inspires us to continue providing exceptional products and



services to our customers and truly motivates us to reach even greater heights in the future."

**The Drive program showcases the most successful stores within the Bridgestone network, evaluating customer service, store presentation, operational excellence, and use of the Bridgestone Tech Check platform.**

Introduced in 2020, Drive was established in line with Bridgestone's commitment to "empowering customers and delivering a seamless experience for their tyre and

mechanical servicing needs".

Drive also highlights the top-performing stores in each sales region in three primary categories: Franchise of the Year for Bridgestone Select stores, Store of the Year for Bridgestone Service Centres, and the best-performing store for Truck and Bus Tyre and Bandag Retread sales.

Bridgestone ANZ managing director **Heath Barclay** says the Drive program discovers the top-performing stores and celebrating their success is a highlight of the year.

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"The Drive program highlights our commitment to delivering great customer service and sets the benchmark for our entire network of stores throughout Australia, and this year was another close contest between stores.

**"I'm always proud to showcase our top-performing stores through the Drive program because it shows how committed our network is to deliver on our customer experience promise.**

"These stores continue to drive our business forward so that motorists can continue to 'Go with Confidence'," he says.

In Queensland, it was Bridgestone Select Tyre & Auto Smithfield Cairns, owned by **Tim Robertson**, that won the Store of the Year.

**Mick Carroll's** Bridgestone Service Centre Yatala won Service Centre of the Year. In National Truck Store of the Year, Bridgestone Service Centre Rockhampton, also claimed state honours.

In the NSW/ACT region, **Ashley McDougall** and Bridgestone Service Centre Thornton claimed back-to-back victories in the Truck Store of the Year award.

**Andrew James** and the team at Bridgestone Select Tyre & Auto Belconnen earned the Store of the Year title, while **Scott Davis** and Bridgestone Service Centre Urunga won Service Centre of the Year.

Bridgestone Select Tyre & Auto Fountain Gate owned by **Stuart Brown** was named VIC/TAS store of the year, with Bridgestone Service Centre Benalla owned by **Tony Sait**, **Kevin Saxton** and **John Zappala** taking out the award for Truck Store of the Year.

National Service Centre of the Year winner Kyneton also claimed the regional award.

SA/NT saw repeat winners across all three categories with **Richard Gilder** from Bridgestone Select Tyre & Auto Edwardstown claiming back-to-back store of the year awards.

Meanwhile, **Alf Bamford**, **Dave Barry** and **Terry Gilcrist** from Bridgestone Service Centre Mount Gambier continued their run in the Service Centre of the Year and Truck Store of the Year awards, with a third straight Service Centre of the Year for their car centre, and back-to-back wins in Truck Store of the Year for their dedicated truck store.



Joining Franchise of the Year winner, Bridgestone Select Tyre & Auto Belmont, with WA honours, is Bridgestone Service Centre Dalwallinu, owned by **Karen** and **Matthew Wilson**, for Service Centre of the Year, and **Shane Hay's** Bridgestone Service Centre Geraldton won Truck Store of the Year.

**The Bridgestone network won Gold in the annual Reader's Digest Quality Service awards for tyre retailers, and Silver for independent car servicing, as well as taking out perfect scores for car servicing in Canstar's Outstanding Customer Service awards.**

Earlier this year, Bridgestone was named Australia's Most Trusted Tyre Brand for the 10th consecutive year.

#### **BRIDGESTONE SELECT TYRE & AUTO FRANCHISE OF THE YEAR**

National Winner/WA – Bridgestone Select Tyre & Auto Belmont

NSW/ACT – Bridgestone Select Tyre & Auto Belconnen

QLD – Bridgestone Select Tyre & Auto Smithfield Cairns

VIC/TAS – Bridgestone Select Tyre & Auto Fountain Gate

SA/NT – Bridgestone Select Tyre & Auto Edwardstown

#### **BRIDGESTONE SERVICE CENTRE OF THE YEAR**

National Winner/VIC/TAS – Bridgestone Service Centre Kyneton

NSW/ACT – Bridgestone Service Centre Urunga

QLD – Bridgestone Service Centre Yatala

SA/NT – Bridgestone Service Centre Mount Gambier (car centre)

WA – Bridgestone Service Centre Dalwallinu

#### **BRIDGESTONE TRUCK STORE OF THE YEAR**

National Winner/QLD – Bridgestone Service Centre Rockhampton

NSW/ACT – Bridgestone Service Centre Urunga

VIC/TAS – Bridgestone Service Centre Benalla

SA/NT – Bridgestone Service Centre Mount Gambier (truck centre)

WA – Bridgestone Service Centre Geraldton



## FORD ANNOUNCES REVISED RANGER AND EVEREST LINE-UP

**F**ord will start production of the updated Ranger ute and Everest SUV range in March 2024 and has made some changes to the line-up.

**For Ranger, the XL Bi-Turbo dual-cab cab-chassis 4X2, XLS Bi-Turbo dual-cab pick-up 4X2, and XL Bi-Turbo super-cab pick-up 4X2 will no longer be available, and the Wildtrak X special edition will end its production run with the 2024 model.**

The Everest Trend RWD will also no longer be available.

Several features that were previously optional extras will now be standard, with the Everest Trend and Sport gaining Zone Lighting as standard, along with Black stand-off roof rails – previously included in the Touring Pack for 4WD and unavailable on RWD Trend and Sport models.

**The Ranger and Everest both get new tech to make towing easier.**

Standard on selected Ranger models and optional on the Everest in 2024, Pro Trailer Back-up Assist operates in a similar way to the system that debuted locally in the F-150 in 2023.

It allows drivers to steer the trailer, making reversing more intuitive than traditional methods.

Pro-Trailer Back-up Assist will be standard on Ranger Wildtrak, Platinum, and Raptor models, and available as part of the optional Touring Pack on 4X4 XLT and Sport pick-up variants.

For the Everest it will be available as a part of the Touring Pack on 4WD Trend and 4WD Sport models, in place of the Zone lighting and black stand-off roof rails which are now standard.

On the Platinum series, an optional Pro Towing Pack, including both Pro Trailer Back-up Assist and the contents of the Towing Pack, will be available replacing the standard Towing Pack option.

**To activate the Pro Trailer Back-up Assist system, the driver presses the trailer icon on the drive mode selector dial and then uses the outer ring to steer the trailer.**

A special sticker placed on the drawbar helps the system keep track of the trailer angle when it's being reversed.

### ENHANCED WORK FEATURES

From now, the Ranger XL comes standard with heavy-duty suspension, which consists of thicker rear springs and new front and rear dampers with a revised tune for driver who carry a significant load in the rear tray.

**Upgrades to the Ranger XLS blend workhorse practicality with plenty of creature comforts.**

Both the Tech and Towing Packs which had been added-cost options on the XLS are standard features on MY24.5 models.

That adds a towbar and tongue, trailer light check, integrated trailer brake controller and extended blindspot monitoring with trailer coverage.



There are also body colour door handles, keyless entry with push-button start, dual-zone climate control, rear seat air vents and upgraded SYNC 4A with voice-activated controls, built-in satellite navigation with one year of connected navigation services, and digital audio.

### FLEXIBLE RACK SYSTEM

After debuting as a standard feature on the Ranger Platinum, and Wildtrak X special edition, the innovative Flexible Rack System will be available on more models this year.

The Ranger Sport and Wildtrak can now be optioned with the Flexible Rack System.

**When selected, it will replace the Sports Bar and Load Box Access Points, or Sailplane and Box Rails that are standard on the Sport and Wildtrak series respectively.**



# LDV ANNOUNCES EDELIVER7 PRICES AND SPECS

**P**rices of LDV Australia's new mid-size eDeliver 7 electric van start at \$59,990.

**LDV says the van is aimed at sole traders, small to medium-sized businesses, transport companies, and corporate fleets and needs less maintenance than an internal combustion counterpart.**

And the battery mounting has been designed to have no impact on cargo space.

In the eDeliver 7, LDV has an electric van that challenges "the strongest competitors in terms of driving experience, safety, functionality and a commitment to reduced emissions", says LDV Australia general manager **Dinesh Chinappa**.

And it does that at a price that reduces the cost of EV entry for businesses.

It's LDV's fourth electric vehicle, alongside the eDeliver 9 large van, the eT60 ute, and the MIFA 9 people mover. There are four variants in the eDeliver 7 range.

They start with a short wheelbase low roof and move on to a long wheelbase low roof, available with either 77kWh or 88kWh batteries.

**Then there's a long wheelbase high roof available with an 88kWh battery only.**

All are available in white, blue, or black body colours.

The eDeliver 7 has a distinctive front grille with dusk-sensing LED lights.

It has LED rear taillights, rear barn doors with two-stage openings, and a single sliding side door.

**eDeliver 7 batteries are built in a joint venture between SAIC and China's largest battery maker, CATL.**

The standard 77kWh battery gives a range of up to 318km on the SWB low roof model and takes approximately eight hours to charge from five to 100% on an 11kW AC home charger.

**Charging from 20 to 80% takes about 43 minutes on a rapid DC charger.**

LDV says the extended range 88kWh battery has a WLTP range of up to 362km on the low roof model, and will take about 9.3 hours to charge on an 11kW AC home charger (five-100%) or 43 minutes using a rapid DC charger (20



to 80%).

The battery powers an electric motor that drives the front wheels and delivers 150kW of power and an instantaneous 330Nm of torque.

The eDeliver 7 has three power modes – Normal, Eco and Power.

**Eco mode can be selected to limit maximum speed to 90km/h and minimise power consumption.**

Standard safety and driver assistance equipment includes Autonomous Emergency Braking; Adaptive Cruise Control with Stop and Go; Front Collision Warning; Emergency Lane Keep Assist and Lane Change Assist; Blindspot Monitoring; front and rear parking sensors, and Rear Cross Traffic Alert.

In the cabin are a heated steering wheel, fully-adjustable driver's seat (height, slide, recline, lumbar support and armrest), keyless entry-keyless start, and a 12.3-inch touchscreen display loaded with Apple Car Play and Android Auto.

The 90/180-degree rear doors can be fixed in place to prevent them from being blown shut, and have standard with non-slip rubber flooring in the load area.

Cargo volumes range from 5.9 cubic metres in the short wheelbase low roof, through 6.7 in the long-wheelbase low roof, to 8.7 in the long wheelbase high roof.

Each variant has six tie-down points in the cargo area, single sliding door on the left side, and LED rear cargo lighting. Braked towing capacity is 1500kg.

Pricing on the 77kWh SWB low roof starts at \$59,990 rising to \$61,990 for the LWB, both excluding on-road costs.

**The 88kWh LWB low roof is \$64,990 excluding on-road costs, rising to \$66,990 excluding on roads for the LWB high roof.**

All eDeliver 7s have a comprehensive five-year/160,000km (whichever comes first) warranty, eight-year/250,000km battery warranty, and five-year/unlimited kilometres roadside assistance.

**LDV has introduced Capped Price Servicing on the eDeliver 7 which covers scheduled servicing for six years/90,000km (whichever comes first) and costs \$1166.10.**



## RECORD SUV AND UTE SALES IN JANUARY

**T**he strong performance of the Australian new car market has continued into 2024 with record January sales of 89,782 new vehicles, 5.8% more than January 2023.

**The previous January record of 88,551 was set in 2018.**

**Toyota** led the market with recorded sales of 17,903, followed by **Mazda** (8165), **Ford** (6624), **Hyundai** (6162), and **Mitsubishi** (5911).

The Ford **Ranger** ute was Australia's top-selling vehicle with 4747 sales, followed by the Toyota **HiLux** (4092), Toyota **Landcruiser** (2541), Isuzu Ute **D-Max** (2541), and Toyota **RAV4** (2211).

Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries (FCAI) chief executive **Tony Weber**, said 2023's demand for new vehicles has continued into 2024 with many businesses and families taking ownership of a new vehicle in January. But there are concerns for the outlook of 2024 given current economic conditions.

**The record January result was underpinned by continued customer preference for SUVs and Light Commercial vehicles.**

SUVs accounted for 55.5% of sales while Light Commercials were 22.9%. Passenger vehicles made up 18.3% of sales.

Low-emission vehicles remained popular, with hybrids, plug-in hybrid and battery electric vehicles making up 17.4% of sales. Battery electric vehicles represented 5.4% of that total.

"The continuing preference for SUVs and utes demonstrates the challenges the Commonwealth Government is facing as it works to introduce a New Vehicle Emissions Standard (NVES)," Weber says.

"Industry wants an emissions standard that's ambitious without limiting the choice and increasing the cost of the

vehicles Australians need and want.

"Even with the current incentives offered by the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments, sales of battery electric vehicles appear to have plateaued during recent months.

**"For more than a year the industry has been sharing information with the Government about what's happening in the suburbs and regions around the country and the preferences and challenges facing families and businesses," Weber says.**

"Good policy must reflect reality rather than a desktop exercise that makes assumptions about what the world can look like, and we strongly urge the Government to share its modelling with us."

The January 2024 market of 89,782 new vehicle sales is an increase of 4909 sales or 5.8% over January 2023 (84,873).

There were 25 selling days in January compared to 24 in January 2023 and that increased 54.9 vehicle sales per day.

The passenger vehicle market is down by 168 vehicle sales (1.0%) over the same month last year.

The SUV market is up by 3132 sales (6.7%); the light commercial market is up by 2055 (11.1%) and the heavy commercial vehicle market is down by 110 vehicle sales (3.6%) compared to January 2023.

Sales in Western Australia increased by 25.4%; Queensland was up 5.4%; South Australia by 3.7%; Victoria by 6.3%, and NSW by 1.2%.

**Northern Territory recorded an increase of 11.6% while sales in the ACT decreased by 7.5% compared with January 2023. Tasmania saw a decrease of 1.1%.**

## TOP 10 BRANDS



1. TOYOTA 17,903



2. MAZDA 8165



3. FORD 6624



4. HYUNDAI 6162



5. MITSUBISHI 5911



## 4X4 UTES



1. Ford Ranger  
**4334**



2. Toyota HiLux  
**3478**



3. Isuzu Ute D-Max  
**2118**



4. Toyota LandCruiser  
70 Series  
**1078**



5. Mitsubishi Triton  
**1059**



6. LDV T60  
**950**



7. Mazda BT-50  
**937**



8. Volkswagen Amarok  
**650**



9. GWM Ute  
**643**



10. Nissan Navara  
**424**

## SUV SMALL &lt;\$40K



1. MG ZS  
**1888**



2. Hyundai Kona  
**1368**



3. GWM Haval Jolion  
**1055**



4. Mazda CX-30  
**1040**



5. Mitsubishi ASX  
**945**



6. Mitsubishi Eclipse  
Cross  
**882**



7. Subaru Crosstrek  
**810**



8. Toyota Corolla  
Cross  
**775**



9. Kia Seltos  
**674**



10. Chery Omoda  
**515**

# TOP 10 BRANDS



6. KIA 5707



7. MG 4006



8. ISUZU UTE 3758



9. SUBARU 3068



10. VOLKSWAGEN 2717

# ELECTRIC CAR SALES HAVE PLATEAUED

**B**attery electric vehicle sales appear to have plateaued in recent months, even with incentives offered by the commonwealth, state and territory governments.

So says Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries (FCAI) chief executive **Tony Weber**, commenting on January VFACTS tables.

**Low-emission vehicles remain popular, with hybrids, plug-in hybrid (PHEVs) and battery electric vehicles (BEVs) comprising 17.4% of sales. BEVs represented 5.4%, he says.**

Electric vehicle sales rose only 0.8% (41) with 4893 sold compared with 4852 in January 2023.

In contrast, hybrid sales rose 91.2% (4685) from 5136 in January 2023 to 9821 in January 2024.

Total PHEV sales went from 438 in January last year to 980, a 123.7% rise. Hydrogen went from zero to one, petrol dropped from 44,831 to 42,247, and diesel barely moved – 26,589 to 28,923).

Passenger electrics dropped 562 (17.4%) from 3231 in January 2023 to 2669 last month, while hybrids soared 137.1% (1750) from 1276 to 3026.

Passenger PHEVs rose by 48 (192%) from 25 to 73.

**Electric SUV sales rose 591 (36.5%) from 1617 to 2208, hybrids were up 2906 (75.3%) from 3860 to 6766 and PHEVs went from 413 to 907 – up 494 or 119.6%.**

Light commercial electrics went from four in January 2023 to 16 last month – up 12 or 300%.

Hybrid light commercial sales rose from zero to 29 – both perhaps reflecting the wider choices available.

Top EV brands include BYD (465 Atto 3, 256 Dolphin and 589 Seal), Tesla (723 Model 3, 384 Model Y), and Polestar (Polestar 2).

Meanwhile, the Electric Vehicle Council (EVC) has applauded the Federal Government's introduction of New Vehicle Efficiency Standards (NVES) promising greater choice and lower fuel bills for Australian motorists.

**NVES incentivise manufacturers to ensure all new cars they sell, on average, meet benchmarks for efficiency.**

That means manufacturers can still sell vehicles with heavy emissions, but they must be offset by sales of low- or zero-emission vehicles.

"NVES have ensured that drivers in North America and Europe have been offered maximum choice, including the



best and most efficient new vehicles on the global market," EVC says, adding that Australian cars use a third more petrol than American cars on average.

"Because previous federal governments failed to introduce New Vehicle Efficiency Standards, some car manufacturers have treated Australia as a dumping ground for their most inefficient models," says EVC chief executive **Behyad Jafari**.

**"This announcement from the Federal Government, when legislated, will give Australians a greater choice for the cars they want and put money back in their pockets through lower fuel bills.**

"Within a few short years it will mean the average family will not have to spend as much on imported petrol, which we know is hugely volatile on price," says Jafari.

"Australia has always been at the back of the queue when it comes to the best and cheapest electric vehicles, because car makers have been incentivised to offer them elsewhere first.

"That should end now with this policy, and Australian car buyers should notice the change very quickly," says Jafari.

"Right now Australia is one of only

two developed countries without new vehicle efficiency standards. Very soon, Russia should be on its own."

**The Climate Council says a national fuel efficiency standard puts Australia on the road to fuel and pollution savings.**

The Federal Government now needs to lock in these strong settings before the end of 2024 so Australians can start saving, it says.

"Many Australians are doing it tough right now, with petrol one of the expenses causing the most financial stress for households," says council chief executive Amanda McKenzie..

"At the same time, pollution from inefficient petrol-guzzling cars is fuelling harmful climate change.

"By giving Australians better choice of cleaner, cheaper-to-run cars, a strong fuel efficiency standard will cut household costs and clean up our air."

**The Climate Council says the National Electric Vehicle Strategy's focus on improving the availability of charging infrastructure and incentivising uptake of the cleanest vehicles remain important to prepare Australian roads for this transition.**

ELECTRIC, PHEV AND HYBRID SALES					JANUARY 2024			
Total Market	Month		YTD		Variance +/- Vol. & %			
	2023	2022	2023	2022	MTH	YTD	MTH	YTD
ELECTRIC								
2,669	3,231	2,669	3,231	-562	-562	-17.4%	-17.4%	100.0%
2,208	1,617	2,208	1,617	591	591	36.5%	36.5%	297.3%
16	4	16	4	12	12	300.0%	300.0%	341.5%
4,893	4,852	4,893	4,852	41	41	0.8%	0.8%	200.8%
HYBRID								
Passenger Private	3,026	1,276	3,026	1,276	1,750	1,750	137.1%	137.1%
SUV Private	6,766	3,860	6,766	3,860	2,906	2,906	75.3%	75.3%
Sub Total	9,792	5,136	9,792	5,136	4,656	4,656	90.7%	90.7%
PHEV								
Passenger Private	73	25	73	25	48	48	192.0%	192.0%
SUV Private	907	413	907	413	494	494	119.6%	119.6%
Sub Total	980	438	980	438	542	542	123.7%	123.7%
TOTAL	15,665	10,426	15,665	9,988	5,239	5,677	50.2%	56.8%