

Bouncing back

With effects of production stop easing, Subaru aims to rebound in second half of 2019 with freer supply



Forester

By JUSTIN HILLIARD

SUBARU Australia says its sales performance this year has been “actually pretty good”, revealing that the fallout from the production stop which derailed its stock levels has subsided, opening up the possibility of it rebounding in the second half of 2019.

Speaking last week in an exclusive interview with GoAuto, Subaru Australia managing director Colin Christie said “our production was significantly reduced” from the outset this year due to a production stop in Japan prompted by a defective electric power steering (EPS) part.

The issue affected MY19 examples of the Forester mid-size SUV, XV small SUV and Impreza small car, with the production stop at the Gunma plant starting on January 16 and lasting for about two weeks. For reference, no vehicles sold Down Under were impacted.

Despite the defect being concentrated to the trio, Subaru halted all of its Japanese assembly

lines for a fortnight, meaning that the Liberty mid-size sedan, Levorg mid-size wagon, WRX small car and BRZ sportscar were also unavailable for export to Australia.

Nonetheless, Mr Christie stressed that “from a momentum point of view, it’s actually pretty good for us this year”, adding that “we’re progressing well, we’ve built a pretty strong order bank”.

“There were obviously production shortages in the first place, so May was really the first month we actually started getting more normalised rates of stock back into the country,” he said.

“There was a massive backlog of getting production in, so even when the production started again, the speed on line was much slower because they obviously were trying to produce replacements units as well as to keep the line going.

“We effectively lost – in real terms – over a month of production ... (and) that (slow production) probably rolled on for about two to three months.

Continued next page

LAUNCHED: A-CLASS SEDAN



LAUNCHED: GT 4-DOOR COUPE



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 “So, that basically (impacted) all the way through from January to April – that’s been the biggest factor by a long way, in terms of our sales result.

“Our orders are naturally small in the first part of the year, so that then made an even bigger impact. It really has taken has three to four months to recover.

“June certainly is feeling a lot better than we’ve seen for the first four months of the year.”

To the end of April this year, Subaru Australia’s sales were down by a massive 33.8 per cent – easily the largest loss incurred among the top-15 brands in a new-vehicle market that was down by 8.1 per cent during the same period.

But May signalled a return to form for the company, with its volume growing for the first time in 2019, albeit by just 0.1 per cent.

Either way, this result was enough



XV



Impreza

to slow the bleeding, with it now standing at a 27.4 per cent loss and 15,518 units sold in the year to date.

Mr Christie said he expects regular levels of supply to be available for the rest of 2019, which “allows us to get back on track”.

“Demand from customers has been strong, we’re very happy with it,” he said. “We just haven’t been able to get the cars into the country and into customers’ hands as quickly as we would like.”

Mr Christie added that even Forester (5192 units, +24.0% YTD), which is Subaru Australia’s only model to experience growth in 2019 thanks to the launch of a new-generation model in September last year, has not been able to fully hit its stride yet.

“While it’s been a really strong start to Forester, it’s also been hindered a lot by the production challenges. They definitely affected new-model Forester, Impreza and XV the most,” he said.

“But our biggest challenge was

certainly Forester. So, while we’re still up 24.0 per cent on Forester volume, the reality is the order momentum for that is significantly stronger.

“We just haven’t been able to get back on top of the production yet to meet all those customer demands.”

Asked if the production stop was

solely to blame for XV (4016 units, -32.3%) and Impreza (1576, -63.3%) cooling off this year, Mr Christie emphasised that “XV and Forester have been the victims of that”.

“I think the Impreza has had a major impact because of that, as well,” he said. “But as we know, the small-car segment is a little

more challenging than it has been historically.

“So, we have seen a little bit of a drop-off in demand but nowhere near what is being shown at the moment – a lot of that has literally been the inability to get cars.”

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Colin Christie

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Positive trends



C-Class

Economic factors, stinkbugs prompt slow start to 2019 for Mercedes but recovery underway

By TUNG NGUYEN

MERCEDES-BENZ Australia/Pacific (MBAP) is expecting renewed sales interest in the second half of the year after a 14.0 per cent year-on-year drop in new registrations in the first five months of trading, to 12,413 units.

According to the German prestige brand, a number of factors have played into its sales decline, including uncertainty surrounding the federal election and an infestation of stinkbugs that has also affected a number of other brands.

Speaking to journalists last week at the launch of the A-Class sedan and AMG GT 4-door Coupe, MBAP managing director and chief executive Horst von Sanden called

the last 12 months a “perfect storm” of events that contributed to the sales decline.

“We obviously had a very challenging 12 months, not only us, but we as much as everyone else,” he said.

“A few reasons for that, some reasons completely beyond our control, I mean we can’t control political uncertainty in the world and obviously in Australia, as well.

“We couldn’t control that there was a royal commission into banking, and also certainly then as a result of that, there were weaknesses in the real-estate housing market happening.

“All of this has certainly resulted in a much weaker consumer and business confidence, and that hit us and our industry and many other



GLC

industries, of course.

“Then we faced some challenges with diesel homologation and certification issues which resulted in big delays, then nature hit us with these stupid animals called stinkbugs and all of a sudden ships were turned around and got lost for weeks if not months.

“That certainly caused frustrations with customers and certainly with us, but it also caused a lot of grief with our dealers – dealers lost a lot of money as

a result of that and so did we.

“It was a bit of a ‘perfect storm’ scenario, but now luckily this is coming to an end.”

However, Mercedes-Benz is not the only prestige brand struggling to break new ground in Australia’s shrinking new-vehicle market this year, as BMW and Audi also face declining sales.

Audi has been hit the hardest in the first five months of 2019, dipping 29.0 per cent to just 6100 sales as key models such as the A1 light hatch, diesel Q7 and ground-breaking e-tron full-electric SUV are delayed.

Meanwhile, BMW has slowed by just 3.8 per cent, to 9882 units, buoyed by the launch of the new-

generation 3 Series, X7 flagship SUV, Z4 convertible and 8 Series sports car.

As for the smaller prestige brands, Alfa Romeo has clocked 373 sales (-26.7%), Infiniti has 253 registrations (+38.3%), Lexus is line-ball with last year on 3838 sales, and Volvo is continuing its upward momentum with 3029 units sold (+27.1%).

However, Mr von Sanden said the landscape was already shifting and that the brand is seeing positive signs in the Australian market.

“We could immediately see – after the federal election finished – some positive trends,” he said.

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AMG GT63 S 4-door Coupe

Benz to fight Victoria's luxury-car tax that does more economic harm than good: von Sanden

By TUNG NGUYEN

MERCEDES-BENZ Australia/Pacific (MBAP) will fight the recently introduced Victorian luxury car tax (LCT) that sees vehicles priced above \$100,000 sluggish with extra tariffs, arguing that the new levy will do more harm to the economy than good.

At last week's launch of the AMG GT 4-door Coupe, MBAP managing director and chief executive Horst von Sanden slammed the increased vehicle excise, questioning the need for extra charges on top of stamp duty, registration fees and the national LCT.

"The very basic question is: How much more burden do you want to load on the shoulders on the car industry?" he said.

"The luxury-car tax for starters

is actually, in my words, an insult because if a government or a country decides to tax luxury, that's fine, but then tax all luxury goods, not only cars.

"In a time when the luxury-car tax is more and more under scrutiny and question with the free-trade agreement with Europe, then we all of a sudden see that additional burden of a stamp duty by one state government.

"How many taxes do you load on a car? In the end, you pay 50 per cent taxes on a car and is that reasonable? And if anyone thinks it is reasonable, the question is why?"

"We all need taxes, we all need to contribute to the income of a state or a country, but it should be equitable, it should be fair, and I believe it is not."

For reference, the \$349,900 before

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on-road costs of the Mercedes-AMG GT63 S 4-door Coupe launched last week balloons to \$374,410.90 driveaway, according to the German brand's website, after \$18,470.40 stamp duty, \$853.50 registration and \$3990 delivery charges are applied.

MBAP lists the LCT – which is applied to fuel-efficient vehicles above \$75,526 and other vehicles above \$67,525 at a rate of 33 per cent of the amount above the threshold – as \$66,636 for the top-

spec V8-powered AMG GT 4-door Coupe.

As reported, the additional Victorian LCT will be applied at seven per cent for vehicles priced from \$100,000 to \$150,000, while vehicles over \$150,000 will be hit with a nine per cent surcharge.

Mr von Sanden said the increased tariffs will have a negative impact on sales, which will knock on and affect dealers and car-makers, who both employ hundreds of people.

"Will it do more damage to the Australian economy than good? And that is also obviously in conjunction with our dealers who have suffered a fair bit from the difficult market conditions, and now they will potentially lose more sales by people no longer being prepared to pay the extra surplus, which is mainly tax," he said.

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Charging ahead



EQC

Mercedes not counting on federal EV incentives as it draws closer to October launch of EQC SUV

By TUNG NGUYEN

MERCEDES-BENZ Australia/Pacific (MBAP) will continue as planned with its electric vehicle (EV) product rollout, spearheaded by the full-electric EQC launching in October, despite the lack of leadership and incentives from the recently elected federal government.

Speaking to GoAuto last week, MBAP managing director and chief executive Horst von Sanden said consumer appetite for emissions-free models has reached a point where he is confident that EVs now make sense in Australia.

“I think there is no doubt that electric cars at the moment are the future, the question is how quickly can the volume grow?” he said.

“We’ve been overwhelmed by the interest of our EQC –

early expressions of interest and commitments to buy – and we can’t wait to finally have the car here.

“We’ve had extremely good feedback from customers and interest shown. Unfortunately, our allocation for the first year and second year is quite moderate, so I’m pretty confident that demand will be greater than supply, but at least it’s a start into a new era.”

Though Mr von Sanden would not be drawn on the exact EQC allocation, volume is expected to be small given Australia’s current low interest in battery-electric vehicles.

Last year, just 1352 EVs (excluding hybrids) were sold, representing just 0.12 per cent of the overall 2018 new-vehicle market.

For the first five months of 2019, however, EV sales have nearly



doubled year-on-year to 1075 units, from 543, thanks to new offerings in the market including the emissions-free Hyundai Ioniq small hatch and Kona Electric small SUV.

The second-generation Nissan Leaf will also launch this year, as well as the entry-level Tesla Model 3, however Audi’s e-tron SUV has been delayed until early 2020.

Mr von Sanden said government intervention or monetary incentives are not necessary for mass-market EV adoption and that the technology will drive interest.

“We believe the time is right for electric cars. Of course they need to be the right electric cars, they need to have the right range – that is still



the biggest fear of people,” he said.

“The second question is how about charging infrastructure – the needs of our customers will be satisfied either at home or at your workplace or at a dealership, and then of course we joined with other manufacturers to develop infrastructure beyond the metropolitan areas.

“Do we wait for the government to put everything into place, or do we start to bring things in and the government and customers will follow?”

“In the end, it’s all about the customer, it’s not about us, it’s not about the government, it’s about what the customers want.”

As reported, the EQC is

underpinned by dual electric motors producing 300kW of power and 760Nm of torque.

With an 80kWh battery in tow, driving range is pegged around 450km when tested on the outdated New European Drive Cycle (NEDC), however fast-charging can top-up to 80 per cent of capacity in just 40 minutes.

Mr von Sanden said ultimately it would be customers that drive the changeover from internal-combustion engines to electric powertrains and that the signs in Australia are positive.

“I’m really encouraged by a lot of expressions of interest from customers saying, ‘Right, I know an electric car will be expensive, but I’m happy to invest that money to make my contribution to the environment, to be an early adopter, to be innovative, to be all those things’,” he said.

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Next step



Lexus partners with VicRoads, Telstra to trial connected vehicle technology on public roads

By ROBBIE WALLIS

LEXUS Australia has announced a partnership with VicRoads and Telstra that will see a pair of modified RX large SUVs trial a number of connected vehicle technologies on the road, with the aim of improving traffic management and reducing road trauma.

The two RX450h hybrids are fitted with about \$5000 of specialised equipment that helps them communicate with each and other through cellular networks while testing five new connected safety features over a two-year collaboration.

Among the new technologies are an emergency electronic brake-light warning, which communicates between two vehicles to warn the driver when another vehicle further down the road – and potentially out of sight – is braking hard.

Alternatively, the systems can

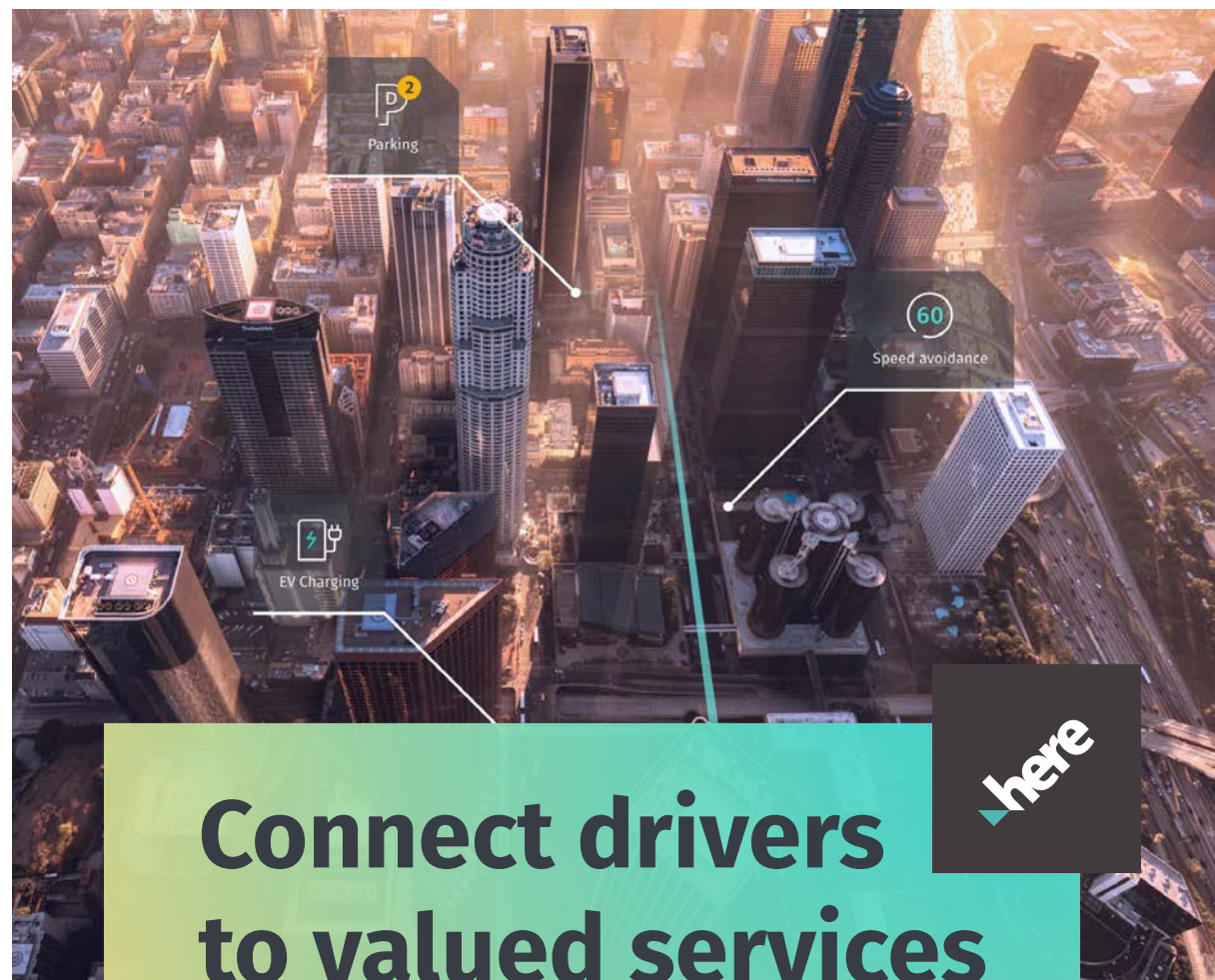
also alert drivers if a vehicle ahead is stopped at the side of the road or travelling at unusually low speeds.

Another feature pertains to speed-limit warnings, providing information on variable speed limits while also giving drivers advisory speed limits when approaching a curve while travelling at speed.

Using Telstra's 4G cellular network, one system uses a video sensor at an intersection to alert drivers when a pedestrian or cyclist is crossing the road, which could be useful at a built-up intersection where visibility around corners is limited.

Telstra group executive network and IT manager Nikos Katinakis said the technology will be compatible with the incoming 5G cellular network, with the current 4G network requiring tweaks to be compatible with the trial.

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Electric vision



BMW channels M1 supercar with potent Vision M Next plug-in that could go on sale in 2023

By RON HAMMERTON

BMW has reimagined its four-decades-old M1 supercar in the shape of the 300km/h Vision M Next sports coupe concept revealed at the Munich company's #NextGen future-technology extravaganza in Germany last week.

The plug-in hybrid, carbon-fibre-bodied two-seater is expected to be one of 25 electrified models to be put into production by 2023 as BMW accelerates its shift to electric drivetrains to meet stringent emissions obligations, especially in Europe.

BMW expects sales of electrified vehicles – both plug-in and full electric – to soar by more than 30 per cent a year up to 2025.

According to BMW AG board of management chairman Harald

Krueger, the brand is moving up a gear in the transition to sustainable mobility to make the company fit for the future.

“Over the past two years, we have consistently taken numerous decisions that we are now bringing to the roads,” he said. “By 2021, we will have doubled our sales of electrified vehicles compared with 2019.

“We will offer 25 electrified vehicles already in 2023 – two years earlier than originally planned. We expect to see a steep growth curve towards 2025.

“Sales of our electrified vehicles should increase by an average of 30 per cent every year.”

BMW's full-electric range will grow to five models by 2021, with the current i3 being joined by the British-built Mini EV this year,

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the Chinese-built iX3 in 2020 and then the German-built iNext and i4 in 2021.

PHEV models on the launch pad include a new petrol-electric 5 Series and 2 Series Active Tourer this year, then the X1 and 3 Series Touring in 2020.

BMW announced that all of its plug-in hybrids will be equipped with an eDrive Zones function that will use sat-nav mapping to automatically switch the powertrain

to electric mode when entering European electric-only city zones from next year.

Although BMW has not confirmed that the Vision M Next will enter production, neither has it ruled it out.

Britain's *Autocar* speculates that it will be produced as a limited-edition supercar as a precursor to the next i8 that is expected to share much of the technology.

The Vision M Next is said to

be powered by a combination of a mid-mounted 2.0-litre turbo-petrol engine behind the seats, linked with two electric motors – one front and one back.

Combined peak power is a claimed 440kW, pushing the lightweight sports coupe to 100km/h in about three seconds and onto a top speed of 300km/h.

FULL STORY: [CLICK HERE](#)
[Couped up – next page](#)



Third-generation X6 steps out as BMW locks in potent M50i and two other variants from launch

By ROBBIE WALLIS

BMW has ripped the covers off its third-generation X6 large coupe-style SUV, set for a public debut at the Frankfurt motor show in September and a global launch from November.

Local versions will arrive around the same time with a three-variant range that should expand to additional versions, including a full-fat X6 M, in the future.

When the X6 launches globally, BMW will offer four different engine choices, with petrol and diesel inline six-cylinder versions and M-fettled offerings in both petrol and diesel guise.

Like its mechanically related X5 sibling, the range will open with the 30d and 40i, the former of which employs BMW's trusty 3.0-litre

inline six-pot turbo-diesel engine, outputting 195kW at 4000rpm and 620Nm from 2000-2500rpm.

The 30d sips between 6.9-7.2 litres per 100km while emitting between 159-172 grams of CO2 per km.

Meanwhile, the 3.0-litre inline turbo-petrol 40i produces 250kW from 5500-6500rpm and 450Nm from a wide 1500-5200rpm while sipping 8.0-8.6L/100km and emitting 181-197g/km of CO2.

As for the M Performance variants, Australia will be treated to the M50i at launch, which is underpinned by a 4.4-litre twin-turbo V8 tuned to produce 390kW from 5500-6000rpm and 750Nm from 1800-4600rpm while drinking 10.4-10.7L/100km and emitting 237-243g/km of CO2.

The only version not destined for



Australia is the M50d that takes its engine from the 30d and adds not one, not two, but three extra turbochargers to increase outputs to 294kW at 4400rpm and 760Nm from 2000-3000rpm.

Fuel economy is pegged at 6.9-7.2L/100km, while carbon emissions stand at 181-190g/km.

All four variants employ BMW's xDrive all-wheel-drive system,

with power being channelled to the wheels via an eight-speed automatic transmission.

The new X6 is 26mm longer and 15mm wider than its predecessor, partly thanks to its 44mm-wider track and 42mm- longer wheelbase.

Its wider track, along with a 6mm reduction in roof height, helps give the new X6 a lower centre of gravity, which increases agility.



Like the previous version, the new X6 shares a similar front end to the X5, however the signature kidney grille will be offered with an illuminating function that works when opening or closing the car. Alternatively, it can be turned on and off manually.

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GLE incoming



Sub-\$100,000 starting price for Benz's fresh GLE but at least two more versions to come

By JUSTIN HILLIARD

MERCEDES-BENZ Australia/Pacific has confirmed pricing and specification for its fourth-generation large SUV, with the GLE available from launch with three engine options, while at least two more are expected down the line.

The range kicks off with the GLE300d from \$99,900 plus on-road costs – \$6000 more than

GLE's previous entry-level offering – with it powered by a 2.0-litre turbo-diesel four-cylinder engine that produces 180kW of power and 500Nm of torque.

Checking in at \$111,700, the GLE450 is the only member of the trio to run on petrol and feature Mercedes-Benz's EQ Boost 48V

mild-hybrid system.

Specifically, its 270kW/500Nm 3.0-litre twin-turbo inline six-cylinder unit is supplemented by an integrated starter-generator that provides 16kW/250Nm of electrical boost under acceleration.

For now, flagship responsibilities fall to the \$118,500 GLE450d that uses a turbo-diesel version of the 3.0-litre straight six to develop a meaty 243kW and 700Nm.

All GLE variants are mated to a nine-speed torque-converter automatic transmission that sends drive to all four wheels via Mercedes-Benz's 4Matic system.

For reference, GLE's key rival, the BMW X5, starts from \$112,990 for the 195kW/620Nm xDrive30d, rising



to \$115,990 for the 250kW/450Nm xDrive40i and \$149,900 for the 294kW/760Nm M50d.

Interestingly, the GLE trio features the same list of standard equipment, including 20-inch alloy wheels, adaptive LED headlights, puddle lights, aluminium roof rails, illuminated aluminium-style running boards and a power-operated tailgate.

Inside, the German brand's new MBUX infotainment powers a pair of 12.3-inch displays (central touchscreen and digital instrument

cluster). It supports natural voice recognition, Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, and 'Mercedes me Connect' smartphone connectivity.

A windshield-projected head-up display, DAB+ digital radio, climate control, heated front seats, LED ambient lighting, Artico leather-accented upholstery, a Nappa-leather-trimmed sports steering wheel and open-pore oak wood trim are among the cabin's other features.

Advanced driver-assist systems extend to autonomous emergency braking, adaptive cruise control, lane-keep and steering assist, blind-spot monitoring, cross-traffic alert, high-beam assist, surround-view cameras and park assist plus nine airbags.

Various options packages are

available, including the \$9900 AMG Sport Package (bodykit plus panoramic sunroof, wireless smartphone charging and leather upholstery), the \$4800 Night Package (black exterior trim), the \$4200 Vision Package (13-speaker Burmester sound system, panoramic sunroof and wireless smartphone charging) and the \$6200 Energising Package Plus (massaging front seats, heated front armrests and more).

For the first time since the original M-Class (GLE's forebear), a seven-seat configuration can be optioned on Mercedes-Benz's large SUV, with it costing \$3900 but also adding power adjustment to the second row.

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[Room to move – next page](#)

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A-Class sedan to sit below imminent CLA in Mercedes line-up as latter grows in size

By TUNG NGUYEN

MERCEDES-BENZ Australia/Pacific (MBAP) will give its just-launched A-Class four-door free air in the luxury small-sedan segment by nudging its incoming second-generation CLA much closer to mid-sizer territory.

Speaking last week, MBAP media relations and product communications manager Ryan Lewis said increasing the new CLA's specification levels – and price, expectedly – will make room for the brand's first A-Class sedan.

“CLA has kind of moved into a different spot, and so A-Class sedan is – in some ways – the alternative to the outgoing CLA,” he said.

“The simple answer is that the new CLA is repositioned, it's significantly bigger than the old one.

“With the Australian spec with AMG Line as standard, the new CLA

is slightly longer than C-Class, which gives you an idea of the size of it.

“Same platform, MFA2, but CLA is a different sort of offering with a high level of spec ... quite a bit more equipment.”

Revealed earlier this year at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES), the CLA measures 4688mm in length, 1830mm in width and 1439mm in height – 139mm longer, 34mm wider and 5mm taller than the A-Class sedan.

However, as both models share the same MFA2 platform, their wheelbases are identical at 2729mm.

For reference, the recently facelifted C-Class mid-size sedan measures 4686mm long, 1810mm wide and 1442mm tall with a 2840mm wheelbase.

In relation to the new A-Class hatchback launched last year, however, the sedan version is



130mm longer and 6mm higher, at 4549mm long, 1796mm wide and 1434mm tall.

As a result, boot capacity is up 50 litres over the five-door, to 420L with the rear seats in place.

When asked which version of the

A-Class will be the most popular in Australia, Mr Lewis said the brand expects the five-door to outsell the sedan but would not be drawn on specifics.

“It (customers) will be similar to A-Class hatch, but not exactly the



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same,” he said. “Obviously, sedans are seen as more of a traditional body style, so it's a slightly different set of customers.

“The expectations – in terms of performance – is that the hatch will continue to be more popular than the sedan.

Continued next page

John Hughes



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Continued from previous page

“Obviously, there hasn’t been an A-Class sedan before, so we don’t know quite what sales will be like, but the expectation will be the hatch will sell in a greater percentage.”

Aside from the slight difference in size and body style, the A-Class sedan also gains more comfort-orientated front seats with adjustable headrests and restyled tail-light designs.

MBAP managing director and chief executive Horst von Sanden said both versions of the A-Class, as well as the CLA, will be made available in local showrooms to offer customers a choice that might not be available in competitor’s line-ups.

“It’s obviously a balance between

giving existing customers a different choice than simply a substitution, so the real business case in those niches is in conquest,” he said.

“There are customers out there who simply don’t like hatches so much. If they can have a sedan, they’d prefer that – it’s a personal taste more than anything.

“In terms of benefits (or differentiation), it’s hard to build a sales pitch, some people like it more than others – some would never go into a hatch, others would never go into a sedan.”

As reported, the A-Class sedan’s launch range kicks off from \$49,400 plus on-road costs for the current top-spec A200, but it will expand in August with the \$44,900 entry-level A180.



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While both versions make use of a 1.3-litre turbocharged four-cylinder petrol engine mated to a seven-speed dual-clutch automatic transmission, the A180 outputs 100kW/200Nm, while the A200 ups the ante to 120kW/250Nm.

However, with only the front axle being driven, both aforementioned versions of the A-Class sedan will return a fuel economy rating of 5.7 litres per 100km that is also helped by a 0.22 drag coefficient,

which Mercedes is touting as the slipperiest in the passenger-car segment.

Later this year, MBAP will also introduce an A250 (in front- and all-wheel-drive guises) and the AMG A35 sedan to round out the four-door range.

Both are motivated by 2.0-litre force-fed petrol engines, tuned to 165kW/350Nm in the former and 225kW/400Nm in the latter.

Like the rest of Benz’s new-

generation small-car family, the A-Class sedan features the Mercedes-Benz User Experience (MBUX) infotainment system, which can be controlled via a touchscreen, a touchpad, steering-wheel buttons or voice activation, the latter of which is activated with the phrase ‘Hey Mercedes’.

FULL STORY: [CLICK HERE](#)
DRIVE IMPRESSIONS: [CLICK HERE](#)
Lion’s share – next page



Benz expects 470kW/900Nm V8 version of AMG GT 4-door Coupe to take charge

By TUNG NGUYEN

MERCEDES-AMG'S GT63 S 4-door Coupe flagship, priced at \$349,900 plus on-road costs, is expected to make up the lion's share of volume in the newly launched super-sedan range, outselling its cheaper \$249,900 GT53 counterpart.

Speaking to journalists last week at the launch of the new model, Mercedes-Benz Australia/Pacific (MBAP) media relations and product communications manager Ryan Lewis confirmed the performance-hungry local market is expected to consume higher quantities of the 470kW/900Nm GT63 S.

"Having not had this vehicle before, we will sort of let the market find its level, but the expectation with Australia is likely the V8 will be more popular," he said.

Though Mr Lewis would not be drawn on the exact sales split, MBAP has already begun delivering GT 4-door Coupes to customers, with 12 new registrations recorded in May.

Despite the boosted practicality of two extra doors and second-row seats, Mr Lewis also expects the two-door GT to outsell its four-door sibling, with the former finding 20 new homes last month.

While Australian showrooms will only play host to the 53 and 63 S variants of the GT 4-door Coupe, overseas markets will also have access to the entry-level 43 grade, which employs the same 3.0-litre bi-turbo 270kW/520Nm 3.0-litre inline six-cylinder engine as the CLS450.

When asked by GoAuto why the German brand decided not to bring in the 53, MBAP managing director



and chief executive Horst von Sanden said the business case for the baby GT 4-door Coupe did not stack up.

"We are still a small market in comparison and quite a successful AMG market – still the highest penetrating AMG market in the

world – but this limited volume can only digest so much variety (in the GT 4-door Coupe range), otherwise you get it wrong in the planning and then you lose money," he said.

"I think three variants in that very limited segment would be too much."



Mr Lewis also said the "more sophisticated" 48-volt mild-hybrid system in the GT53 4-door Coupe also "makes sense" for the local market when compared with the simpler 43 variant.

Continued next page

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Continued from previous page

Opening the Australian GT 4-door Coupe range, the 53 makes use of a 3.0-litre twin-turbocharged inline six-cylinder engine developing 320kW of power at 6100rpm and 520Nm of torque from 1800-5800rpm. With Benz's EQ Boost mild-hybrid technology in tow, an added 16kW/250Nm is also available temporarily.

With drive sent to a rear-biased 4Matic+ all-wheel-drive (AWD) system via a nine-speed torque-converter automatic transmission, the GT53 4-door Coupe will accelerate from zero to 100km/h in 5.3 seconds while sipping 10.4 litres



PRICING:

GT53 (a)	\$249,900
GT63 S (a)	\$349,900

per 100km of petrol and emitting 239 grams of carbon dioxide per kilometre.

Buyers are also treated to 20-inch wheels, a hands-free tailgate, adaptive LED headlights with high-beam assist, yellow-painted AMG brake callipers, a 14-speaker Burmester sound system, all-digital instrumentation, wireless phone charging and a widescreen infotainment system with satellite navigation, digital radio and Bluetooth connectivity.

Following on from the SLS



and two-door GT as AMG's third standalone model, the GT 4-door Coupe also receives bespoke goodies from Affalterbach, including a performance exhaust, adaptive suspension, a rear electronic limited-slip differential, front sports seats, a Nappa leather- and Dinamica microfibre-trimmed steering wheel, and track-orientated telematics and performance readouts.

Safety equipment, however, is

still paramount despite the GT53's pace and comprises surround-view cameras, blind-spot monitoring, autonomous emergency braking, adaptive cruise control, lane-keep and -change assist, nine airbags, electronic stability control, tyre pressure monitoring and hill-start assist.

Stepping up to the top-shelf GT63 S 4-door Coupe swaps out the inline six-cylinder engine for AMG's ubiquitous 4.0-litre twin-turbo V8,

which produces 470kW at 6500rpm and 900Nm from 2500-4500rpm.

Compared with the current two-door 430kW/700Nm GT R flagship, the GT63 S 4-door Coupe is 40kW/200Nm more potent, though it is expected the latter's engine tune will make its way into a coupe body style in the near future.

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Fresh face



Audi takes Q7 to surgeon for major facelift due here in second half of 2020 with new technology

By ROBBIE WALLIS

AUDI has ripped the covers off its facelifted Q7 large SUV, which brings refreshed styling and updated powertrains ahead of an Australian arrival in the first half of 2020.

Designers have given the Q7 a significant facelift with new styling that brings it in line with models such as the A6 and upcoming Q3, including new, more angular headlights and a Singleframe grille with vertical louvres.

Bumper designs have also been revised, while at the rear, new tail-lights reminiscent of the Q5 feature, underscored by a chrome strip that runs across the length of the tailgate.

The Q7 rides on 19-inch hoops as standard, while high-tech HD Matrix LED headlights are

available as an option.

As a result of the update, the Q7 is now 11mm longer, at 5063mm, while checking in at 1970mm wide and 1741mm tall.

All powertrain variants have been updated with the inclusion of a 48-volt mild-hybrid electrical system that can reduce fuel consumption by up to 0.7 litres per 100km.

The system can recuperate up to 8kW of power back to the battery and can assist with coasting and increasing speeds.

At launch, two turbo-diesel engines will be available – likely the 160kW/500Nm and 200kW/600Nm versions found in the existing line-up, supplemented by the mild-hybrid technology – while turbo-petrol and plug-in hybrid versions



will also be available further down the line.

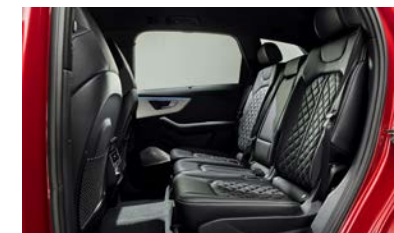
The 320kW/900Nm twin-turbo-diesel V8 SQ7 range-topper can also be expected to return at some point.

The Q7 is available in five- or seven-seat configurations, with the latter coming as standard with air suspension, while examples equipped with the S line exterior package score adaptive air

suspension which lowers ride height by 15mm over the standard air system.

Other options include electromechanical active roll stabilisation which helps keep the car planted around corners, and all-wheel steering which helps increase agility at low speeds and stability at high speeds.

The increased dimensions help to add extra space inside, with new



storage compartments and what Audi claims is superior headroom and elbow room compared to its competitors.

Two 10.1-inch screens are used for the infotainment and climate-control systems, while Audi's 12.3-inch digital instrument cluster also features.

FULL STORY: [CLICK HERE](#)
Hot diesel – next page

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Hot diesel



SQ8 comes into frame as 320kW/900Nm oil-burner entering Audi showrooms next year

By ROBBIE WALLIS

AUDI has announced it will be bringing enhanced performance to its Q8 upper-large coupe-SUV range, with the reveal of the twin-turbo-diesel V8 SQ8 that is set to touch down in Australia in the first half of 2020.

Having first landed in December with a pair of V6-powered offerings, the Q8 ups the ante with the introduction of the oil-burning V8 that pumps out 320kW and a hefty 900Nm of torque from a low 1250-3250rpm.

Sending power to all four wheels via an eight-speed automatic transmission, the SQ8 sprints from standstill to 100km/h in 4.8 seconds and onto an electronically limited top speed of 250km/h.

The two turbochargers are aided by an electric-powered compressor

that helps provide extra induction at low engine speeds. It is teamed to a 48-volt electrical mild-hybrid system that can reduce fuel consumption by up to 0.5 litres per 100km.

As befitting its performance status, the SQ8 scores adaptive air suspension that can change the ride height by up to 90mm, a locking centre differential and electromechanical active roll stabilisation, which helps keep the car flat through corners and aids handling.

Rear-wheel steering is available as an option, which helps improve the car's turning circle at low speeds while aiding high-speed stability.

Some sporty touches have been applied to the SQ8's exterior, including 21-inch wheels as standard (with optional 22-inch hoops), a double-louvred Singleframe grille,



an S-specific exhaust system and matte-silver underbody protection.

Inside, the leather sports seats are embossed with S logos and feature contrast stitching alongside integrated head restraints and high side bolsters.

Massage functionality is available for the seats, while matte brushed-aluminium trim comes as standard and carbon and oak trims are optional.

Handling infotainment and climate-control duties are a pair of 10.1-inch screens, with an additional 12.3-inch screen for the digital instrument cluster which also shows a number of SQ8-specific performance readouts.

Active safety systems include autonomous emergency braking, adaptive cruise control, traffic-jam assist, lane-keep assist, rear cross-



traffic alert, intersection assist, exit warning and surround-view cameras.

No local pricing has been revealed yet for the SQ8, however judging by the pricing structure of the mechanically related Q7 range, customers should expect to fork out about \$180,000.

In its first full year on sale, Audi has recorded 172 sales of the Q8, placing it fourth in the upper-large SUV segment, behind the Lexus LX (197), Range Rover (183) and BMW X7 (174).

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Out of the bag



Ford reveals Puma small SUV in Europe but has no plans for it to sit above EcoSport in Australia

By ROBBIE WALLIS

FORD has ripped the covers off its Puma small crossover, a Fiesta-based tallboy hatch that will be launched in Europe at the end of the year, but Ford Australia says there are no plans to offer the new model locally.

Based on the same architecture that underpins the B-segment Fiesta light hatch, the Puma will sit just above the EcoSport in Ford's global SUV line-up.

The ageing EcoSport is nearing the end of its life cycle in Australia, and while the company's local arm has no current plans to bring it here, it has not ruled out the possibility of introducing the Puma at a later stage.

The Puma also borrows some of its styling cues from the Fiesta, including its grille and front bumper, while its bulbous headlights and

forward-sloping bonnet evoke the styling cues of the Tesla Model 3.

From the rear, the bulbous theme continues with tail-lights featuring a circular LED pattern, while the roof-mounted spoiler and 17- to 19-inch wheel options give the Puma a sporty look.

Variants include the Titanium with chrome trim elements and a metallic-grey rear diffuser and skid plate, while the ST-Line employs matte-black trim and high-gloss foglight surrounds, while a larger rear spoiler is optional.

A palette of 10 colours is available for the Puma, including hues of white, black, red, silver, grey, and, of course, blue.

Inside, the Puma features an 8.0-inch touchscreen with Ford's Sync3 infotainment system with sat-nav, Apple CarPlay and Android Auto,



while a 12.3-inch digital instrument cluster also features.

Luxurious interior features available on the Puma include partial leather upholstery, alloy pedals, front seats with lumbar massage functionality, a panoramic sunroof, wireless phone charging and a 10-speaker B&O sound system with a 150mm x 200mm subwoofer.

Cargo volume extends to 456

litres thanks to the MegaBox system which provides an additional 80L of space under the boot floor to help accommodate tall items without having to fold down the rear seats. A hands-free tailgate also aids in loading items.

Two new powertrains underpinning the Puma range feature mild-hybrid technology, with a 48-volt electrical system and an



11.5kW belt-driver starter/generator mated to a 1.0-litre turbocharged three-cylinder petrol engine.

With the engine producing either 92kW or 114kW, the 48V mild-hybrid system can temporarily add up to 50Nm but is limited to 20Nm when the petrol engine is outputting its peak torque figure.

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Kia adds third small SUV to global portfolio but Xceed not heading Down Under to join Seltos

By ROBBIE WALLIS

KIA has unveiled its latest small crossover, the Europe-only Xceed that draws on the styling of the Ceed hatchback but adds the practicality of an SUV.

As reported, the Xceed will not be making its way Down Under, with Kia Motors Australia set to instead use the recently revealed Seltos to fill the small-SUV gap in its portfolio from October.

Styled at the brand's European design centre in Germany, the Xceed borrows heavily from the sporty Ceed and Cerato small cars with long, swooping 'ice-cube' LED headlights featuring a unique



lighting signature.

Kia's trademark 'tiger nose' grille returns with a subtle design, while the lower bumper features a squared-off front lip with two-tone black trim that runs around the wheelarches, side skirts and rear bumper.

At the rear, the Xceed features a new tail-light design and a silver rear bumper that integrates its twin-exit tailpipes.

Despite sharing the same 2650mm wheelbase as the Ceed, the Xceed hangs over 25mm more at the front and 60mm at the rear while also sitting 26mm wider on the road.

Befitting its SUV status, ground clearance is increased by as much



as 42mm over the Ceed when fitted with 18-inch wheels.

The Xceed rides on alloys between 16 and 18 inches in size, while 12 different paint finishes are available.

Inside, the Xceed offers more room than the Ceed, with 31 litres of extra luggage capacity (426L), which extends to 1378L with the 40/20/40 split-fold rear seats flat.

An 8.0-inch touchscreen infotainment system with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto is included

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as standard, while a 10.25-inch system can be had on higher-spec variants.

Kia's first fully digital 12.3-inch instrument cluster will be optionally available on the Xceed, which would otherwise be offered with a 3.8- or 4.2-inch TFT screen.

The South Korean brand has aimed to provide Xceed buyers with a unique driving experience, with a bespoke suspension tune featuring hydraulic rebound stoppers on the front axle and spring rates that are

seven per cent softer up front and four per cent at the rear.

A turbocharged range of three petrol and two diesel engines will be offered, with petrol powerplants ranging from the 88kW/172Nm 1.0-litre three-cylinder to the mid-spec 103kW/242Nm 1.4-litre four-pot and the 150kW/265Nm 1.6-litre unit found in a number of local Hyundai and Kia models.

FULL STORY: [CLICK HERE](#)

Oil reserve



Ram expands 1500 range with 179kW/569Nm EcoDiesel Laramie flagship from \$110k BOCs

By TUNG NGUYEN

RAM Trucks Australia has lobbed pricing for its diesel-powered 1500 Laramie full-size pick-up, dubbed EcoDiesel, that will sit atop the entry-level truck line-up at \$109,950 plus on-road costs.

As the new flagship for the 1500 range, the Laramie EcoDiesel is \$30,000 pricier than the model-opening \$79,950 Express and \$10,000 more expensive than the \$99,950 Laramie – both powered by a 291kW/556Nm 5.7-litre Hemi petrol V8.

Propelling the EcoDiesel, however, is a 3.0-litre turbocharged V6 that outputs 179kW of power at 3600rpm and 569Nm of torque at 2000rpm.

All Ram 1500 vehicles send drive to all four wheels via an eight-speed automatic transmission, but crucially the oil-burner sips just

11.9 litres per 100km compared to its petrol sibling's 12.2L/100km economy rating.

The Ram 1500 Laramie EcoDiesel also outmuscles its smaller rivals in torque, including the 157kW/500Nm Ford Ranger Raptor, 147kW/500Nm HSV Colorado SportsCat and 190kW/550Nm Mercedes-Benz X350d; but falls just shy of the Volkswagen Amarok TDI580 Ultimate's 190kW/580Nm output.

Of note, the Ram 1500 Laramie EcoDiesel is also at least \$30,000 more expensive than its aforementioned competitors.

However, the Ram 1500 is also larger – measuring 5817mm long, 2017mm wide and 1990mm tall with a 3571mm wheelbase – and features a 3500kg braked towing capacity and a 735kg payload rating.

[FULL STORY: CLICK HERE](#)



TMCA POSTS PROFIT

TOYOTA Motor Corporation Australia (TMCA) has registered an after-tax profit of \$206 million in its first financial year after shuttering its local manufacturing operation.

In the Japanese fiscal year to March 31, 2019, TMCA's Toyota Australia and Lexus Australia operations sold a combined 223,096 vehicles.

This sales result was down by 2.7 per cent – or 6162 units – over the previous financial year.

[FULL STORY: CLICK HERE](#)



FORD CUTS JOBS

FORD has announced its facility closures in Europe will result in about 12,000 job losses, forming part of a business reshuffle designed to streamline its structure and increase profitability.

The company confirmed the shuttering of two assembly factories and one engine plant in Russia, and the Ford Aquitaine Industries transmission plant in France, as well as the proposed closure of the Bridgend engine plant in South Wales, which was announced earlier this month.

[FULL STORY: CLICK HERE](#)



AUTONOMOUS XC90

VOLVO Cars and Uber have announced the next phase of their autonomous-vehicle trial with the reveal of one their XC90 large SUV test vehicles, which the two companies claim is ready to go into production.

The vehicle previewed features safety technology that will allow Uber to easily install its own autonomous driving systems, with the aim to eventually offer an autonomous ride-sharing service to the public.

[FULL STORY: CLICK HERE](#)

GOAUTO'S LATEST CAR REVIEW

GOAUTO.COM.AU

Kia Cerato Sport sedan

The Kia Cerato is one of those quiet achievers gnawing its way into the consciousness of Australian small-car buyers. Even toward the end of its lifecycle, the previous-generation model remained an attractive buy, but the new iteration tested here seemed to come along so quickly that we wondered if Kia was risking a case of 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it'. After driving the Cerato Sport sedan, we did feel a bit disappointed, but the value for money on offer snapped us back into reality.

[FULL STORY: CLICK HERE](#)



GoAuto Market Insight
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Growing up

Expensive upper-large SUVs buck market trend with massive 47.0 per cent YTD growth

By RON HAMMERTON

IF SALES of new vehicles are supposed to be down in Australia, no one told the cashed-up buyers of big, beefy and luxurious SUVs costing more than \$100,000.

To the end of May, sales of these upper-large luxury land yachts are up a healthy 47.0 per cent on the same period of last year, even though the overall new-vehicle market has declined 8.1 per cent.

The segment is out of step with the overall SUV market in which sales have declined 4.6 per cent this year as demand plateaus after years of rampant growth.

Many of the buyers for flagship SUVs appear to be coming from similar \$100,000-plus upper-large passenger cars, sales of which are down 43.5 per cent this year.

If we extrapolate the year-to-date 47.0 per cent growth rate in upper-large luxury SUVs to the end of 2019, sales could threaten 3000 units for the first time.

The biggest trigger in the sales expansion of the biggest SUV breed has been the arrival of several fresh models, including all-new entries

such as the BMW X7 and Audi Q8.

In 2011, when the official VFACTS data started breaking out upper-large luxury SUV sales as a separate segment from large SUVs, it had just four contenders – the Range Rover, the Lexus LX and two Mercedes-Benz models, the G-Class and GL-Class.

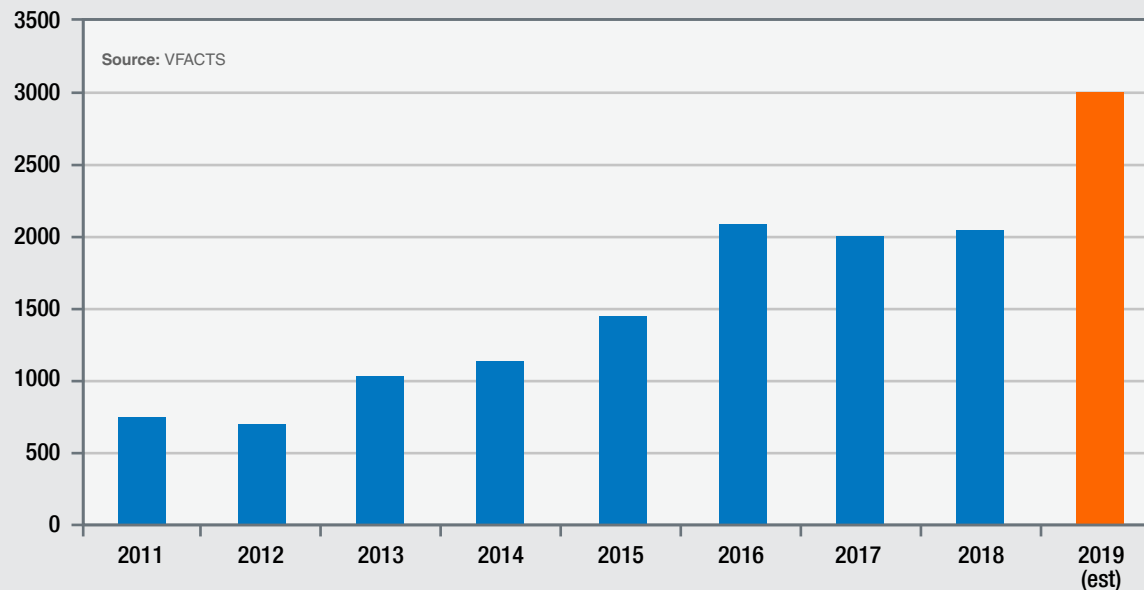
The class of 2019 has 11 entries, including the super-expensive Rolls-Royce Cullinan, Bentley Bentayga and Lamborghini Urus.

Rather than take sales from the existing SUV combatants, the arrival of new contestants appears to have spiced sales of even the oldest models, with sales of the LandCruiser-based Lexus LX up 23.1 per cent, to 197 units, and the Range Rover jumping by a whopping 64.9 per cent, to 183 units.

Sales of the utilitarian Mercedes G-Class have rocketed 243.5 per cent, to 158 units in the year to date, after it came out fighting in AMG-enhanced G63 twin-turbo V8 form following major revisions last year.

While the traditional contenders still hold sway at the top of the

Combined annual sales of \$100,000-plus upper-large SUVs (2011-2019)



segment sales rankings, the newbies are fast closing the gap. The BMW X7 started with a bang in May, with a shipload of 152 units registered in a single month.

The X7 and Audi Q8 (in showrooms since January) are now locked at 174

and 172 sales respectively.

And these manufacturers have not finished yet, with both promising to add high-performance variants in the twin-turbo V8 petrol X7 M50i late this year and the V8 diesel Audi SQ8 in the first half of 2020.

While rival Mercedes has been doing nicely with the G-Class and G-Wagon, its luxury flagship GLS has gone into hiatus while an all-new model goes into production.

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Power play



BMW ditches internal-combustion engine for three electric motors in hot 5 Series test mule

By RON HAMMERTON
AN INNOCENT-LOOKING BMW 5 Series sedan has become the rolling test-bed for the German company's 21st century muscle-car technology.

Shown at BMW's #NextGen event in Munich, the engineering mule dubbed Power BEV (battery electric vehicle) packs a reputed 530kW of power from three fifth-generation electric motors – one on the front axle and two at the rear.

That power theoretically puts the family luxury sedan in the same performance league as the Ferrari 488 Pista and Lamborghini Aventador S, laying down a 0-100km/h time of “comfortably

less than three seconds” – at least half a second faster than the 441kW 4.4-litre V8 M5.

It also puts the Tesla Model S with its Ludicrous mode in the crosshairs, although BMW is not saying when such a sedan might go into production.

Interestingly, BMW said it did not have to intrude on cabin space to fit the batteries, motors and allied technology in the current-model car, although it admitted the challenge was “a serious technical undertaking”.

It said it worked as hard on the vehicle's dynamics as it did on the power and acceleration, with chassis engineers involved in the



development alongside electric powertrain experts.

BMW said the rear electric motors operate independently and can be controlled separately by software for a form of e-torque vectoring to “enable maximum drive power to be translated into forward propulsion, even in extremely dynamic driving manoeuvres”.

“The result is more effective and precise than with a limited-slip differential because actively targeted inputs are possible in any driving

situation,” it said.

“By contrast, a limited-slip differential always reacts to a difference in rotation speed between the driven wheels.”

BMW also revealed that the newly designed electric motor with its controlling electronics and power takeoff all in a single modular unit will first appear in the upcoming iX3 that will be built in China from next year.

However, the iX3 will get only one of the motors which – BMW



also revealed – does not require rare-earth metals in its construction, presumably making it cheaper to manufacture.

The company has suggested that these electric motors can be used in various combinations to suit different vehicles and driving needs.

BMW's current power champion is the M5 Competition that packs 460kW from its petrol 4.4-litre V8 – 70kW short of the claimed output of the electric combo of the Power BEV mule.



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AADA SELECTS VOORTMAN AS NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE

By NEIL DOWLING

THE Australian Automotive Dealer Association (AADA) has appointed James Voortman as its new chief executive officer, effective from July 1, 2019.

Having been the AADA's executive director of policy and communications since September 2017, Mr Voortman replaces David Blackhall who has taken up other roles but remains a consultant to the company.

The AADA board said it was thrilled that Mr Voortman has taken up the key position and is looking forward to working with him to further the interests of franchised new-car dealers across Australia.

"James was the outstanding candidate of those who expressed interest in the position," said AADA chair Terry Keating.

"We are pleased that he has accepted the role. Given his role as our director of policy, we expect a strong continuity across both policy and advocacy on behalf of our members.

"James also brings experience from working with other associations in the automotive sector and most recently as an

advisor to a federal minister."

The AADA has also acknowledged the ongoing role of AADA chief operating officer Brian Savage who provides significant industry experience, having worked in dealerships, OEMs and automotive industry associations.

"Brian was appointed to this role earlier in the year and will play an important role in the AADA secretariat with a strong focus on working with our most important resource, our members," Mr Keating said.

"The board and I would like to sincerely thank outgoing CEO David Blackhall for his hard work and dedication over the last three years.

"David provided invaluable leadership and is largely responsible for the significant gains the AADA has made in recent years.

"Every new-car dealer in Australia owes David a debt of gratitude for the focus, commitment and – in many cases – the resolution he has brought to issues in a time of extreme disruption.

FULL STORY: [CLICK HERE](#)



James Voortman

JOHNSON, SCHEFFER TAKE UP NEW LEAD CORPORATE POSITIONS AT AUTOPACT

By JUSTIN HILLIARD

AUTOPACT, one of Australia's largest automotive dealership groups, has appointed Ian Johnson as national head of sales and Joshua Scheffer as national head of fixed operations, both of which are new roles that were created as part of a restructure of its corporate team.

Mr Johnson's appointment is effective immediately, with him having served as Autopact's group operations manager since he joined the company in October last year.

Previously, Mr Johnson was Autopact rival Bayford Group's chief operating officer from April 2015. Prior to that, he was an operations executive for fellow competitor Automotive Holdings Group (AHG).

According to Autopact, Mr Johnson will be "responsible for

developing sales, customer service and dealership facilities ... (and) will manage dealership sales performance nationally".

Meanwhile, Mr Scheffer will commence with Autopact on July 1, having been employed on and off at AHG since September 2007. He was



Ian Johnson

most recently state service manager – a position he held for more than five years.

Mr Scheffer "will be responsible for the development

and execution of Autopact's national service and parts operations, and customer service", according to the company.

"Both Ian and Josh have extensive experience across the automotive industry and bring strategic-thought leadership combined with a history of successful hands-on management

of day-to-day-dealership operations," Autopact said in a statement.

"Ian and Josh will have oversight across all 27 Autopact dealerships and their objective is to drive excellence and best practice."

These appointments come less than six months after James Welch was appointed as Autopact's new chief executive.

Mr Welch joined Autopact in February 2016 and prior to taking the top job served as its group chief financial officer.

Previously, he worked outside of the automotive industry in similar roles, including as CFO for Coates Hire (October 2009 to July 2015) and general manager of finance for Thiess (September 2000 to September 2009).



Joshua Scheffer

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Safer HiLux

Toyota announces expansion of critical active safety suite to Australia's best-selling model

By ROBBIE WALLIS

TOYOTA Australia has announced it will expand its Toyota Safety Sense suite of driver-assistance technologies across its best-selling HiLux ute range over the coming months, with prices set to rise between \$800 and \$875, depending on the variant.

The updates will arrive for 4x2



and 4x4 single- and double-cab variants on July 8, for top-spec Rugged, Rugged X and Rogue variants on August 1, and lastly on extra-cab body styles on August 26.

All HiLux variants will now come as standard with a pre-collision safety system with autonomous emergency braking, day and night pedestrian detection, and daytime cyclist detection plus adaptive cruise control, lane departure alert with steering assistance, and road sign assist.

To make sure drivers can accurately interpret the safety systems, a 4.2-inch multi-function display has been made standard on Workmate variants.

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Audi's fifth-generation A6 large sedan takes a massive leap forward with cutting-edge technology inside and out, including the debut of a new connectivity suite.

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The inclusion of added safety technology helps broaden the appeal of the HiLux for fleet and business buyers, who often list safety credentials as one of the most important factors when choosing a fleet vehicle.

Toyota has also rejigged the Workmate line-up with the removal of 4x2 single-cab and dual-cab versions equipped with the 110kW/343Nm 2.4-litre turbo-diesel four-cylinder engine.

4x2 Workmate examples have been replaced with Hi-Rider versions which feature the same ride height as 4x4 versions, while the old five-speed manual transmission has been switched out

for a six-speed version.

Other engine choices carry over unchanged, including the entry-level 122kW/245Nm 2.7-litre petrol four-cylinder and 2.8-litre turbo-diesel four-pot producing 130kW and either 420Nm with the six-speed manual or 450Nm with a six-speed auto.

Toyota Australia vice-president of sales and marketing Sean Hanley said the company plans to expand Toyota Safety Sense across its entire model line-up.

"With the addition of these advanced safety technologies, customers can be assured they are behind the wheel of a vehicle that delivers the latest driver-assistance

features, whether that's a light commercial vehicle like HiLux or HiAce, or a passenger car such as Corolla or Camry," he said.

"We intend making these types of technologies available on every variant in each model range."

Through the first five months of 2019, Toyota has sold 20,736 combined examples of the HiLux, up slightly on the 20,615 examples it recorded to the same point in 2018.

It continues to lead all comers, including the Ford Ranger (16,645 units), Mitsubishi Triton (10,062) and Holden Colorado (7457).

Full pricing will be released ahead of the model refresh.

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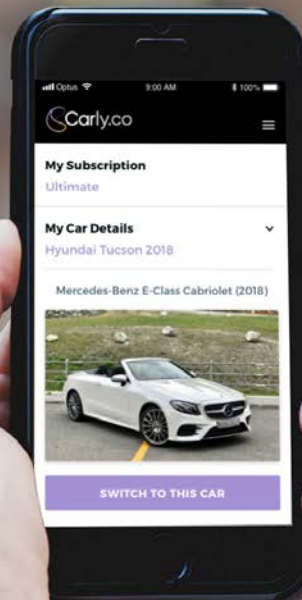
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A SMARTER WAY TO TRADE AUTO

Carly offers subscriptions on dealer stock

Revenue win for dealers from slow-moving cars while customers get flexible ownership



By NEIL DOWLING

EVERY car dealer in Australia now has the option of getting income from its vehicle stock through an innovative subscription service launched by Australian businesses Carly and I-Motor.

The latter manages more than 700 dealer websites which display over 50,000 vehicles and attract over 15 million page impressions a month.

I-Motor will offer the 'Car Subscription Solution' to each of these dealers and Carly and I-Motor will jointly promote this product to existing Carly dealers and all other automotive dealers in Australia.

Carly is part of Australian publicly listed company Collaborate Ltd and I-Motor is an independent consultancy business based in Melbourne.

The Car Subscription Solution proposed by Carly and I-Motor will let dealers introduce a new revenue stream and allow customers to view cars already on the dealership website, said Collaborate chief executive Chris Noone.

He said the fact the vehicles are already on the website means no additional marketing expenditure and the ability for the customer to complete the subscription process entirely online makes the process quick and easy.

"This deal with I-Motor represents a major step forward for Carly and car subscription in Australia, in terms of volume of cars, customer reach and simplicity," Mr Noone said.

"For the first time, we are exposing a large supply of cars to customers who can subscribe online.

"Dealers now have a powerful new way of generating revenue from customers who may not be prepared to make a long-term financial commitment to a vehicle right now and otherwise may be lost."

I-Motor managing director Tony Malby-Luke said the subscription model fills in the gap between an Uber relationship that is "minute by minute", Hertz which is "one day to a week" and buying a vehicle outright.

Continued next page

Will ACCC order AP Eagers divestments?

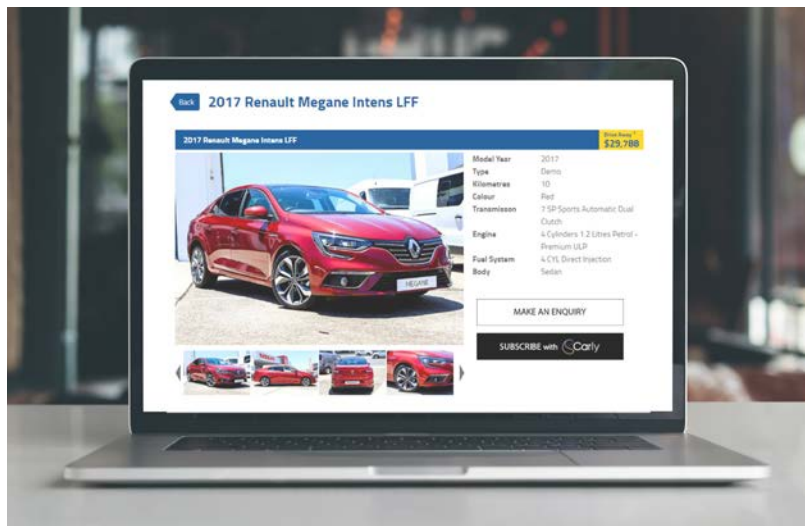
Opportunities might flow to other groups if AP Eagers/AHG forced to sell Hunter sites

Survey: Millenials like dealers, test drives

New research discovers your age significantly affects how you research and purchase a new car



Motor Industry Services
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Continued from previous page
“Carly saw this gap as creating a ‘Netflix for cars’ where you can change the channel – or the car – as often as you want to based on repayments,” he said.

“So while it helps the customer get the car they need at any particular time, it also gives the dealers an instantaneous income.

“Subscription provides dealers with a new revenue stream for cars and enables new customers to be secured in this challenging sales environment without heavy retail discounting.

“It also helps dealers with slow-moving stock that may have attracted lower financial returns.

“Although the vehicles in the subscription service by the dealer will depreciate, it is more than offset by the income generated by the service.

“It won’t take long for people to

be talking about this option where you can change your vehicle based on your budget as often as you like.”

Mr Noone said that digital marketing was “an area of great focus for automotive dealers, despite the challenges of converting web traffic into foot traffic in the dealership and eventually into the sale of a vehicle”.

“The Car Subscription Solution solves each of these challenges by enabling the customer to complete the subscription process entirely online and offering a lower commitment alternative to an outright purchase of a vehicle, a loan or a long-term lease,” he said.

Under the program, Carly accesses dealer-owned vehicles and offers them with a subscription service to customers.



Chris Noone

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AADA warns on task force



Progress but auto industry may be sidelined as government slows on car franchising code

By NEIL DOWLING

THE federal government may have watered down one of its key election promises made to the automotive industry, raising concerns this week by Australia's peak automotive franchise body and the powerful Victorian automotive chamber.

The Australian Automotive Dealer Association's incoming CEO James Voortman told *GoAutoNews Premium* that the association had positive feedback from both parties before the election "and we have made progress".

"But we believe an automotive code of conduct shouldn't be considered part of the general franchising code – the products we are dealing with are vastly more expensive and the industry is much

bigger than nearly all other franchise business models," he said.

The AADA this week said it welcomed the establishment of the Franchising Task Force by the government but has urged it to finalise the work already underway on specific protections for automotive dealers.

The task force was established to deliver the government response to the recommendations of the Fairness in Franchising report, which was handed down earlier this year by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services.

The Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce agrees with the AADA but took a more hard-edged view.

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It told *GoAutoNews Premium* that dealerships are enmeshed in a "one-in-a-100-year" permanent structural shift in terms of a business model.

"Dealers need a dedicated code to survive that shift," said VACC chief executive Geoff Gwilym.

"We are seeing agency models being talked about – similar to Toyota NZ's Drive Happy – which could wash away generations of family businesses without protection for dealers or investors.

"The impact of non-renewal without cause has massive consequences for community, especially in regional Australia where dealerships are quite often the major employer.

"If the government cannot see how examples such as the horrible and unjust way groups like D'Alberto (Holden dealer in Echuca that lost its franchise in late 2017) were treated as reason for a defined code – or a bolt-on to the

franchising code – then it is not fair dinkum. What hope does small business have?"

Mr Voortman said the VACC has collaborated with the AADA on the issue.

"We have said the principle we are looking for is a set of protection guidelines for franchisees or new-car dealers and we have been making the case for a long time in Canberra," he said.

Continued next page



James Voortman



Geoff Gwilym

Continued from previous page
“We would have preferred action by government specifically focused on automotive, but the nature of government is that it’s slow and considers all factors.

“While we want government to be far stronger, we will continue making the message to all representatives, government departments and other stakeholders in the industry because we believe our arguments have merit and hope to get this across the line at the end of the day.”

The VACC said it would support a “bolt-on” to the current code “as long as it covered off vital issues such as capital expense outlay being connected to tenure. The ideal tenure is five- year renewals”.

“We are always interested in franchise code reform as we have been lobbying for this since 2011,” Mr Gwilym said.

The AADA’s calls for changes to the code included a plea to the Australian Competition and

Consumer Commission (ACCC) in October 2017, before the ACCC released its final report on the Retail Car Industry in December of that year.

It said then that the ACCC study had highlighted “the structural imbalance between manufacturers and dealers which leaves both consumers and dealers vulnerable”.

AADA chief executive David Blackhall said the imbalance was caused by “one-sided dealer agreements, policies and procedures including restricting what dealers are allowed to say to consumers”.

“Under these agreements, dealers are required to adhere strictly to manufacturers’ policies regarding warranties and potential product defect claims, they are not to admit liability and can be required to allow manufacturers to assume control of how dealers handle complaints,” he said.

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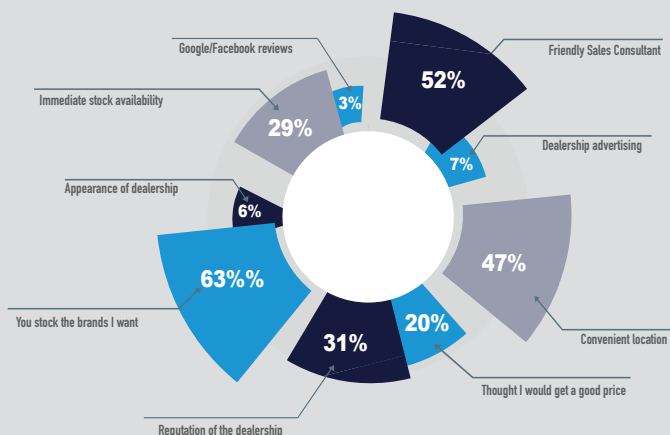
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Survey: Millenials like dealers, test drives

TOP REASONS FOR VISITING A DEALERSHIP



New research discovers your age significantly affects how you research and purchase a new car

By JOHN MELLOR

THE most common presumption made about younger car buyers is that there will be fewer of them (they tend to get their licenses later) and that they will gravitate to short-term vehicle use rather than outright ownership.

But new research commissioned by leading Brisbane dealer Mark Woelders of the Motorama Group is suggesting that the young people of today are relying on dealers to buy their cars and that they place great value on the test drive as part of their buying process.

The Boyle Consulting New Vehicle Shopping Index, new

research analysing the purchasing and buying habits of new-vehicle customers, has discovered your birthday significantly impacts your research preferences.

Boyle Consulting is a leading Australian-based consulting and training company.

The research is seen as a vital tool for dealers deciding on the generational structure of their sales teams and may give dealers pause before investing heavily on premises upgrades which rate poorly as a reason for visiting a dealership.

It showed that more than 90 per cent of all respondents placed



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visiting a dealership as the most helpful way to research a new car to buy, followed by taking a test drive.

But there were distinct preferences according to the age groups.

The research discovered the older you get, the less you value the opinions of family and friends, with 76.5 per cent of 18-24-year-olds finding the technique useful compared to 54.8 per cent of people aged 55 years and older.

The youngest (18-24-year-olds) and the oldest (55+) age brackets

found manufacturer websites the least helpful at 58.8 and 58.1 per cent respectively, while 25-34-year-olds (78.3 per cent) and 35-54-year-olds (75.7 per cent) found dealership websites the most helpful.

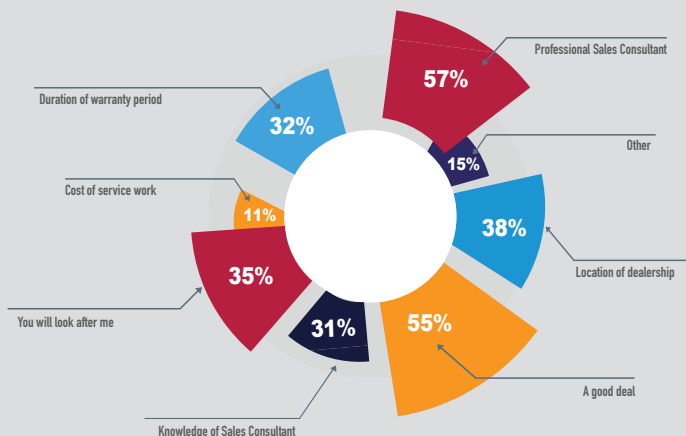
But the older the buyers, the lower they value the test drive. One hundred per cent of 18-24-year-old customers found dealership test drives helpful, compared to just 73.1 per cent of customers aged 55 years and above.

Boyle Consulting's business development manager, Adrian Fox, said: "For the first time, we've been able to differentiate between the purchasing and buying behaviours of people of different ages searching for a new car.

"This level of intel will help dealership sales teams customise their approach, giving customers, irrespective of their gender, exactly what they want.

Continued next page

TOP REASONS FOR BUYING FROM A DEALERSHIP



Continued from previous page

“At the same time, they’ll be able to modify their approach for older customers, eliminating information they don’t need when researching their next new-car purchase.”

The comprehensive 20-page research report was commissioned in partnership with Motorama dealer principal Mark Woelders who said the Index, which examined the research habits of customers prior to purchase, “has been insightful to finally get some Australian research that pinpoints the subtle differences between age”.

“We will be using these insights to further refine and tailor our customer approach to ensure every customer receives the most relevant and personalised buying experience we can provide,” he said.

Motorama represents Toyota, Holden, HSV, Ford, Mitsubishi, Nissan and Kia.

Boyle Consulting said the Index “answers a host of difficult to answer questions and unpacks the purchasing and buying habits of new-vehicle customers, including:

- What research methods do customers prefer and find most helpful?
- Are online research methods preferred to traditional methods?
- What reasons do buyers give for visiting a dealership?
- What reasons do buyers give for buying from a dealership?
- How many dealerships do customers visit when shopping for a new vehicle?
- How long is their shopping research phase?
- Does gender or age impact research and buying preferences?

When measuring the top reasons for visiting a dealership, the results came down heavily on what happens inside the dealership rather than

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what the dealership looks like.

By grouping the multiple-choice results, an instructive pattern emerges.

For example, in terms of drawing buyers to the business, ‘You stock the brands I want’ at 63 per cent was the strongest factor. ‘Immediate stock availability’ (29 per cent) and ‘Thought I would get a good price’ (20 per cent) were weaker factors.

‘Convenient location’ scored 47 per cent and ‘Reputation of

dealership’ scored 31 per cent but ‘Dealership advertising’ (seven per cent), ‘Appearance of the dealership’ (six per cent) and ‘Online reviews of the dealership’ (three per cent) barely rated.

But what did rate was ‘The friendliness of the sales consultant’ at 52 per cent – the second most-important factor.

In terms of reasons for buying from the dealership, the clear leader was ‘The professionalism of the

sales consultant’ (57 per cent), ahead of ‘A good deal’ at 55 per cent and ‘The knowledge of the sales consultant’ at 31 per cent.

This means that the professionalism of the sales consultants, their ability to get the buyer a good deal and their knowledge of what they are selling are key ingredients in a dealership’s success.

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Will ACCC order AP Eagers divestments?



Opportunities might flow to other groups if AP Eagers/AHG forced to sell Hunter sites

By JOHN MELLOR

THE Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has flagged its concerns that the proposed merger of AP Eagers and Automotive Holdings Group (AHG) will significantly reduce competition in the Newcastle/Hunter Valley area and may lead to the group selling off some of its holdings in the region.



Delia Rickard

If responses sought from the industry are unfavourable and AP Eagers chief executive Martin Ward is unable to convince the regulator that competition in the area will not be significantly diminished, the ACCC is likely to place divestment orders on the table as a condition of its approval for the deal.

Such a development could see some prime dealership properties

become available, which could significantly strengthen the portfolios of smaller dealer groups looking to increase their scale in the face of approaching disruption in the basic dealership business model.

The ACCC, which is currently assessing the competition implications of the merged AP Eagers-AHG group, has issued a call for industry players to comment specifically on the likely effect of the merger in Newcastle and the wider Hunter Valley region.

However, the regulator has virtually given the green light to other areas, saying that it does not believe the competition will be diminished in “Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane or nationally”.

In a note to the industry, ACCC acting chair Delia Rickard said:

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“The ACCC is seeking further feedback from market participants about this proposed transaction, in particular regarding the Newcastle/Hunter Valley region.

“A combined AP Eagers and AHG would operate 46 per cent of new-car dealership sites in the Newcastle/Hunter Valley region, including those for the ten most popular brands, and run 54 per cent of the dealership sites selling those brands.

“In metropolitan Newcastle alone,

the combined company would operate 77 per cent of dealership sites selling the ten most popular brands.

“We believe that local consumers generally don’t travel beyond the Newcastle/Hunter Valley region to buy new cars and it is difficult to find out the final price for a car without visiting a dealership.”

On June 24, the ACCC issued a market feedback letter setting out the its preliminary views and summarising submissions received

by that point.

The ACCC’s preliminary view is that the proposed acquisition is unlikely to substantially lessen competition for the supply of new cars in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane or nationally, the wholesaling and retailing of used cars, the acquisition of car dealerships or the supply and acquisition of finance and insurance products.

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Carworks takes more honours



Carworks Ballarat team

Renault dealer in Ballarat adds to its awards tally with best VACC new-car dealer for 2019

By JOHN MELLOR

CARWORKS Ballarat Renault has added yet another award to its tally of accolades by winning the Best New Car Dealer award at the recent 2019 VACC Industry Awards.

Thirty-six Victorian businesses and business people were announced as winners at a black-tie gala awards dinner at Melbourne's Grand Hyatt in what is the premier prize dedicated to the Victorian automotive industry.

Carworks, which has a Renault



Alex Lemmon and Rebecca Lewis

and Chrysler-Jeep franchise in Wendoree, is a consistent performer in both the VACC and Renault awards.

In the VACC awards, the company, whose dealer principal is Carl Marandi, was a finalist as best used-car dealer in 2016, won the best-used car dealer award in 2017 and was best new-car dealer for 2019.

In the Renault awards, Carworks was national best-used car dealer in 2014, 2015 and 2016 and was national dealer of the year in 2014, 2015 and 2016.

The best VACC used-car dealer (small) for 2019 is Ballarat Car Sales run by Alex Lemmon and Rebecca Lewis. Ms Lewis also won the Unsung Hero award.

The best-used car dealer (large) award went to 3 Point Motors

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VACC chief executive Geoff Gwilym said that the VACC Industry Awards demonstrate VACC members' commitment to quality and customer service.

"It is a huge accolade to be named the best in Victoria and these businesses have all proved themselves worthy of that title," he said.

Categories for the 2019 VACC Industry Awards included mechanical repair, auto electrical,

recycling, body repair, engine reconditioning, farm machinery, heavy-vehicle repair, new and used car, motorcycle and commercial-vehicle dealers, service station and convenience stores, aftermarket and retail, towing, and tyre dealers.

Eight expert judges evaluated entries based on business management, workplace practices, customer service and marketing and communication.

To ensure that only the finest

of VACC's more than 5500 members would be announced as finalists, an independent standards representative audited the judging.

Instituted in 2016 by VACC in recognition of the many excellent businesses operating across the state, the VACC Industry Awards are recognised as the highest honour a Victorian automotive business can achieve.

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Toyota's RAV4 light show



Brightest lights in the world switch on for WA's Toyota RAV4 reveal at Eagles AFL match

By NEIL DOWLING

TOYOTA'S fresh RAV4 took centre stage at the West Coast Eagles' home ground, Optus Stadium, last month in a world-first laser-light show promoting the new SUV.

Held at half-time in the West Coast-Essendon match, which was won by the Eagles, Toyota WA Distributors – the Perth-based independent importers and distributors of Toyota vehicles – presented a spectacular laser-light show incorporating full LED 'SuperScreens' and big sound to showcase the new RAV4.

The Optus Stadium has the world's biggest LED system, backed by more than 15,000 lights and 897 LEDs in the leading edge of the roof alone. The SuperScreens are each 340 square-metres in size.

A spokeswoman for the Toyota

distributors that put on the show said it was a unique way to show the SUV and demonstrate the capability of Optus Stadium.

"While a laser show is not unique to the AFL, nothing to the extent or technicality of the show that took place at Optus for the Eagles-Essendon game has been seen in this space before," she said.

The laser show was the result of more than 40 hours of programming alone. Toyota WA said it lost count of the hours that went into the creative aspect of the laser show and the vision for the LEDs and SuperScreens.

"A bespoke audio track was composed especially for the event," the spokeswoman said.

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