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THE AUSTRALIAN VEHICLE DEALER'S NEWS SOURCE



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RECORD SALES IN
AUGUST

LET THE GOOD TIMES ROLL-ON AND ROLL-OFF



Hello there,

The results of the Australian new car market in August are staggering, more than 15% up year-on-year, and with almost 110,000 vehicles sold.

They reflect a global manufacturing supply chain that continues to recover from post-pandemic disruption (with the exception of Toyota) but is not so much the logistics part of the equation.

Transporting vehicles by land and sea, particularly from Europe remains a challenge for OEM distributors thanks to the unintended consequences of the war in Ukraine which continues to draw resources out of the civilian supply chain.

Then there's the ongoing battle of port congestion across Australia caused by a shortage of quarantine staff to inspect and process arriving vehicles, which adds its own set of unique frustrations for Australian distributors.

Ford Australia has taken the unique step of leasing a roll-on roll-off (Ro-Ro) car carrier for the next 36 months to try to speed up delivery of the Ranger and Everest from its manufacturing base in Thailand.

Ford has conceded too that to speed up deliveries to customers it has also been transporting cars in shipping containers, and we believe that some other mass market brands have also been using this method to avoid local quarantine delays.

Vertical integration of global transport logistics isn't a new concept to vehicle manufacturers.

Toyota owns its own fleet of Toyofuji Ro-Ro vessels, Nissan owns 60% of its Nissan Motor Car Carrier Ro-Ro fleet, and ship operator Mitsui OSK Line has the other 40%.

Volkswagen Group has the exclusive use of 11 Ro-Ro vessels in an agreement with Wallenius Marine and SFL Corporation.

So, it comes as no surprise that China's SAIC Motor which owns Maxus (LDV), MG Motor and others, has just launched a new 7600-unit Ro-Ro vessel fuelled by liquified natural gas (LNG).

It will be used soon by its wholly owned affiliate Anji Logistics to transport vehicles to Australia and New Zealand as well as Europe.

It's the first of 12 new vessels to join the existing Anji fleet of six dedicated ships for foreign trade.

State-owned SAIC Motor currently is, and will no doubt continue to be, the Chinese vehicle maker that owns the largest fleet of Ro-Ro vessels.

As global demand accelerates for cars made in China, particularly electric vehicles, there's no doubt SAIC will be able to capitalise on this good fortune with its growing fleet of ships.

Let the good times roll-on and roll-off.

Enjoy your reading this month.

Best regards,

Robert Barry
EDITOR **AUTOTALK**





COX REPORTS VARIABILITY IN SOFTER USED VEHICLE PRICES

Cox Automotive Australia (CAA) believes that used vehicle prices are continuing to come down from the record highs of mid-2022, but vary by fuel type, vehicle age, and body type.

The CAA National Retail – Dealer Used Car Prices Index, which measures price movements of sold dealer used vehicles each month, ended July 2023 at 141.6.

That's a modest 1.0% reduction month-on-month (MoM) and the fifth successive month where the (weighted average) index has fallen.

It's now 4% lower than the used market's price peak in August last year, says CAA.

But from a broader perspective, prices remain substantially higher than they were before the COVID-19 pandemic and associated market interruptions.

NATIONAL RETAIL – DEALER USED CAR PRICES INDEX

The price index started at 100 in December 2019 and sits at 141.6 now.

But context is key, says CAA. The price index also shows that, for the most part, the biggest proportional price increases over the past few years have been on older used vehicles rather than newer, lower-mileage ones.

In July, used and demo passenger vehicles aged two years or younger ended the month 29.3% more expensive than they were just before COVID.

By contrast those aged two to four years remain 44.6% more expensive, those aged five to seven years are 53.2% more expensive, and vehicles aged eight to 10 years are 69% more expensive.

SUVs under two years old finished July 20% higher on the price index than the same age bracket was in December 2019, compared to 32.6% higher for those aged two to four, 35.9% for those aged five to seven, and 40.8% for those aged eight to 10.

The price index for pick-ups younger than two finished July at 128.5, a 28.5% average price increase over the same

sorts of vehicles before COVID.

By contrast pick-ups aged two to four were on average 35.7% more expensive, pick-ups aged five to seven were 44.7% dearer, and those aged eight to 10 were 56.3% pricier.

Across the board CAA says it's the older stock commanding much greater prices than they were before COVID.

With improved supply of new vehicles filtering through, it expects to see reduced demand for late model used cars, so believes the trend will continue.

It's a similar story for the used EV and PHEV market, which tends to be quite volatile given the smaller sample size of used models in dealer inventories.

CAA says price indexes for these vehicles across age brackets aren't holding up as well as combustion-engine vehicles and hybrids.

The respective price indexes for EVs and PHEVs are 99.4 (aged two or under), 115.4 (aged two to four), 108 (aged five to seven), and 112 (aged eight to 10).

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The pattern where older vehicles are relatively more expensive than before COVID likewise applies to lower tailpipe emissions vehicles too, just at a lower level.

CAA says resale values of all secondhand electric vehicles and plug-in hybrids fell at a faster rate (3.1% MoM) than the overall car park (1% MoM).

What else does the data show?

The overall number of active dealer used listings grew 6.8% MoM and 25.2% year-on-year for some longer-term context, meaning there are more used vehicles available now.

This drove an overall 3.8% MoM increase in Market Days Supply (MDS), which sits at 63 days across age brackets and vehicle types.

More used vehicle stock means downward price pressure should appear. However, in the medium-term the implications of a few years of new vehicle shortages will mean a potential shortfall of late model used stock built between 2020 and 2022.

CAA says EVs and PHEVs are statistical outliers with MDS figures of 76 days for those aged under two years, 77 days for those aged two to four, and 87 days for those aged five to seven.

Any number higher than 70 days means the market is carrying too much stock, but CAA adds a caveat that the sample size is small.

The number of used vehicles sold was down 8.9% over a bumper June result.

But year-to-date (YTD) the number of secondhand vehicles sold is still up 15.8% over 2022 at the same point. CAA says dealers are moving stock faster, with the average days to sell being 41, down 1.1% MoM.

July's top five selling passenger used nameplates were the Hyundai i30, Toyota Corolla, Mazda 3, Holden Commodore, and Kia Cerato.

The top five SUVs were the Toyota RAV4, Nissan X-Trail, Mitsubishi Outlander, Mazda CX-5, and Toyota Prado.

Leading used pick-up sales were the Ford Ranger and Toyota HiLux, which were also the two top-selling used vehicles of any type – the story is the same in the new market – ahead of the Mitsubishi Triton, Nissan Navara, and Holden Colorado.

Resale values of all secondhand electric vehicles and plug-in hybrids fell at a faster rate (-3.1 MoM) than the overall car park (-1% MoM).

MANHEIM WHOLESALE

From a wholesale Manheim auction perspective, the company has enjoyed 19.5% YoY growth in volume, driven in part by the return of in-person auctions across Australia.

On average, prices are reducing slowly, with the index (142.8) 3.3% down MoM and 13.1% down YoY.

The index peaked in May 2022 at 167.4. The main client types were ex-fleet vehicles, dealer stock, and ex-OEM stock.

CAA says the prices of older wholesale stock remain more inflated in relative terms, as shown by the respective price indexes for vehicle types broken up by their age.

For instance, passenger vehicles aged eight to 10 sold in July were on average 84.5% more expensive in relative terms than pre-COVID, whereas those aged two to four were 35.7% more expensive.

Likewise for SUVs, those aged five to seven were 39.2% more expensive than the same sorts of vehicles were in December 2019, compared to 19.3% more expensive for those aged two to four.

Older pick-ups aged eight to 10 years were 141.4 on the price index at the end of July (meaning 41.4% more expensive than pre-COVID) compared to 19.4% more expensive for those aged two to four.

The overall top five vehicles wholesaled through Manheim were the Ford Ranger, Toyota HiLux, Toyota Camry, Mitsubishi Triton, and Holden Colorado.

Overall, 33.2% of auctioned vehicles were SUVs, 30.8% were pick-ups, and 33% were passenger cars.



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8/152 Quay Street, P.O. Box 10 50 10,
Auckland City, NZ 1030.



EDITOR – AUTOTALK AUSTRALIA
Robert Barry
robert@automediagroup.co.nz



ASSISTANT EDITOR
Geoff Dobson
geoff@automediagroup.co.nz



MANAGING EDITOR
Richard Edwards
richard@automediagroup.co.nz



BUSINESS MANAGER
Dale Stevenson
dale@automediagroup.co.nz



GROUP GENERAL MANAGER
Deborah Baxter
deborah@automediagroup.co.nz

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NAVIGATING SHIFTING CONSUMER TRENDS

In spite of ongoing economic uncertainty, 22% of Australians say they intend to buy a vehicle in the upcoming year according to Fifth Quadrant (formerly ACA Research).

This intention manifests itself on generational lines, with Gen Z (27%) and Gen Y (27%) leading the charge, followed closely by Gen X (24%), and 14% among Boomers.

Though 71% of respondents foresee a challenging economic terrain ahead for Australia in the next 12 months, 45% of Gen Zs project optimism, anticipating that economic conditions will stabilise or improve.

This sits in stark contrast to the 27% of Boomers who share this outlook off the back of concerns about the burden of rising energy bills (77%), the constant pressure of affordability for essential products (63%), and the accessibility of affordable healthcare (52%).

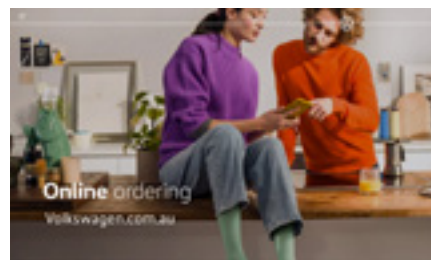
In line with recent automotive trends, SUVs command the spotlight, with 62% of consumers drawn towards them, overshadowing the 50% considering passenger cars.

This trend gains momentum among Boomers (71%), underscoring SUVs' appeal across generations.

Brand loyalty also takes centre stage with Toyota (75%), Mazda (58%), and Hyundai (54%) emerging as the most favoured options.

In a twist, Gen Z displays a propensity for Volkswagen (49%), illustrating a willingness to explore newer avenues while still considering the established players.

Reflecting the continuing transition towards a sustainable future, almost half (49%) of potential vehicle buyers are open to the idea of low- or zero-emission vehicles, with



42% considering hybrids and 22% contemplating electric cars.

However, Gen Z (34%) appears less likely to buy a low-emission vehicle within the next 12 months, with affordability a key factor.

"In summary, this study unpacks shifting consumer sentiments and priorities, revealing distinct generational economic outlooks that are reshaping market dynamics," says Fifth Quadrant director **Ben Selwyn**.

"Purchasing intentions hold up despite a range of concerns, with Gen Z's more optimistic outlook shining through despite the concerns they hold (rising energy bills and mental health) and contrasting with Boomers' focus on rising cost of living pressure.

"These generational trends extend to vehicular preferences, with a notable emphasis on sustainability, led by Boomers who have the financial capability to invest in lower-emission vehicles," he adds.

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WOMEN IN THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY ROUNDTABLE

The Women in the Automotive Industry roundtable will be a key event during the global Pentana Live event hosted by Pentana Solutions on October 17 and 18.

An online event with relevant topics focused across all job positions within automotive dealerships, distributors, and the OEM, Pentana Live will feature more than 30 presentations in multiple languages, across nine time zones.

The previous global two-day event hosted by Pentana Solutions was attended by more than 2000 people from 13 countries.

It gained more than 4000 views, and had more than 800 hours of content viewed, more than 300 questions asked in Q&A, and more than 100 people on average attending each presentation.

Pentana says the event reflects its commitment to pushing boundaries and accelerating innovation, allowing the industry to explore business trends and next-generation technologies that drive growth, improve customer experiences, and enhance efficiencies within the global automotive community.

It says Pentana Live will showcase

thought leadership from key automotive industry figures and its resident team of experts.

Attendees can take in the best practice advice from the presenters' in-depth product knowledge.

Hosted on a virtual platform, with multiple rooms, Pentana Live attendees can enter the auditorium to attend whichever session of their choice.

The virtual space also provides the opportunity for surveys, advertising, and breakout live sessions.

There will be two roundtables featuring prominent industry leaders, including Women in the Automotive Industry where **Edwina Gilbert**, **Kirzsten Pountney**, and **Samantha Reid** will discuss their leadership journeys and their commitment to redefining the role of women in the sector.

Other notable expert industry speakers will include **Steven Bragg** from Pitcher Partners, **Seth Watts** CEO Neo/Eastern Press and Co-founder of Campaign Agent, and the chief executive of the Australia Automotive Dealers Association **James Voortman**.

Bragg will shed light on why used cars should be the primary focus for



dealerships. In this session, he'll outline the reasons why used cars provide a significant opportunity for dealers to maximise profitability.

Voortman will discuss changing legislation around cyber security and how it's set to impact the future of automotive.

Also, Pentana Live will offer a wide variety of presentations covering best practice, emerging trends, tips and product demonstrations, including interactive workshop sessions with in-house experts, and information about Pentana Solution's new product innovations.

MTA NSW ACQUIRES MY TRADE START

The Motor Traders' Association of New South Wales (MTA NSW) has bought Career Options Australia Pty Ltd, trading as My Trade Start, a registered training organisation (RTO) in Auburn.

MTA NSW says the acquisition marks a strategic move that will help enhance the training options available to automotive apprentices and employers, at a time when the industry is grappling with chronic skills and worker shortages.

My Trade Start complements MTA NSW's existing onsite training model, offering a fixed location in Auburn for apprentices and employers who prefer a classroom setting.

With 400 students in training at My Trade Start, and an additional 2000 enrolled with MTA NSW, the

acquisition expands significantly the organisation's impact on automotive training.

My Trade Start will continue to operate as an independent brand, supported by MTA NSW, to deliver best-in-class automotive training.

"This isn't just a business move; it's a commitment to the future of the automotive industry," says MTA NSW chief executive **Stavros Yallouridis**.

"As the largest private provider of automotive training in the state, we have a responsibility to offer diverse and high-quality training options.

"With this purchase, we aim to address the skills shortage head-on. We're not just expanding; we're creating a pathway for quality staff and apprentices to enter and enrich the industry."

MTA NSW RTO general manager Ian



Price says he's "looking forward to working closely with the MTS team to combine our strengths and expertise, setting a new benchmark for quality in automotive training".

"The acquisition comes at a critical time as the automotive industry faces a perfect storm of skills shortages and additional pressures on existing staff, all of which hinder industry growth and progression," he adds.

FORD DEALERS ANNOUNCE BASKETBALL SPONSORSHIP

Ford dealers are furthering their partnership with Basketball Australia, sponsoring the Boomers and gaining naming rights of Aussie Hoops.

Ford Aussie Hoops is a national program that introduces children to basketball in a structured and accredited environment at the grassroots through to elite levels.

The Ford dealer network's sponsorship of the Australian Opals was announced in June this year. The multi-year deal will see the Ford logo feature prominently on the Opals, Boomers, and Aussie Hoops jerseys.

The dealer network says it has always played a role in helping customers in their communities achieve their dreams.

With the partnership with Basketball Australia, the Ford dealer network will be able to ramp up its support at a grassroots level, helping aspiring basketball players.

Ford dealer advertising fund chairperson **Cameron McLeish** says that since 1925, "Ford and its more than 170 dealers have a history of supporting sport across the country and connecting with communities".

"Continuing this legacy, we're now proud to add Basketball Australia to the family through our partnership with the Boomers, Opals and Aussie Hoops program, representing one of Australia's fastest growing sports.

"We're excited to be a major supporter at the ground level with Ford Aussie



Hoops, which is especially important as it's all about encouraging kids excelling at basketball on a community level and helping basketball dreams to be born.

"We're equally excited to cheer on the next Boomers v The World game, just as we cheered on the Opals at the 2023 FIBA Asia Cup."

Basketball Australia chief executive **Matt Scriven** says the collaboration with Ford "stands as a significant validation of our sport's current stature, both on local and international levels".

"The involvement of the Ford dealership network presents a significant opportunity for the advancement of our sport.

"Basketball is experiencing growth across multiple fronts, with participation numbers, event attendance, and viewership on

broadcasts at an all-time high."

"The surge in junior-level participation across Australia is particularly notable, highlighted by a record-breaking 42,600 enrolments in Aussie Hoops for 2022, representing a huge 32% increase over 2021. The momentum carried into the first half of 2023, with Term 1 and 2 enrolments on track to set a new record at 21,009.

"The increasing number of families, young boys and girls who are choosing to play basketball is attributed to several factors, including the growing dominance of Australian players on the global stage. We look forward to taking these participation numbers to new heights with the support of the Ford dealer network," he says.

Retail & Used Vehicle Market Insights

January - June 2023

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COX AUTOMOTIVE

REVIEW APPOINTMENT WELCOMED BY DEALERS

The Australian Automotive Dealer Association has welcomed the appointment of **Dr Michael Schaper** by the minister for small business, **Julie Collins**, as the independent reviewer of the franchising code of conduct.

As a former deputy chair of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and former ACT small business commissioner, Dr Schaper brings the necessary expertise and experience to this review, the AADA says.

It says the franchising review is timely and is a step to examine existing regulatory settings, including by evaluating the effectiveness of previous reforms such as the new car dealerships provisions enacted in 2021.

"This review will be a significant step in ensuring a fair and transparent business environment for new car and truck dealers across the nation," says AADA chief executive **James Voortman**.

"And the AADA welcomes the Government's commitment to continually improve this vital regulatory framework.

"In recent years there have been several high-profile automotive franchising disputes, a number of which remain before the courts.

"Now is an opportune time to review franchising regulations to ensure that they remain fit for purpose and the code is effectively protecting new car dealers and their customers," Voortman says.

"Franchised new car dealers invest significant sums of capital, employ tens of thousands of Australians, and make significant contributions to their communities.

"It's important to ensure that elements of our franchising laws, such as termination processes, dispute resolution and contract terms, are fair and reasonable.

"Additionally, this review provides an opportunity to expand the provisions to encompass truck and other automotive franchised dealers who are currently not afforded the automotive specific protections the franchising code provides," Voortman adds.



JAMES VOORTMAN

FORMER GM HOLDEN MD MOVES TO CANADA

Former GM Holden managing director and chairman **Kristian Aquilina** has been appointed vice president for sales, service and marketing at General Motors Canada.

Upon leaving Holden in November 2020, Aquilina was posted to Dubai as the managing director of Cadillac International Operations and Cadillac Middle East.

For almost three years, he led Cadillac's strategy across the company's operations in Europe, Russia, the Middle East, South Korea, and Japan.

Aquilina will now report to GM Canada president and managing

director **Marissa West** and he replaces **Sandor Piszar** who is moving back to his hometown of Detroit as the vice president of GM Enclave.

"It's a fantastic time to join such a dynamic and innovative organisation steered by Marissa West and the GM Canada leadership team," Aquilina says. "I will miss my colleagues and dealer partners throughout the Middle East, North Africa, Asia Pacific and Europe. My time working across a vast region has been an absolute gift and thanks to your friendship and all the knowledge you so willingly shared," he says.



KRISTIAN AQUILINA

SIME DARBY ACQUIRES CAVPOWER GROUP

Malaysian multinational Sime Darby has announced that its subsidiary, Sime Darby Industrial Australia Pty Ltd will acquire the South Australia-based Cavpower Group.

Cavpower is a privately owned Australian company, with distribution responsibilities for Cat equipment in South Australia and Broken Hill in New South Wales.

"The acquisition of Cavpower complements our existing portfolio and provides geographic expansion to position our Industrial division in high growth infrastructure and commodity areas of the Australian market," says Sime Darby Berhad group chief executive **Jeffri Salim Davidson**.

The Cavpower and Cat brands are well established in South Australia.

"The transaction provides a rare opportunity for Sime Darby to gain exposure to the extensive resources sector in South Australia, further reinforcing Sime Darby Industrial's footprint in Australia and the Asia



Pacific region," Davidson says.

Cavpower, headquartered in Adelaide, employs more than 450 people through a network of nine branches across South Australia selling Cat equipment, parts, service, and technology.

"We're very pleased to have retained

Cavpower's strong management team and look forward to working with them to build on its leadership in the resources, infrastructure, and energy sectors," Davidson says.

The transaction is expected to be finalised once final conditions are met.



BMW SYDNEY TRIALLING EV DELIVERY VAN

BMW has equipped its company-owned dealership, BMW Sydney and Mini Garage Sydney, with a fully electric van as part of its day-to-day operations.

The LDV eDeliver 9 painted in a distinctive livery, has joined the dealership's fleet to deliver BMW parts and accessories to locations in the Sydney metropolitan area including accredited BMW body shops.

The fully electric van can cover 280km on the WLTP cycle and accommodates a substantial cargo capacity of 10.9 cubic metres with a 1410kg payload.

Between jobs, its high-voltage battery is recharged using one of the on-site BMW Wallbox chargers. It will be trialled for three months, during which BMW will assess its

operational viability and explore the potential to increase the number of EVs on the road to complete delivery and collection jobs.

BMW Sydney and MINI Garage Sydney dealer principal **Peter Kallitsis** said onboarding of the van would fulfil both practical and strategic purposes.

"There are numerous advantages to a fully electric van on an operational level, chiefly zero tailpipe emissions and noise reduction," Kallitsis says. "This has benefits for our roadways and provides a cleaner option for our staff when they are working around the van and loading or unloading cargo in confined indoor areas.

"However, it also contributes in a meaningful way to the BMW Group's global goal to reduce CO2 emissions



across the entire value chain – of which logistics are a key element – by 40 percent from 2019 levels by the year 2030.

"We look forward to seeing how the van performs during the trial phase as we consider all facets of our business and how we can all play an important part in lowering emissions while maintaining a high level of efficiency," Kallitsis says.





INCHCAPE WANTS FURTHER MOMENTUM

Inchcape chief executive **Duncan Tait** says the multinational automotive distribution and retail business had an excellent first half of 2023 result.

He says Inchcape which recently acquired Great Lake Motor Distributors in New Zealand, delivered revenue and profit growth of 45% and 35%, respectively in the first half of financial year 2023.

A rigorous focus on operational execution has underpinned these impressive numbers as Inchcape delivered strong performances in all its regions.

"Recent transformational acquisitions are driving the momentum in our business along with consistent organic growth and excellent progress under our two strategic growth pillars, distribution excellence and vehicle lifecycle services," Tait says.

"We've grown at an impressive rate since the launch of our accelerate strategy and since 2021 we've entered six new markets and developed 13 new OEM partnerships."

"However, our industry faces an unprecedented period of change.

"The rapid shift to consumers demanding an omni-channel vehicle

buying experience and the speed with which the transition to electric vehicles is re-shaping our markets means that OEMs...need a partner with a distribution capability backed by local expertise and digital and data capabilities.

"At Inchcape, we're well positioned to be this partner of choice and in the last six months we've further enhanced our global leadership position via the acquisition of Derco, the largest distributor in Latin America.

"We've been busy integrating the company into our group and one of my personal highlights in the first half has been getting to meet so many of my new colleagues via townhalls."

"Derco is performing in line with our expectations..."

EXPANDING A GLOBAL LEADERSHIP POSITION

"Alongside Derco, we've continued to drive consolidation in a fragmented global market, expanding our distribution footprint in two new markets, Honduras and the Philippines," Tait says.

"We've signed 11 new contract deals, including expanding our existing OEM relationships with Mercedes-Benz AG



DUNCAN TAIT

in Honduras, and Geely in Guatemala and El Salvador, which reinforces the fact that OEMs value our integrated platform, market insights, and digital and data capabilities.

"Our global strategic partnership with Great Wall Motor Co, Ltd further strengthens our position as a leading distributor of Chinese OEMs and significantly increases our global offering of EVs.

"In addition, the partnership will have an immediate tangible commercial impact on our business as we have also signed a distribution agreement with GWM for the high growth market of Indonesia," he says.

LOOKING AHEAD

"All of the progress gives me great confidence as we look ahead to the second half of this year," Tait says.

"The combination of our resilient business model, strong OEM partnerships and digital and data capabilities is a winning one which is providing sustainable growth and long-term value for all our partners.

"We're well positioned to capitalise on further opportunities for organic growth and market consolidation thanks to the efforts of our teams across the globe."



FORD'S GRAND QUEST TO REDUCE DELIVERY DELAYS

Ford Australia has signed a three-year lease deal on a roll-on, roll-off car carrier ship to try to reduce customer wait times for vehicles.

Named Grand Quest, the ship will deliver vehicles from Ford's factories in Thailand to Australia and New Zealand.

With a capacity of 2600 vehicles, Ford says the Grand Quest to shorten wait times for customers who have placed orders for the Ranger ute and Everest SUV.

"We're investing significantly in tackling the ongoing supply chain issues head-on, with a focus on ensuring customer cars are delivered as quickly as possible," says **Andrew Birkic**, president and CEO, Ford Australia and New Zealand.

"Securing a three-year lease of the Grand Quest will allow Ford to deliver more vehicles to both Australia and New Zealand as we continue to face unprecedented levels of demand."

Along with the Grand Quest, and in addition to regular shipments shared with other manufacturers, Ford continues to charter its own ships for a handful of trips.

"With the addition of the Grand Quest to our logistics supply chain, customers can buy a Ford Ranger or Everest knowing that we're doing all we can to deliver their vehicle as quickly as possible," says **Ambrose Henderson**, Ford Australia's director of CX and growth.

The Grand Quest is operated by Polaris Autoliners which works closely with Ford globally and has already delivered thousands of vehicles to Australia.

"In a time of great logistical uncertainty, taking the initiative to lease our own ship gives Ford the ability to determine shipping routes and volumes by port, allowing us greater control in very challenging conditions," says **Iris Moreno**, Ford Australia's vehicle logistics manager.

And to avoid lengthy delays caused by port congestion, Ford has begun transporting some Rangers and Everests in shipping containers, opening access to unloading alternatives that might speed up final delivery.

As port congestion persists around the country, Ford Australia is keeping its dealers and customers informed, and is committed to investigating methods of shortening wait times.



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WALFORD IS NEW ISUZU NATIONAL FLEET SALES MANAGER

Isuзу Australia Limited (IAL), has appointed **Grant Walford** as national fleet sales manager, replacing **Tony Kerr** who is retiring.

Walford brings more than 20 years' experience in heavy vehicle account and product management, sales planning, customer service, and customer retention.

Starting as a motor mechanic, Walford attained a heavy vehicle licence before moving into sales in the early 2000s.

During his career, Walford has secured and managed major accounts including government and blue-chip customers, putting this experience to effect driving fleet sales for Isuzu Trucks as fleet manager for New South Wales since 2020.

IAL director and chief operating officer **Andrew Harbison** says Walford's achievements and vision for fleet business made him the ideal choice as national fleet sales manager.

"Grant's extensive experience across the automotive industry and at IAL in New South Wales stands him in good stead as he comes to fill in the big shoes left by Tony Kerr," Harbison says.

"Grant not only understands Isuzu's broad product range, he has the best interests of our customers at heart, regardless of whether that customer is a small local trade business or an

international logistics company with a large truck fleet.

"Fleet sales form an incredibly important part of Isuzu's overall picture and our performance in this space contributes heavily to our lasting success as Australia's truck market leader.

"It's not only about having great product in the market but also a solid support base such as our fleet sales and zone teams and an outstanding dealer network to deliver the Isuzu sales and aftersales experience."

Isuzu has more than 70 dealer locations across Australia.

The brand recorded 13,360 truck sales in 2022 and 8108 to the end of July 2023, an increase of 13.7% on the same period a year ago.

Walford is looking forward to his new position at a time when the heavy vehicle industry is evolving significantly.

"The industry has seen unprecedented change in the last few years, especially off the back of COVID and the growth that has continued on since then," he says.

"My goal is to continue to streamline the business and focus on the Tier One fleets that Isuzu Trucks supports, and build on that momentum.

"It's critically important that we continue to have the right people on



GRANT WALFORD

the ground in each zone, working with customers to understand their business and the environments that they operate in.

"The needs of our customers, including major fleets, are changing," Walford says.

"The requirement for quality product continues to grow alongside the call for safer, smarter trucks, but I think environmental factors are also at the top of the list of concerns.

"In the coming years, Euro 6 emissions standards through to carbon neutrality will be a big challenge for everyone to contemplate."

HILUX BEV CONCEPT HEADLINES TOYOTA MEDIA SHOWCASE

A concept HiLux Revo battery electric vehicle (BEV) headlined a showcase of new models Toyota will launch in the Australia in the next 12 months.

Alongside the Revo BEV, Toyota presented the all-new Land Cruiser Prado, hybrid C-HR and fully-electric bZ4X, upgraded Land Cruiser 70 Series, two new HiLux variants, and the RHD full-sized pick-up Tundra.

Toyota Australia spokesman **Sean Hanley** says the showcase demonstrated the brand's commitment to providing a broad range of vehicles as it works towards achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

Originally unveiled in Thailand late last year, the HiLux Revo is an urban-focused two-wheel drive pick-up designed for short-range use.

It's in Australia to be tested and evaluated locally to help further the development of alternative powertrain technologies.

Australians will soon be able to buy or lease Toyota's first production BEV when the bZ4X arrives early next year.

It's the first of three production Toyota battery-electric vehicles due in Australia over the next three years expanding Toyota's electrified line up.

Toyota says it remains committed to increasing its successful hybrid range and displayed the all-new hybrid-only second-generation C-HR.

The 1.8-litre hybrid front-wheel drive Koba and 2.0-litre hybrid all-wheel drive GR Sport are due on sale early in 2024.

Designed, engineered, and built in Europe, Toyota says the all-new C-HR makes significant strides in styling, technology and refinement, while doubling the content of recycled plastic used in the vehicle.

Toyota also showed a production HiLux and pre-production Land Cruiser Prado, both fitted with 48-Volt Technology.

The 48-Volt Technology is combined with the 2.8-litre turbodiesel engine and six-speed automatic gearbox.

It comprises an additional 48-Volt battery, small electric motor-generator and other components to help reduce fuel consumption.



Both vehicles are due in Australia next year and the pre-production Prado prototype is being used for extensive local testing.

Another vehicle on display was the American full-size hybrid Tundra pick-up.

In a Toyota first, 300 Tundras will be converted to right-hand drive locally by Walkinshaw Automotive Group and leased to selected potential customers for a real-world evaluation and validation program.

Toyota says it remains committed to providing the right vehicles for all customers and provided a first look at the significantly upgraded Land Cruiser 70 Series.

The new 70 Series features updated styling and the new option of a 2.8-litre diesel engine with a six-speed automatic transmission.

Joining the battery-electric concept and HiLux with 48-Volt Technology was the production HiLux GR Sport, the new flagship which has improved off-road performance and a swathe of upgrades while retaining a 3500kg braked towing capacity.

The HiLux GR Sport has a wider wheel track with enhanced suspension, brakes and tyres, and improved performance from the 2.8-litre turbodiesel engine, with the new off-road grade arriving in

local showrooms in September.

Toyota says its development of new technologies and applications doesn't end there.

It has been leasing a small number of Mirai FCEVs to organisations for the past two years and its long-term investment in hydrogen fuel-cell electric technology may also offer a solution for zero-emission commercial vehicles.

In Britain, Toyota has shown a HiLux Hydrogen Fuel-Cell Electric Concept that uses the same Toyota FCEV system found in the production Mirai.

The system combines a 330-cell solid polymer electrolyte fuel-cell stack, three high-pressure hydrogen tanks, a large lithium-ion battery, electric motor and rear transaxle.

In the Mirai, it develops 134kW/300Nm driving through the rear wheels, with the 5.6kg hydrogen tank delivering a WLTP driving range of 650km.

The hydrogen HiLux concept is currently being developed into prototype vehicles in partnership with the British Government, and is built at Toyota's factory in Burnaston, England.

Toyota is also developing internal-combustion engines powered by liquid hydrogen as seen in vehicles such the GR Corolla H2 race car.



ASG CORPORATE STRATEGY REMAINS LUXURY FOCUSED

Autosports Group (ASG) chief executive **Nick Pagent** says in the listed company's annual report that its strategy remains focused on the luxury market.

Aftersales growth, new business acquisitions, and better global supply resulted in ASG's record turnover of \$2.37m for the financial year to June 30 and an overall improvement in gross margin to 20.1%.

The company says Improvements in efficiency through scale and cost control reduced operational expenditure to 11.7% resulting in a record EBITDA margin of 8.4% and a NPBT ratio of 4.9%, up 0.3% on last year.

It finished the financial period with a cash balance of \$42m and net debt of \$181m, backed by property assets with a carrying value of \$194m.

Pagent says ASG sees luxury and prestige brands as the most resilient consumer segment which offers the best margin potential.

"It has allowed us to build a corporate skillset and market position that gives us a competitive advantage in Australia and New Zealand.

"It also means we've declined acquisition opportunities for brands that don't align with our luxury-based strategy and skillset.

Pagent says though overall new vehicle registrations rose 8.2% in the six months to June, the luxury and prestige markets were stronger, achieving 27.3% growth.

"Throughout this period, we saw normalising of supply and demand in global supply chains which allowed us to grow our new vehicle revenue by 25.9%...

"Pleasingly, we were able to achieve this growth whilst increasing our forward customer order bank volumes, revenue, and gross profits..."

"Furthermore, luxury demand remained resilient with like-for-like growth in new customer orders in FY2023."

Electric vehicles gathered momentum and June saw a new high with alternate powertrains (Plug-in hybrid, hybrid, and full electric) representing 23.2% of the passenger and SUV market.

"While the EV space has been the most dynamic part of the industry including several new players, barriers to (EVs) entry to the luxury space remain high," says Pagent.

"This is further evidence that our luxury- focused corporate strategy is right for Autosports Group."

In the used vehicle market, prices are "more reflective of their pre-COVID valuations", says Pagent.

Margins have stabilised "and our strategy of focusing on the lowest cost of acquisition and most efficient sales channel improved used car revenue by 22.4%".

"Our strong (service and parts) growth was driven by two key factors.

"Firstly, the increased volume of new cars delivered in the post-COVID era support trailing income streams in service, parts, and panel.

"Secondly, the growing penetration of service plan contracts supports customer retention rates and provides more predictable revenue streams from our aftersales division."

Those factors allow for growth in the highest margin elements of the business and provide a foundation

to weather turbulence caused by macroeconomic factors.

"Of course, this opportunity needs capacity." In FY23, ASG opened a greenfield site at Ringwood BMW and launched a state-of-the-art facility at Melbourne BMW.

"We also invested at Brighton Jaguar Land Rover, Ducati Sydney, our Bespoke by Autosports business, and Volvo sites in Sydney..."

"Delivering this growth from our existing aftersales resources will be one of the key priorities for the coming year."

Also, ASG bought the Motorline and Gold Coast BMW and Mini dealerships, and its existing retail location in Fortitude Valley, bringing the carrying value of its real estate portfolio beyond \$194m.

The business' strong cashflow allowed it to expand into New Zealand buying two BMW and two Mini dealerships in Auckland, and NZ's only Rolls-Royce dealership.

"These businesses gave us immediate scale in the marketplace and are operating in line with our expectations."

Pagent expects FY24 to present more challenges than last year, but "the luxury consumer remains resilient with enquiry and order rates remaining stable even as the broader economy slows".

Autosports is positioned to deliver continued revenue growth through FY24, he adds. "I'm confident our decision to concentrate on the luxury end of the market will be rewarded."

POLESTAR DELIVERS 15,765 VEHICLES IN SECOND QUARTER

Swedish electric performance car brand Polestar delivered 15,765 vehicles during the second quarter of 2023, 36% more than last year.

With record global deliveries of 27,841 cars for the first six months, Polestar expects to deliver 60,000 to 70,000 vehicles and a gross margin of 4% this year.

"We achieved record volume growth during the second quarter. Deliveries of our significantly upgraded Polestar 2 are now ramping up," says Polestar chief executive **Thomas Ingenlath**.

"With Polestar 4 expected to start production in November and Polestar 3 in the first quarter of next year, we're entering an exciting phase of higher



volumes and value from our expanded model range."

DEALERS LOSE \$650M CLAIM AGAINST MERCEDES-BENZ AUSTRALIA PACIFIC

A Federal Court Judge has dismissed a \$650m claim brought against Mercedes-Benz Australia Pacific (MBAUP) by 38 dealers (out of 50) following the implementation of an agency sales network in January 2022.

In an agency system, the distributor owns and controls the vehicle inventory and can set national recommended retail pricing across the franchise network, effectively paying retailers a small fee for every new vehicle they sell.

The Australian Financial Review says that Justice **Jonathan Beach** ruled in favour of Mercedes, finding that the dealers didn't prove "unconscionable conduct" by Mercedes in setting up the agency network.

The 38 dealers alleged they had been bullied into signing new agency agreements which had robbed them of millions of dollars in goodwill which they had accumulated over many years.

Justice Beach accepted that ultimately the dealers were placed in a position of situational disadvantage and possibly constitutional disadvantage in terms of

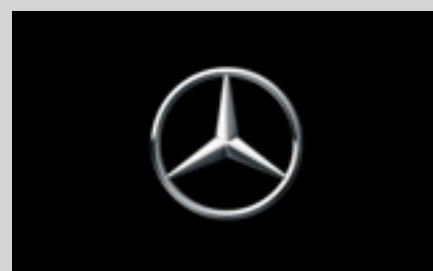
the agency model.

"But in a sense, this was in part self-induced by the dealers' entry into the dealer agreements and a willingness, it must be inferred, to accept the risks and the risk allocation enshrined in those agreements including the risks inherent in the contractual power of [Mercedes-Benz Australia] to issue the [non-renewal notices] without cause," Justice Beach was reported as saying.

"They made the relevant capital investments knowing of or when they ought to have known of such risks. And on a broader front, the dealers were well-heeled individuals and corporations that hardly had any socio-economic vulnerability."

According to the AFR only 46 pages of Justice Beach's 653 page judgement was made publicly available. It says the rest has been temporarily redacted because of confidentiality claims that have not been resolved.

Mercedes-Benz Australia Pacific has welcomed the court's decision. A spokesperson told the Financial Review that its focus continues to be on "delivering luxury, high-performance



cars for it valued customers around Australia."

Australian Automotive Dealer Association (AADA) chief executive **James Voortman** told the newspaper the 38 dealers would be disappointed with the judgment.

"The dealers are weighing up their options and as an industry, we'll carefully consider this judgment as more detail comes to hand," Voortman says.

"This will feel like a kick in the guts not only to the Mercedes-Benz dealers, but to all franchised new car dealers and for that matter all of Australia's franchisees," he adds.

FCAI APPLAUDS QUEENSLAND RIDE TO ZERO

The Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries (FCAI) is applauding the Queensland Government's new community road Safety Grants program, the Motorcycle Ride to Zero Grants.

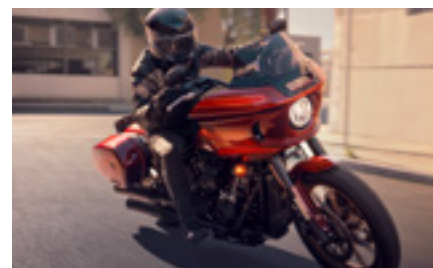
For many Australians, especially Queenslanders, the FCAI says riding motorcycle isn't just a mode of transport but a way of life.

To ensure the enjoyment while prioritising safety, riders must use safe riding skills and on-road behaviour.

This program offers support to local organisations, including motorcycle clubs and groups, by subsidising participant fees for post-licence training courses, which is a step in the right direction in reducing accidents on Queensland roads says the FCAI.

FCAI chief executive **Tony Weber** says the FCAI supports the Queensland Government's commitment to road safety and rider education.

"This initiative enhances road safety by equipping riders with improved



motorcycle skills and rider knowledge.

"Whether for experienced riders looking to refine their skills or those returning to their motorcycles after a hiatus, these training courses play a pivotal role in enhancing on-road behaviours."



ISUZU AND VW AT EMERGENCY VEHICLE SHOWCASE

Isuзу Australia (IAL) and Volkswagen Group Australia (VGA) returned to the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authority Council (AFAC) conference at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre in late August.

IAL showcased a selection of Isuzu Trucks and Isuzu Power Solutions (IPS), from tankers through to standalone power units.

This year's theme was based around the challenges and opportunities of creating a sustainable future and how Australian emergency services will evolve in response to a changing landscape, climate, and technology.

IAL national sales manager **Craig White** says reliability of equipment continues to be a priority in emergency service work.

"Reliability of equipment and transportation in an emergency response situation is a critical factor, it just can't let our crews down when they need it," White says.

"This becomes ever more important as they step up to meet the challenges of



changing weather conditions."

Isuzu showed a fully operational fire truck that's already being used by emergency response teams around Australia.

ON THE STAND

A fully operational FTS 139-260 4x4 Auto Crew tanker took centre stage.

It was joined by a NPS 75/45-155 4x4

Crew Rescue Truck built for the Victorian State Emergency Service to transport team members and equipment to rescues in remote and difficult to access locations.

Isuzu Power Solutions presented a 3CA1 Power Unit and a 20kVA GS020-PTY generator set from its range of off-road power products.

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"Over the past few years IPS has been developing the quietest, most compact engines to support our partners in Australian industry," White says.

"We're pleased to bring these models to the attention of the emergency services sector through AFAC and believe that the ongoing refinements to these products will be welcomed."

The vertical water-cooled four-cycle diesel 3CA1 Power Unit is well-matched for truck-mounted pumping with a heavy-duty cooling system (specified for up to 50°C on premium models) and air cleaner with flame retardant element which makes it ideal for emergency service vehicles.

The G5020-PTY 20 kVA gen set comes with a portable compact design and a sound level output of 51db(A) at seven metres, making it one of the quietest gen sets currently available.

It's powered by the Isuzu 4LE1 engine producing an output of 20 kVA/16 kW (Prime), with a rated voltage of 415 VAC/50 Hz.

VOLKSWAGEN EMERGENCY VEHICLES STEAL THE SHOW

A Volkswagen police pursuit car and a prototype emergency services Amarok played starring roles at AFAC 2023.

A new Volkswagen Passat Proline showcased the latest version of the touchscreen integration for emergency vehicles which is a collaboration with Lumen Australia, Obses UK, and Ecco Safety Group.

It enables easy activation of lights and sirens through the standard OEM multi-media screen.

Numberplate recognition capability is now also included. This integration removes the need for multiple screens, saving space, build costs, and weight, improves occupant safety and can be fitted to other Volkswagen emergency services vehicles.

An example of the recently launched Amarok Style V6 premiered in Brisbane as a prototype for a fire and rescue vehicle in conjunction with MFI and Ecco Safety Group.

The body integrates rear traffic alert, reversing camera, sensors and a built-in rear sign board.

Volkswagens of various types, from Golf hatchbacks to Crafter vans, are used by emergency services in every state and territory.

"Year-to-date, we've sold more than 1400 Passat Proline wagons and sedans, and almost 600 Tiguan Allspace

Proline," says Volkswagen and Cupra national fleet sales manager **Regine Zschernig**.

Prolines are developed for and with emergency services, differing from civilian issue vehicles in interior trim, an upgraded alternator and provision for an additional battery.

In emergency service use, the Tiguan Allspace Proline five-seat SUV is fitted with a 162TSI 4Motion drivetrain and sports suspension.

"There are no alterations to brakes, engines or drivetrains," Zschernig adds.

"So, aside from the Proline adjustments, the police and ambulance have selected Volkswagen cars and SUVs that are essentially the very cars that the public drive."

Zschernig says VW offers an array of suitable vehicles. "We have compact hatches, a full range of SUVs, a new ute range, and a full suite of commercial vans and chassis up to 5.5 tonnes GVM," she explains.

"We back them all with Care Plans, five-year warranty and more than 100 dealers nationwide."



RPM ACCELERATES GROWTH THROUGH SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATIONS

RPM Automotive Group's revenue rose 48% to \$117 million this year (in FY22 it was \$78.8 million), driven by growth and two acquisitions.

Gross profit was up 35% to \$37.0 million (FY22, \$27.5m).

Underlying EBITDA is up 40% to \$10.6 million (FY22: \$7.6 million) according to RPM while it says NPAT from continuing operations is down 38% to \$1.8 million (FY22: \$2.8 million.)

"Over the past 12 months, we have accelerated our rate of revenue and EBITDA growth across our portfolio of 15 automotive brands through all of our retail and wholesale divisions, Repairs and Roadside, Performance and Accessories, Motorsport, and Wheels and Tyres," says chief executive **Clive Finkelstein**.

"We successfully acquired two businesses and launched three new retail operations, unlocking synergies through cross-selling and leveraging existing infrastructure.

"We improved our gross margin across the network by harnessing our scale and supply chain capability, consolidating brands to maximise awareness at both state and national level and in-filling the network with complementary products."

FY23 RESULT OVERVIEW

RPM's FY23 revenue of \$117m rose 48% on the prior corresponding period.

That was driven by 8% organic growth and the strong performance of acquisitions, including Metro Tyre Services (January 2023), and the successful integration of Safety Dave (acquired in February 2022), ACT Total Tyres (April 2022), VicWide Tyre Services (May 2022), and AFT Automotive (July 2022).

Total gross profit increased to \$37m up 35% from FY22's \$27.5m through lower cost of goods sold and increasing economies of scale across RPM's wholesale and retail networks.

Strong revenue growth combined with operational optimisation and cost management, improved RPM's FY23 EBITDA to \$8.8m, up 21% on FY22, with underlying EBITDA of \$10.6m.

Net Profit After Tax was \$1.2m, down 54% primarily because of accounting adjustments for the disposal of under-performing business units, as well as a one-off goodwill impairment.



Inventory stabilised at \$25.1m. There has been considerable improvement in inventory turnover to 3.4x, a substantial improvement on FY22, with four turns per annum being the ultimate objective.

In December 2022, RPM raised \$3m via an institutional placement and share purchase plan.

Though the optimisation strategy has affected the FY23 results, RPM is confident that strategic changes across the business will create a more resilient and ultimately more profitable company.

DIVISION COMMENTARY

In FY23, Wheels and Tyres (wholesale tyres) generated revenue of \$33.5m, a 19% increase on FY22, driven primarily by increasing commercial tyre orders for the transport, agriculture and mining sectors.

Further wholesale revenue increases were due in part to RPM's expanding national presence following the acquisition of Metro Tyre Services, the expansion of the retail network and continued enhancement of RPM's distribution capabilities.

The Repairs and Roadside division (retail tyres) saw substantial growth over FY23 through acquisitions and expansion, increasing revenue by 55% to \$51m and profitability by 53%.

As a result of strategic restructuring early in 2H23 to address inflation and labour shortages in the service industry, the retail tyre division improved its margins significantly.

Though fluctuations in passenger tyre retail sales are anticipated because of increased trading volatility from cost-of-living rises, the impact on commercial and industrial tyres is expected to be minimal.

The Performance and Accessories division experienced strong trading throughout the year, reporting a 108% increase in revenue to \$23.6m.

There was an 87% increase in profitability, from RPM's expanding national presence and record sales growth in FY23.

RPM has had strong growth in conjunction with favourable industry tailwinds, driven by the expansion of the automotive aftermarket segment, notably in commercial trucking, 4WD, and caravans.

The Motorsport division generated \$8.6m in revenue, an increase of 9% over FY22, and profitability was consistent.

The Motorsport division is reaffirming its dominance in race safety gear as the motorsport calendar and car club track days return to pre-COVID levels.

THE OUTLOOK

In FY24, RPM anticipates continued growth across the business and expects to achieve between \$130m and \$140m in revenue with a growing earnings ratio.

That growth is underpinned by enhanced cross-selling and economies of scale.

Simultaneously, the retail and wholesale divisions are expanding through network development, product diversification, and warehouse expansion.

The wholesale tyre division will be strengthened when Chapel Corner Tyres joins the group in FY24.

RPM's continued commitment to sustainability is set to advance through the implementation of its Tyre Recycling Strategy, scheduled for rollout during FY24.



MTA NSW APPRENTICES SHINE AT FIRST WORLDSKILLS

The Motor Traders' Association of NSW (MTA NSW) is celebrating a successful first entry in the WorldSkills National Championships, with two of its apprentices winning medals.

WorldSkills is dedicated to promoting the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector.

MTA NSW was a key sponsor of the national event and sent six automotive apprentices to Melbourne to compete against Australia's best young talent.

Apprentices competed in a series of challenges designed to test their skills across a range of disciplines.

Auto electrical competitors were tasked with diagnosing and solving various vehicle faults, while racing against the clock.

The Autobody Repair and Refinishing categories saw apprentices undergo a series of paint and panel challenges, ranging from spray painting to buffing and design layout.

Ballina-based apprentice **Lockie Hipkins**, took home a silver medal in the Autobody Repair category, while Newcastle-based apprentice **Luke Callaway** achieved a bronze in Auto Electrical.

Alongside that, Sydney-based spray-painting apprentice **Neha Singh** received a Certificate Of Excellence for her performance in the Auto Refinishing competition.

MTA NSW general manager RTO **Ian Price** says WorldSkills provides a great platform for new talent to showcase its abilities and highlights the excellent level of training apprentices receive.



LOCKIE HIPKINS

"It's great to see MTA NSW apprentices being recognised across all three disciplines that we competed in at WorldSkills," Price says.

"We're so proud of Luke, Lachlan and Neha for their achievements, and to all our apprentices who competed at the event.

"Being chosen to represent NSW was a huge accomplishment and they're all winners in our eyes.

"This is the first time MTA NSW has entered the WorldSkills competition and we're looking forward to many more years of success. This is just the beginning," he says.

MTA NSW chief executive **Stavros Yallouridis** says the WorldSkills competition provides a key opportunity for recognising emerging talent in the automotive industry.

"Not only is WorldSkills a chance to demonstrate the high quality of our training, it's also an opportunity for our organisation to give back and invest in the future careers of our talented trainees," Yallouridis says.



LUKE CALLAWAY

Held every two years, the WorldSkills National Championships is the biggest trades and skills competition in Australia.

The 2023 event featured 50 competitions, with trainees and apprentices across various industries testing their abilities against their peers.

Each secured a place after winning WorldSkills regional competitions, which featured more than 500 events across 34 regions of Australia, with more than 4000 apprentices, trainees and students competing.

MTA NSW Apprentices competing at WorldSkills National Championships:

- **Kynan Bonnano**, Sydney, Refinishing.
- **Neha Singh**, Sydney, Refinishing, Certificate of Excellence.
- **Lockie Hipkins**, Ballina, Body Repair, Silver medal.
- **Liam Piscioneri**, Sydney, Body Repair.
- **Luke Callaway**, Newcastle, Auto Electrical, Bronze medal.
- **Jake Ryan**, Griffith, Auto Electrical.



QUEENSLAND APPRENTICE IS 2023 CAPRICORN RISING STAR

Queensland apprentice **Chelsea Bowers** is Capricorn's 2023 Rising Star.

Employed by John Edwards Automotive in Geebung, Bowers was a top five finalist in 2022.

"I began my journey in automotive when I started a school-based apprenticeship in grade 12. I took every Wednesday off and worked alongside a brilliant mentor who taught me so much," Bowers says.

"I found my love of cars again when I was restoring a 1964 Buick with my friends in my spare time. I decided I wasn't finished with the trade, and I was determined to come back and finish my apprenticeship."

"This is when I found John at Bosch and the rest is history. I love my job more than ever and I have never once felt out of place.

"As I re-entered the trade, I met a few women in all different trades who had gone through exactly what I had gone through and had a whole network of tradeswomen I could turn to.

"Everything I went through got me to where I am now. It has taught me resilience, both mental and physical strength, passion and most importantly, the drive to share my story so no one ever feels as though they need to go through the same thing," she says.

Bowers says coming from a humble workshop has accelerated her growth

and provided great benefits.

"Being in a small workshop, I feel as though I'm very involved and included in my work...

"I like to put myself out of my comfort zone and choose to do difficult jobs so I can learn quickly and accurately," Bowers says.

"I also do a lot of external training outside of work hours that can help improve my knowledge and confidence.

"I love that every day is a different challenge and a different opportunity to learn something new.

"Something that keeps me going when times get difficult, is thinking about how far I've come in my journey and how I can use my story to inspire the next generation of people looking to get into the automotive trade," she says.

"One of our regular customers runs a not-for-profit women's shelter. We have a very strong, trusting relationship with these people. Every time they come in, our hearts break hearing the stories they tell us about what they go through," Bowers says.

"When they bring their car in to our workshop, we stock the boot with donated nappies, sanitary items, soaps, toilet paper, shampoos and conditioners, and anything else they need at the time as a thank-you for helping those in need. It's only a small gesture but it does go a long way.

"I have a vision that one day I'll own the workshop I'm currently employed in, and I have my apprentices that I closely mentor.

"My long-term goals that accompany this vision is running hands-on workshops at schools teaching basic car maintenance and safety, as well as encouraging students to consider a trade in automotive as their first career option post-school."

"I look forward to continuing to break the stigma of what the image of a mechanic looks like in people's minds," she adds.

John Edwards Automotive owner, **Sam Lawson**, says Bowers is an inspiration for future generations.

Bowers has won a \$5000 cash prize from Castrol and a Capricorn Rising Stars trophy. John Edwards Automotive has received a 12-month Repco Autopedia subscription along with enrolment in the Workshop Whisperer's Service Advisor Pro online program.

"The 2023 Capricorn Rising Stars Apprentice of the Year was selected from more than 550 apprentices nominated by member businesses located across Australia and New Zealand," says Capricorn Group chief executive **Brad Gannon**.

"This competition highlights the importance of apprentices to the Australian and New Zealand automotive aftermarket industries."



FOTON LAUNCHES ALL-ELECTRIC T5 TIPPER TRUCK

Chinese truck maker Foton has launched what it says is an Australian first with the all-electric ready-to-go T5 tipper truck.

The model's main point of difference is its 3500kg braked towing capacity, making it a practical choice for municipalities, landscape companies, infrastructure support, and construction firms.

Another strength is its adaptability, with the model available with a rated GVM of 4500kg for car licence operation, or 6000kg for light rigid licensed drivers, with either option allowing towing.

Featuring an Australian-made steel tipper body, the Foton T5 EV is available for delivery from Foton Mobility Distribution dealers nationwide.

"We're particularly proud of the T5 EV Tipper, as it combines the positive attributes of going all-electric, while also providing the performance and towing capabilities that are required

in the real world," says Foton Mobility Distribution's general manager, light-duty vehicles **Bill Gillespie**.

"From a financial standpoint, it makes a lot of sense, as the model allows for a genuinely affordable entry into the EV tipper market, with 20% lower upfront and operational expenditure costs.

"While Foton Mobility Distribution's EV truck offering is new to Australia, it comes with impressive credentials from markets around the globe.

"Last year alone, Foton led the world in producing 22,000 new energy commercial vehicles, and with that number continually growing, purchasers can be confident that they're receiving a proven package.

"In the short time that we've been on sale here in Australia, we've claimed leadership in the pure-EV truck sales race, and with the T5 EV Tipper, we're looking to continue that growth," he says.

Besides being a tipper, the T5 EV can be

configured for practically any light-duty application.

DC fast charging allows for full recharging in 1.5 hours, or the standard 11kW AC onboard charger can recharge the traction battery in 7.2 hours, allowing for overnight turnarounds.

The T5 EV has a fully loaded range of 180km, and a full safety suite, including a Low-Speed Pedestrian Warning System, a comprehensive electronic braking and stability support package, dual SRS airbags, and reversing radar and buzzer.

Supported by a nationwide dealer network from Cairns to Perth, Foton EV trucks have a five-year/200,000km vehicle warranty, and an eight-year/300,000km traction battery warranty.

All Foton trucks have 24/7 roadside assistance provided by NTI Truck Assist.



ELECTRIC JEEP AVENGER ARRIVING 2024

JeeP has confirmed the compact Avenger, the brand's first battery electric vehicle (BEV), will be coming to Australia in the second half of next year.

Since it was unveiled in October 2022, the Avenger BEV has won accolades in its home market of Europe.

It was voted European Car of the Year 2023, Women's World Car of the Year best family SUV, TopGear.com Electric Awards electric car of the Year 2023, Best Small Car at Autocar Awards 2023, and Small BEV Autovista Group Residual Value Award 2023.

Jeep says the Avenger is a key component in its global electrification strategy and is built in the Stellantis factory in Tychy, Poland.

Designed and built as a Jeep from day one, the Avenger packs the brand's DNA into a compact SUV with a combination of capability, style, functionality, and technology.

"The Jeep Avenger represents a key milestone for the Jeep brand, our first zero exhaust emission SUV," says Jeep Australia managing director **Michael Filazzola**.

"A compact SUV, the Avenger will provide a new entry point to the Jeep range while adding another level of electrification to our offering in



Australia and represents a further step in the Jeep brand's evolution."

The Avenger has been designed to offer 360-degree protection with encased lights and colour-moulded skidplates for both urban and off-road driving.

At 4.08 metres long, the Avenger is the most compact Jeep but offers a roomy and versatile interior for five people and their luggage.

The interior continues Jeep's "design to function" premise offering 34 litres of interior storage, the equivalent of a carry-on bag and the one metre-wide, square-shaped boot is spacious and versatile.

The Avenger has an electric range of up to 400km WLTP. The standard fast

charging mode allows it to recharge 30km (average daily need) in three minutes and go from 20 to 80% in 24 minutes.

A series of safety and ADAS features which provide level-two driving autonomy include blindspot monitoring, Autonomous Emergency Braking with Vulnerable Road Users (pedestrian and cyclist) protection, automatic parking, and 180-degree rear camera with drone view.

The Avenger has a 10.25-inch radio screen Uconnect Infotainment combined with full digital cluster available in two variants (seven and 10.25 inches).



LEXUS DEALERS INUNDATED WITH ENQUIRY FOR ALL-NEW LM

Lexus will market two highly equipped variants of the new LM luxury people mover in Australia later this year.

And it will be followed by an even higher specified version from early 2024.

Lexus customers and guests attending the Lexus Melbourne Cup will be among the first to experience the new vehicle, riding to and from Flemington racecourse in a fleet of chauffeur-driven LMs.

Lexus Australia chief executive **John Pappas** says dealers have been "inundated" with customer enquiries since the second-generation LM was revealed at 2023 Auto Shanghai in April.

"The reality is that demand will initially exceed supply for this vehicle by a significant margin, so we therefore need to manage customer expectations."

Pappas says the LM anticipates passengers' needs in advance, offering levels of comfort and amenities associated normally with first and business class air travel.

The LM will be available with a choice of two hybrid powertrains in keeping with the Lexus electrified strategy of developing powertrains that combine

strong performance with reduced fuel consumption and lower emissions.

It will be sold initially in seven-seat configuration with the LM 350h Sports Luxury, available in two- and all-wheel drive, priced from \$160,888 and \$165,888 respectively.

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There is no Lexus like it, and almost certainly no other vehicle like it. It's the ultimate expression of Lexus making luxury personal.

The 2.5-litre four-cylinder engine with series parallel hybrid system produces 184kW and 270Nm.

The sliding side door opens on to two reclining airline business-class-like seats, with a third row boosting capacity to seven.

When not in use the supplementary row can be folded away at the push of a button to maximise luggage space.

In early 2024 the LM range will be

joined by the four-seat LM 500h Ultra Luxury, with a 2.4-litre turbocharged four-cylinder hybrid engine developing more than 200kW and all-wheel drive. It's priced at \$220,888.

The centrepiece of the LM 500h is its rear cabin, dominated by two VIP throne seats with first-class levels of comfort, Japanese craftsmanship and a Lexus-first Rear Climate Concierge to control the cabin environment.

Fully raising the glass behind the front seats creates a personal and private cabin for chauffeured passengers, who can enjoy a world-first 48-inch widescreen along with a 23-speaker Mark Levinson premium audio system.

Pappas says the LM will "delight customers with the ultimate in comfort and a level of opulence never seen before" in a luxury people mover.

"There is no Lexus like it, and almost certainly no other vehicle like it. It's the ultimate expression of Lexus making luxury personal."

"It's a great Lexus to drive but an even better Lexus to be driven in. It will be hard to surpass the LM for the ultimate chauffeur-driven experience," he says.



HILUX LEADS RECORD BREAKING NEW VEHICLE SALES IN AUGUST

Toyota's **HiLux** ute was Australia's best-selling new vehicle in August, recording 5762 sales in a record-breaking month.

It was followed by the Ford **Ranger** (5760), Toyota **RAV4** (3317), Isuzu Ute **D-Max** (3281), and MG **ZS** (3193).

New vehicle sales achieved the highest August result on record as Australian customers took delivery of 109,966 new vehicles, a 15.4% increase on the same period of 2022.

Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries (FCAI) chief executive **Tony Weber** says back-to-back months of record new car sales was positive news for car manufacturers and consumers.

"The Australian automotive sector continues to demonstrate its strength, with August recording unprecedented sales figures, reflecting both a high level of demand from Australians and improved supply of vehicles," Weber says.

"Year to date sales have increased 9.9% which is a better indicator of the

underlying strength of the market."

Weber says that electric vehicles accounted for 6.4% of sales and hybrids for 10.5% of sales in August.

"As consumers continue to embrace low-emissions technologies we're seeing growth in electric, plug-in and hybrid vehicle sales. More than one in six vehicles sold in the month of August featured low-emissions technologies."

Sales across every state and territory increased this month compared with August 2022.

Sales in the Australian Capital Territory by 21.5% (1713); New South Wales 13.6% (34,655); Queensland 7.8% (23,049); South Australia 21.9% (6952); Tasmania 14.4% (1843); Victoria 16.3% (29,126); Western Australia 32.5% (11,637), and Northern Territory 21.4% (991).

Toyota was the highest selling marque with 22,321 sales. **Mazda** followed with 8458 then **Ford** (7898), **Hyundai** (6513), and **Kia** (6510).

VFACTS AUGUST 2023 SUMMARY BY CLASS.

- The August 2023 market of 109,966 new vehicle sales is an increase of 14,710 sales or 15.4% against August 2022 (95,256). There were 26.8 selling days in both August 2023 and August 2022 which resulted in an increase of 548.9 vehicle sales per day.
- The passenger vehicle market is down by 661 sales (-3.3%) over the same month last year; the SUV market is up by 13,742 vehicle sales (28.3%); the light commercial market is up by 1559 sales (6.9%), and the heavy commercial vehicle market is up by 70 sales (1.7%) versus August 2022.

TOP 10 BRANDS



1. TOYOTA 22,321



2. MAZDA 8458



3. FORD 7898



4. HYUNDAI 6513



5. KIA 6510

4X4 UTES



1. Ford Ranger
5381



2. Toyota HiLux
4561



3. Isuzu Ute D-Max
2628



4. Toyota Landcruiser
1102



5. Mazda BT-50
1099



6. Mitsubishi Triton
917



7. LDV T60/T60 MAX
710



8. Nissan Navara
688



9. GWM Ute
631



10. Volkswagen Amarok
553

SUV SMALL <\$40K



1. MG ZS
3193



2. Subaru Crosstrek
1177



3. Mazda CX-30
1132



4. Kia Seltos
1085



5. Mitsubishi ASX
1053



6. GWM Haval Jolion
996



7. Hyundai Kona
993



8. Toyota C-HR
863



9. Toyota Corolla Cross
858



10. Chery Omoda 5
760

TOP 10 BRANDS



6. MG 5368



7. MITSUBI 4961



8. ISUZU UTE 4712



9. SUBARU 4706



10. NISSAN 4233



EVS HELP CHARGE UP AUGUST NEW VEHICLE SALES

Electric vehicles accounted for 6.4% of record August new vehicle sales and hybrids accounted for 10.5%.

So says Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries (FCAI) chief executive **Tony Weber**, adding that growth in electric, plug-in, and hybrid vehicle sales is being seen as consumers continue to embrace low-emissions technologies.

"More than one in six vehicles sold in the month of August featured low emissions technologies."

Releasing the August VFacts figures, the FCAI's tables show new electric sales at 6984 for August compared with 4235 in August 2022, up 64.9%.

Year-to-date (YTD) sales were 56,922 compared to 14,524 in 2022, a rise of 291.9%.

Total plug-in hybrid (PHEV) sales were 1113 in August, up 106.1% on August 2022 when 540 sales were recorded.

YTD comparisons are 5479 in 2023, up 35% on last year's 4059.

New hybrid vehicle sales were 11,584 in August, up 68.7% on August 2022's 6866.

Hybrid sales YTD are 59,593 compared to 54,723, an 8.9% increase.

Electrics remain high in the popular SUV category, accounting for 4967 sales, up 218.8% on the 1558 new sales in August 2022.

SUV electric sales YTD are 38,843, a rise of 666.1% on the previous year's 5070.

Passenger electrics dropped in monthly comparisons (1991 from 2668, down 25.4%) but increased in YTD comparisons (17,956, a 90.6% rise from 9420).

Hybrids did the opposite in the

passenger category, going up 73.5% in August comparisons (3924 from 2262) but dropping slightly in YTD comparisons to 9.2% from 18,695 sales to 16,983.

Petrol and diesel new vehicle sales haven't changed much in all categories and hydrogen vehicle sales have largely stagnated.

BYD and Tesla are among the top selling electrics.

ELECTRIC, PHEV AND HYBRID SALES					AUGUST 2023			
Total Market	Month		YTD		Variance +/- Vol. & %			
	2023	2022	2023	2022	MTH	YTD	MTH	YTD
ELECTRIC								
Passenger Private	1,991	2,668	17,956	9,420	-677	8,536	-25.4%	90.6%
SUV Private	4,967	1,558	38,843	5,070	3,409	33,773	218.8%	666.1%
Light Commercial Non-Private	26	9	123	34	17	89	188.9%	261.8%
Sub Total	6,984	4,235	56,922	14,524	2,749	42,398	64.9%	291.9%
HYBRID								
Passenger Private	3,924	2,262	16,983	18,695	1,662	-1,712	73.5%	-9.2%
SUV Private	7,660	4,604	42,610	36,028	3,056	6,582	66.4%	18.3%
Sub Total	11,584	6,866	59,593	54,723	4,718	4,870	68.7%	8.9%
PHEV								
Passenger Private	46	43	280	281	3	-1	7.0%	-0.4%
SUV Private	1,067	497	5,199	3,778	570	1,421	114.7%	37.6%
Sub Total	1,113	540	5,479	4,059	573	1,420	106.1%	35.0%
TOTAL	19,681	11,641	121,994	69,247	8,040	52,747	69.1%	76.2%