

Overhauled

Hyundai's heavily reworked Kona small SUV touches down locally with changes to engines, design and cost



N-Line

By CALLUM HUNTER

HYUNDAI Motor Company Australia's (HMCA) significantly updated Kona compact SUV has arrived Down Under brandishing a fresh look, all-new powertrains, new variants and a new opening pricetag of \$26,600 plus on-road costs.

Now \$2300 more expensive than before, the base-model Kona along with the Active (\$28,200), Elite (\$31,600) and Highlander (\$38,000) are all now powered by an Atkinson-cycle 2.0-litre petrol engine developing the same 110kW of power and 180Nm of torque as the previous model, however fuel economy has been slashed by a claimed 14 per cent to 6.2 litres per 100km (combined).

A good portion of this improved economy figure can be chalked up to the new continuously variable transmission (CVT) which replaces the outgoing model's six-speed torque converter automatic, but still sends power to the front wheels.

Those chasing an all-wheel-drive

configuration for their Kona will now have to step up to the – new – performance-minded N-Lines, both of which are powered by a turbocharged 1.6-litre four-cylinder petrol engine good for 146kW/265Nm which drives all-four wheels via a seven-speed dual-clutch automatic transmission.

As with other N-Lines in HMCA's portfolio, the Kona N-Line (\$36,300) and N-Line Premium (\$42,400) ride on a sportier multi-link rear suspension set-up than the rest of the range and brandish more aggressive styling all-round courtesy of bigger (18-inch) alloy wheels, lower ride height, N-Line-specific bumpers and side skirts as well as gloss-black mirror caps.

The regular versions have been made to look more aggressive and 'sophisticated' in their own right with a completely new front fascia headlined by the redesigned – wider and thinner – grille and headlight arrangement.

Continued next page

SUPER SEDAN: BMW M5 CS



BROAD UPDATES: MASERATI



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Continued from previous page

Adding to the new look is a fresh range of alloy wheel designs and a tweaked rear bumper featuring an imitation skid-plate.

What's more, the whole package has grown by 40mm (length) resulting in improved legroom and rear cargo space, however exactly how much extra room is yet to be confirmed.

In keeping with the higher asking price, HMCA says every variant has been treated to more standard equipment than before, with the base Kona now featuring an 8.0-inch infotainment touchscreen, 4.2-inch TFT colour supervision cluster, adaptive cruise control with stop and go function, Qi wireless smartphone



N-Line Premium

charging, electronic park brake, 16-inch alloy wheels, 'quiet mode', rear USB charging port, passenger seat height adjustment and driver's one touch auto up/down window.

Other (carried over) features consist of automatic headlights, rearview camera, Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, Bluetooth, power windows and roof rails.

Safety has been stepped up too with forward collision-avoidance assist, lane following assist and rear occupant alert joining the existing six airbags, driver attention warning, electronic stability control, downhill brake control and hill-start assist control.

Things are predictably stepped up throughout the range with the Active adding 17-inch alloys, rear park assist, heated exterior mirrors, leather-appointed seats and steering wheel, rear privacy glass, front seat back pockets, solar control glass, rear centre armrest, leather gear knob and power folding exterior mirrors.

The Elite goes one step further with a bigger 10.25-inch infotainment system paired to an eight-speaker Harman Kardon

sound system, blind-spot collision-avoidance assist, front foglights, rear cross-traffic alert, keyless entry and start, gloss black radiator grille, collision-avoidance assist, remote start, grey exterior cladding, safe exit warning, climate control, tailgate and side garnish insert and rain sensing wipers.

As usual, the Highlander is the most generously specced offering.

Compared to the Elite, the non-sporting range-topper adds 18-inch alloys shod with premium Continental tyres, 10.25-inch instrument digital cluster, head-up display, front park assist system, power adjustable heated and ventilated front seats,

ambient lighting, LED headlights, front indicators and tail-lights, sunroof, heated rear outboard seats, high beam assist, heated steering wheel and an electrochromatic interior mirror.

FULL STORY: [CLICK HERE](#)

Heating up – page 9

PRICING

Kona (a)	\$26,600
Active (a)	\$28,200
Elite (a)	\$31,600
Highlander (a)	\$38,000
N-Line (a)	\$36,300
N-Line Premium (a)	\$42,400

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Bahn-stormer



BMW turns the wick up on M5 super-sedan with reveal of faster, focused CS limited-run variant

By CALLUM HUNTER

WHILE the M8 Competition may be the flagship of BMW's range on a day-to-day basis, the Bavarian brand has just upped its performance ante with the reveal of the M5 CS – the fastest and most powerful BMW to date.

Set to land Down Under mid-year in an allocation of just 20 units – all of which have been sold – the M5 CS is both lighter and more powerful than the M5 Competition, shedding 70kg from its kerb weight while the familiar twin-turbocharged 4.4-litre V8 petrol engine has been tuned to 467kW/750Nm.

The results largely speak for themselves, with zero to 100km/h being dispatched in 3.0 seconds (0.3s faster), a 10.4-second dash to 200km/h (0.4s faster) and the same 305km/h electronically limited top speed.

As with the 'standard' car, drive is sent to all four wheels via an eight-speed automatic transmission.

To help haul the flying four-door back up again, BMW has specced M carbon ceramic brakes as standard on the CS which not only provide more stopping power, but also save 23kg of unsprung mass compared to the M compound brakes fitted to the Competition.

The rest of the weight-saving comes through the extensive use of carbon-fibre both for the body and interior, including the bonnet, front splitter, wing mirrors, boot spoiler, rear diffuser and bucket seats.

Marking the CS' out among the rest of its M-branded stablemates are a wealth of signature styling cues including the uniquely bulged and vented bonnet, the aforementioned



carbon-fibre body features and a distinctive gold-bronze finish for the kidney grille surround, 20-inch M forged wheels and 'M5 CS' badging.

Under the skin, the damping and spring rates have been given a unique retune to further enhance the car's dynamic capabilities while super-sticky Pirelli P Zero Corsa tyres can also be fitted as a no-cost option.

Things have been stepped up inside the cabin too where the most



marked change is the move to four individual seats rather than the traditional five.

Upholstered in black Merino leather, the seats feature all-red stitching and a map of the Nurburgring embossed on the head restraints while the front pews also score illuminated M5 badges.

Other standard equipment highlights of the M5 CS include BMW Laserlight with yellow icon

lights, illuminated 'M5 CS' door sills, M Alcantara steering wheel with carbon paddles, fixed lightweight carbon centre console, ceramic surrounds for controls, driving assistant, parking assistant, Harman/Kardon surround sound system and BMW Individual frozen paintwork.

Not surprisingly, there is a decent price to pay for all the extra performance, trinkets and exclusivity with the M5 CS due to arrive Down Under priced from \$305,900 driveaway, or for comparison's sake, \$274,900 plus on-road costs.

FULL STORY: [CLICK HERE](#)

Drip-feed – page 11

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Range renewal



Ghibli

Maserati applies model-year facelift to Levante, Ghibli and Quattroporte with price, style changes

BY NEIL DOWLING

MASERATI Australia has unveiled its freshly updated 2021 portfolio which has seen all variants across its Ghibli, Quattroporte and Levante model lines receive a mild facelift, new-generation Android multimedia system and improved driver-assist system as well as a few fairly major pricing adjustments.

Due in local showrooms imminently, the core portfolio will be joined by the MC20 supercar later in the year with the brand's first electrified model, the Ghibli Hybrid, also due to touch down soon.

Pricing for the Levante SUV starts



Levante

at \$127,000 plus on-roads for the base 350 variant (+\$2000) and stretches all the way through to \$336,990 for the range-topping Trofeo (+\$6990).

By contrast, the Ghibli range has seen prices both rise and fall with the model line now opening from \$144,990 for the self-named base model, marking an entry-price increase of \$5000, something that was shared by the mid-range GranSport and GranLusso twins (\$168,990).

Further up the range however, the sticker price of the S GranLusso and S GranSport has fallen by a hefty \$9990 to \$175,000.

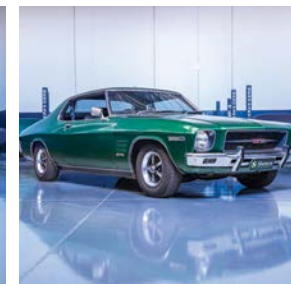
The Quattroporte line-up has also seen its entry-price drop, with the range now opening from \$210,990 (-\$4000) for the base model however the mid-range GranLusso and GranSport have both gone up \$3000 to \$227,990.



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At the top of the range, the S variants have both decreased in price by \$5000 to \$269,990 apiece.

Maserati attributed the pricing changes to various factors including the model year update, lifecycle of the cars and currency changes.

No changes have been made to drivetrains of any of the models with the styling updates designed to unify the portfolio.

The major changes consist of a new grille and “boomerang” tail-

light clusters that serve as a nod to the Guigaro-penned 3200 GT coupe of the 1990s.

The Ghibli GranLusso and GranSport retain their different features, with the Sport having black piano inserts on the front bumper, body-coloured side skirts, red brake callipers and 20-inch polished alloy wheels.

Inside the Ghibli and Quattroporte is a new-generation multimedia system dubbed ‘Maserati Intelligent

Assistant’ based on Android Auto which features a new, bigger 10.1-inch touchscreen (up from 8.4-inches) while the Levante retains the previous-gen 8.4-inch display but gets improved resolution and graphics.

The three models also get subtle changes to the instrument cluster which now boasts a larger tachometer and speedometer with a central 7.0-inch TFT display and improved graphics.

Continued next page



Quattroporte

Continued from previous page
Maserati said a lot of plastic used in the previous models' dashboard had been removed, replaced instead with features like anti-dazzle flat glass over the instruments.

All three model lines have also inherited updated advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS) with the main addition being active driving assist – an evolution of the highway assist system that was added in 2018.

It includes a “hands-on” function – the driver is required to stay in control of the car at all times – intended for use on any kind of well-maintained road that centres the car in a lane at speeds up to 145km/h.

The system uses a radar and forward-looking camera and works with the electric-assist steering to control the direction of the car.



Ghibli

The camera detects horizontal road markings and calculates the distance and speed of the preceding vehicle.

Highway assist includes a radio that provides road information, and a “hands on wheel” detection system. The driver can override the system at any time.

The new Ghibli Hybrid – intended to replace the defunct diesel options – uses a mild hybrid system based around a turbocharged 2.0-litre four-cylinder petrol engine featuring an electric supercharger. The electric motor is for assistance and cannot independently drive the car.

Maserati Australia and New Zealand chief operating officer Glen Sealey said “with these new models, the imminent arrival of the Ghibli hybrid and full complement of high-performance Trofeo editions, and the arrival of the all-new MC20 supercar, 2021 is set to be an exciting year for Maserati.”

FULL STORY, PRICING: [CLICK HERE](#)



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Hatching plans



Mini updates Hatch and Convertible ranges with tweaks to looks, dynamics ahead of H2 launch

By CALLUM HUNTER

COINCIDING with the 20th anniversary of Mini's BMW-backed relaunch, the iconic small-car brand has revealed and detailed its 2021 Hatch and Convertible range with all versions being treated to a comprehensive overhaul for the New Year.

Due to arrive in Australia in the second half of the year, the new Hatch and Convertible range not only flaunts some updated styling and a refreshed interior but some chassis refinements too, specifically in relation to the adaptive damping.

No changes have been made under



the bonnet of any variant with all three of the familiar turbocharged three- and four-cylinder engines set to be carried over unchanged – 100kW/220Nm in the Cooper, 141kW/280Nm in the Cooper S and 170kW/320Nm in the JCW.

Mini has always prided itself on the design of its cars and so it has been sure to make the latest versions of its most stylish offerings distinguishable from the last; adding a contrasting black trim piece around the front grille and replacing the foglights on the Cooper S variants with new air intakes.

It is a similar story at the back too with a bold new trim piece either skirting or spanning the rear apron depending on the variant.

"The new Mini design is more modern, fresher and clearer," Mini design boss Oliver Heilmer said.

"All innovations follow a

DISTRICT PARTS & SERVICE MANAGER – NSW



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common mission: Purify Mini! Less complexity, more individuality."

Adding to the new look will be an optional 'multitone roof' for the hatches which uses a Spray Tech paint finish to layer and stagger various colours – "San Marino Blue through to Pearly Aqua and Jet Black" – along the roof with no two vehicles being the same due to the natural variation in the process.

Three new colours will also be added to the body palette – Rooftop

Grey metallic, Island Blue metallic and Zesty Yellow – while the alloy wheel range has also been updated.

Inside the cabin, the interior has been given a freshen up with some new upholstery colours and patterns while many of the chrome trim pieces have been swapped out for black ones.

There is also a new 8.8-inch touchscreen infotainment system now free of the previous model's underlining row of buttons.

Drivers now score the 5.0-inch digital display from the Electric Hatch as standard as well as a new sports leather steering wheel.

Under the skin is a new version of Mini's adaptive suspension system which scores an extra valve within the dampers designed to take the sting off sharper bumps by "smoothing out sudden pressure peaks within the damper".

FULL STORY: [CLICK HERE](#)

Ruled out



Global Jeep boss says no to eight-seat Grand Wagoneer for Aus, focus on Grand Cherokee

By CALLUM HUNTER

JEEP has officially confirmed the Grand Cherokee will be the biggest vehicle the brand offers Down Under when it arrives later in the year, with global president Christian Meunier confirming to local media the eight-seat Grand Wagoneer would not be coming to Australia.

Describing the new Grand Cherokee as already being a “pretty substantial, pretty big” vehicle, Mr Meunier said the three-row version in particular will cater to at least some of the market the Grand Wagoneer would have occupied.

“For now it’s off the table and I think we will focus on the three-row Grand Cherokee,” he said.

“It’s all about performance, it’s all about business cases ... but I’d love to do it and I’m sure it could do very well

in Australia, but let’s focus on what really matters for the market for now.”

First teased in August last year before being revealed on September 3 in final concept form, the Grand Wagoneer will be a full-sized SUV designed to take on established high-riding luxury players like the Lexus LX, Range Rover and Mercedes-Benz GLS while simultaneously poaching sales away from other American rigs including the Cadillac Escalade and Chevrolet Suburban.

Now however following the confirmation that the Grand Cherokee will remain the brand’s flagship model Down Under, Mr Meunier said a good deal of the development work was being carried out in Australia to ensure it was as competent as possible.

“We’re doing it ... and that

will make all the difference in the world,” he said.

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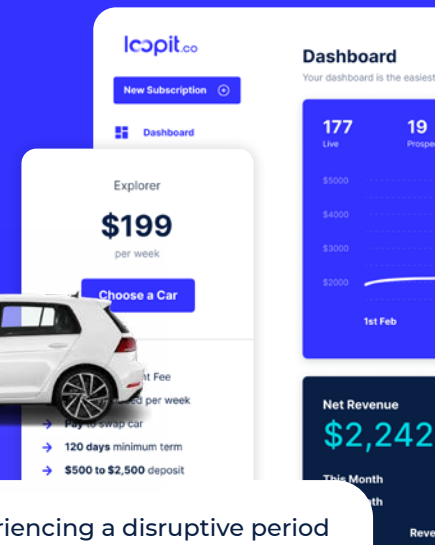
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Clean slate



Lotus to end production of current Elise, Exige and Evora models to make way for brand-new products

By CALLUM HUNTER

THE winds of change are starting to blow for Lotus which has announced production of its Elise, Exige and Evora will be coming to an end this year as the brand shifts its focus to a new series of sportscars capable of taking the British icon into the future.

Forming part of Lotus' Vision80 strategy, the new three-model range will be produced at and supported by a more-than-£100 million (\$A177.3m) upgrade of the brand's Hethel production facilities which will also contribute to the creation of some 250 new jobs across Lotus Cars and Lotus Engineering.

No specific details of the range have been released as yet apart from the codename of the first model due to come online, the Type 131, with production set to start sometime this year.

According to Lotus Cars CEO Phil Popham, the new models would be built with "new levels of efficiency and quality" only achievable by the latest facilities.

"Despite the continuing global challenges, Lotus has emerged from 2020 strong and on track in the delivery of our Vision80 business plan," he said.

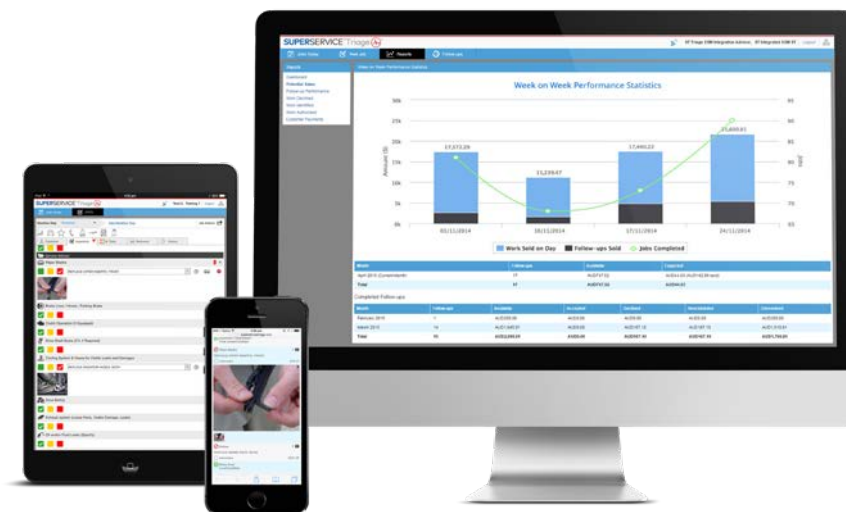
"As our Vision80 strategy illustrates, Lotus is all about looking forward, and our future is full of continuous innovation.

"In 2021, however, we will be reflecting on the legacy of our current range, starting with the Elise, a sportscar that genuinely revolutionised the automotive industry, not only because it is a legend-in-its-own-lifetime but also for its impact on car design and technology."

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Heating up



Hyundai debuts warmed-over Tucson N-Line medium SUV, arriving in coming months

By CALLUM HUNTER

HYUNDAI Motor Company (HMC) has unveiled its biggest performance-oriented model yet with the Tucson N-Line due to arrive Down Under in the coming months, offering a sportier look and driving experience compared to the rest of the new Tucson medium SUV range.

As is the way with all N-Line products, the Tucson N-Line's styling has been given an aggressive makeover and now sports a bigger, blacked out radiator grille, enlarged lower intake, a redesigned front bumper and black headlight surrounds.

From the side, bigger (19-inch) and more aggressive alloy wheels headline the changes along with chunky body-coloured wheelarches, black mirror caps and blacked-out roof and glasshouse.

At the rear there is a bigger roof-mounted spoiler ridged with subtle aero fins while the rear bumper now sports a sizeable rear diffuser and dual exhaust tips.

The sporty touches have been continued within the cabin too with N-branded sports seats finished in black suede and leather, N-branded gear selector, N steering wheel, black headliner, metal finish sports pedals and an abundance of red stitching.

While the local pricing and specification details are yet to be revealed, HMC says the bulk of the Tucson N-Line's development has been done in Europe and in that market at least, will be available with a sportier tune of the optional 'electronically controlled suspension' (adaptive damping) to make the flagship family hauler more dynamic to drive.



The larger-diameter wheels and lower-profile tyres will help here too, inevitably delivering a marginally firmer ride.

As for the powertrains, the Tucson has long been offered with a different range of engines in Europe than it has in Australia, with the N-Line set to be underpinned in Europe by a turbocharged 1.6-litre four-cylinder petrol engine with five different configurations.



Those consist of pure internal combustion (110kW), two mild hybrids (110kW and 132kW), a 169kW hybrid (HEV) and a 188kW plug-in hybrid (PHEV).

Australian Tucsons – initial examples at least – are likely to retain the current line-up of petrol and diesel engines – 122kW/205Nm 2.0-litre four-cylinder petrol, 130kW/265Nm 1.6-litre turbo and 136kW/400Nm 2.0-litre turbo-diesel – while the hybrid



powertrains are under consideration.

One notable omission from those line-ups is the long-suspected turbocharged 2.5-litre four-cylinder petrol mill out of the Sonata N-Line good for 213kW/422Nm, leaving the door wide open for a possible full-fat Tucson N to emerge down the line, something executives have alluded to in the past.

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Sales crown



Toyota GR Yaris

Toyota surpasses Volkswagen as world's best-selling brand in 2020 following five-year VW reign at top

By NEIL DOWLING

VOLKSWAGEN has been booted out of the top-seller's position after five years as the world's most popular brand with the effects of the pandemic and soaring costs slashing sales in 2020 by 15 per cent – enough to elevate Toyota to the top for the first time since 2015.

The global slump in vehicle demand caused by the pandemic hit the Volkswagen Group harder than most of its rivals, with sales down 15 per cent to 9.31 million deliveries across all Group assets (Volkswagen, Audi, Porsche, Skoda, Seat, Scania and MAN).

The extent of the car-maker's sales losses was largely determined by their level of exposure to the regions most disrupted by the virus.

The European Automobile

Manufacturers Association (ACEA) reported that Volkswagen has a strong footprint in the European Union where passenger car sales plunged by 24 per cent to less than 10m in 2020.

ACEA said that Toyota has a bigger presence in the US, where total light vehicle sales fell 14.4 per cent in 2020.

"Although the US has the most COVID-19 deaths and cases, there have not been the same lockdowns as in Europe," it said in a statement.

The lockdowns directly affected sales by preventing people from visiting car showrooms.

As a result, Toyota's 2020 group sales – including Lexus, Daihatsu and Hino – fell 11 per cent to 9.53m units.

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Drip-feed



BMW teases i4 EV sedan, releases powertrain details including 390kW peak power, 600km driving range

By CALLUM HUNTER

BMW has confirmed some of the key specifications and priorities of its upcoming i4 electric sports-sedan as it undergoes the final stages of its development, including a peak power output of 390kW.

Despite not being a designated performance model adorned with M badges, the sleek new four-door EV actually develops more power than the imminently arriving M3 and M4 Competition twins however a final torque figure has not been revealed yet.

According to engineers, the i4 will go from standstill to 100km/h in four seconds flat and while the top speed is yet to be revealed, the brand is claiming an effective range of up to 600km on the WLTP cycle.

“For the first time, we’ve developed

a BMW with sporty DNA for purely electric driving entirely from scratch,” i4 project manager David Alfredo Ferrufino Camacho said.

“The BMW i4 offers everything BMW stands for – and it’s fully electric, too.”

More than just about raw speed, Mr Camacho added that plenty of work was going into the i4’s dynamics resulting in a “mature premium character”.

Given its inevitable weight penalty over the next-gen BMW 4 Series Gran Coupe with which it will share a platform, the i4 will boast model-specific components and damper technology, unique camber values and component tunes as well as a lower centre of gravity than its eventual internal-combustion counterpart.

“The BMW i4 conveys the feeling of being light and agile yet also solid and authoritative,” Mr Camacho said.

“With its superior directional reliability and high level of cornering stability, it seems to literally attach itself to the road.

“All electric vehicles are capable of fast straight-line acceleration. But that’s not enough for us at BMW.”

Despite the obvious rhetoric about the i4’s performance credentials, the electric Gran Coupe is first and foremost aimed at long-distance comfort and day-to-day use however those BMW fans hoping for an all-out performance EV have had their wishes granted with the i4 set to be used as the basis for the first ever electrified M car.

As reported by *GoAuto* in September last year, the Performance version of the i4 will not be a fully-fledged M car like the M3 or M5 but rather an M Performance vehicle in the ilk of the semi-skim M340i and M550i – performance vs high-performance.

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Crazy crossover



GoAuto tests out Mercedes-AMG's new-generation GLA45 S to find out who rules hot small SUV sector

By ROBBIE WALLIS

WITH the rise in popularity of small SUVs over the past decade, it has brought increased competition to the performance SUV sector, even at the more affordable end with models such as the Hyundai Kona N and Volkswagen T-Roc R due to launch soon.

However the real performance small SUV heavy hitters lie at the top of the segment. While the BMW X2 M35i and Mini Countryman JCW can claim performance status, the title of segment king is realistically fought between two models – the Audi RS Q3 and Mercedes-AMG GLA45 S.

Both released in new-generation guise in the last six months, the German rivals are both supremely powerful and capable, with the

AMG featuring both a higher kilowatt count and pricetag.

We took the GLA45 S out on the road to find out if it has what it takes to rule the performance crossover roost.

Despite being an all-new model with a fresh design, the signature visual elements of the old GLA45 have been carried over, namely the chrome-rimmed 21-inch alloy wheels, front apron aero fins and chunky rear spoiler, which combine with the red brake callipers, quad-exit exhaust, Panamericana grille and more aggressive bodykit to signify its performance intentions.

We have to admit, the juxtaposition of a boxy small SUV body with tall doors and black trim around the skirts and bumpers does make for a curious combination against the performance-oriented



body parts, however it does work in a unique way.

Moving inside the cabin, the GLA45 S features more or less the same interior as its platform-sharing A45 and CLA45 cousins, starting with the dual-screen MBUX infotainment system and digital instrument cluster.

We've never been fans of the stuck-on-tablet look of Mercedes'

infotainment screens, however the systems themselves are easy to operate with a fairly simple layout aided by a number of shortcut buttons and a (slightly fiddly) touchpad.

The MBUX's voice recognition system is also the best and most intuitive among its competitors.

For those who don't prefer Mercedes' system, wired Apple



CarPlay/Android Auto is also on offer.

The cabin itself is somewhat of a mixture, with some high-quality elements such as the stylish ambient interior lighting and turbine air vents, Dinamica microfibre sports steering wheel, lovely Burmester sound system, colour head-up display, sunroof and leather seats with contrast yellow stitching.

Continued next page

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In particular the steering wheel feels chunky and comfortable in the hands, with a wide array of buttons that can configure the infotainment and instrument cluster screens, cruise control functions, audio playback, drive mode selector and brushed metal paddle shifters.

However there is an underlying sense of cheapness on some parts of the cabin, such as the hard plastics used on the B-pillars, door bins and door handle surrounds, along with fake-looking faux carbon-fibre trim on the dashboard and doors.

We understand most of the money on the GLA45 S has gone towards its performance credentials, however for a small SUV priced at \$107,035 plus on-roads (and nearly \$15,000 more than the outgoing model), we would have liked to see some more premium materials adorning the cabin.

Head and legroom for front

passengers is ample (however the seats are on the narrow side), while taller rear passengers may feel a little tight on legroom. Surprisingly, there is no drop-down centre armrest or cupholder for rear passengers.

With a relatively low boot floor, 435 litres of cargo space is on offer, expanding to a healthy 1430L with the 40:20:40 split-fold rear seats stowed.

One of the undeniable highlights of the new GLA45 S is the demonic engine hiding under the bonnet, which claims the title of most powerful 2.0-litre four-cylinder on the market.

Tuned to produce a manic 310kW at 6750rpm and 500Nm from 5000-5250rpm (an improvement of 30kW/25Nm), the GLA45 S drives all four wheels through an eight-speed dual-clutch automatic transmission with variable torque distribution.

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Freshening up

Brand-new offerings in people mover segment look to claw back share from seven-seat SUVs

By NEIL DOWLING

PEOPLE movers heavily based on commercial vans were once the only way to move a large family and all the associated children paraphernalia.

They were the workhorses of suburbia and though generally unloved, became the backbone to getting the family around as one unit.

Now the segment has lost much of its sales grip as seven-seat SUVs become the vehicle of choice for families, but there are still signs of strength in the family market, particularly from the new breed that have no basis on commercial vans.

The other market for people movers is in doing exactly what the name indicates – moving people as a commercial business, such as airport transfer, executive limousine transport, or shifting corporate members around cities and regional sites.

Some strength has come to the segment from the federal government's instant tax write-off that assisted the commercial side of people movers, allowing operators a welcome discount to upgrade vehicles

used for tours and transit businesses.

But against that grain, the hospitality industry slumped as tourists from overseas and even interstate were held back from travel, impacting on any related business.

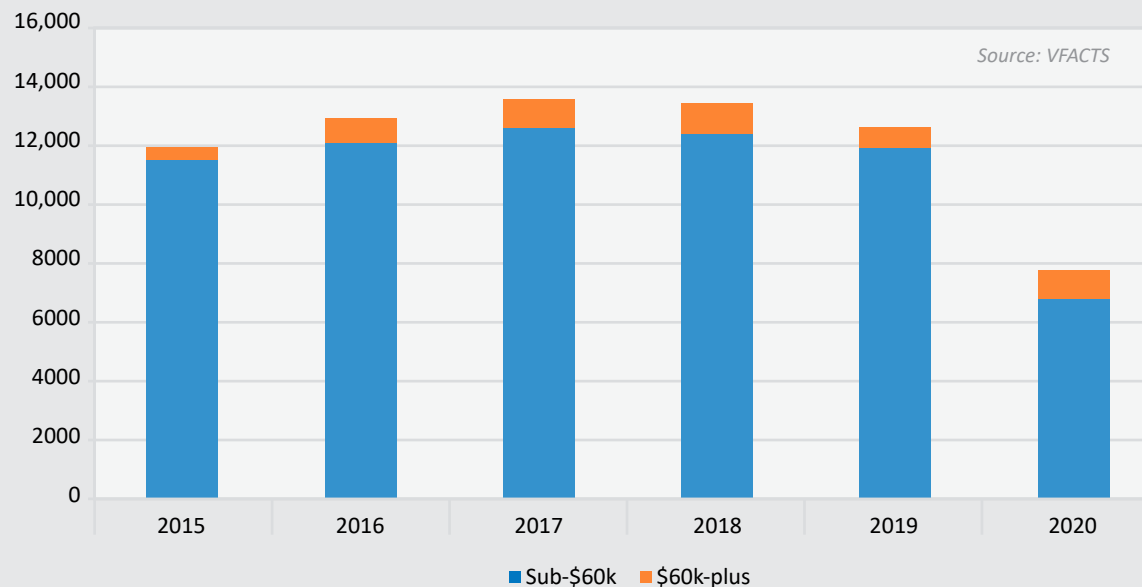
People movers have also been attacked from other vehicle genres, notably the SUVs of which many have seven-seat capacity, a high towing capacity and all-wheel drive, appealing to families who want to get away and need space.

With tow ratings of 2000-3500kg, the larger SUVs can generally out-tow people movers, such as the Hyundai Santa Fe SUV with a 2500kg maximum braked towing capacity compared with the Hyundai iMax people mover's 1500kg.

People mover sales are now only 7730 units a year, falling more than 37 per cent over the past decade from the 12,655 units shifted in 2010 when they were under less threat from the SUV genre and when owning – and being seen in – such a van was more socially acceptable.

Now that SUVs have become the “must have” family car for people

People mover sales 2015-2020



who want to look adventurous, the humble people movers have drifted into becoming merely transport for lots of kids.

The stigma remains that people movers are still based on commercial vans and have inherited

similar comfort, build quality and roadholding manners.

Of the 13 models of people movers in today's market, only two are purpose-built for the task – the rest are based on a commercial vehicle.

While that may sound dismissive of the segment, few acknowledge that Australia's most popular vehicles – the Toyota HiLux and Ford Ranger – are commercial vehicles.

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Regional rollout



Adrian Kinderis with a Linga charging station

Aussie startup Linga Network to facilitate installation of 100 new free-use EV chargers in regional Victoria

By CALLUM HUNTER

VICTORIA'S electric vehicle infrastructure is set to be given a booster shot over the coming months with the rollout of 100 free-to-use regional charging stations across the state.

Orchestrated and initiated by Australian startup Linga Network, the first stations were switched on last week in Hindmarsh Shire in the north-west of the state with the remaining 98 to be installed and live by mid-year.

With the infrastructure costs covered directly by manufacturers, it is then down to participating local councils to determine and provide the exact charger location as well as

cover the installation costs.

According to a statement made by Linga Network, the charging locations are determined by community need rather than financial return with no two chargers ever being more than 100km apart.

Designed to simultaneously boost tourism as well as reduce range anxiety among EV owners, the chargers themselves will deliver around 20 per cent of charge per hour, allowing motorists enough time to look around, explore and support local businesses while they wait.

“Until now, charging locations for EVs have been confined to cities and a small number of major travel

routes like Sydney to Melbourne, and the market has been largely dominated by private enterprises that operate with disparate and confusing payment systems,” Linga Network founder and CEO Adrian Kinderis said.

“Linga Network’s goal is to break down yet another digital divide for regional Australians.

“We’re overcoming the major infrastructure roadblock to electric vehicle ownership – charge anxiety – while supporting regional communities through tourism, economic activity and a boost to their sustainability credentials.”

There are also plans to expand

the program to a national level once the Victorian rollout is complete, however no set timeline of events has been released yet in this context with Linga Network quite content to see how things go at a state level first.

As such, it was no coincidence that Nhill and Rainbow in the Hindmarsh Shire were selected as the first locations to receive a charger given both are more than four hours’ drive from the Melbourne CBD.

Hindmarsh Shire Council mayor Ron Ismay said the initiative had the potential to “change the face of tourism in regional town centres”


and that it was an exciting time for the shire.

“We have a proud history of innovation through agriculture and more recently in our sustainable practices,” he said.

“Not only does participation in this program make sense for our local economies, it will play an important role in bridging the divide between metropolitan and regional Victoria and unifying our state.

“It also gives all Victorians a great way to reduce their impact on the environment ... we encourage our colleagues in other councils across Australia to follow our lead.”


1769 new EVs were purchased Australia-wide last year (excluding Tesla), 246 more than the 1523 sold in 2019 (+16.2%) with more and more manufacturers across all segments joining the EV market as global emission restrictions become ever-tighter.



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ANDREW MCKELLAR ANNOUNCED AS ATA CEO

By NEIL DOWLING
ANDREW McKellar, the Paris-based secretary general for mobility at the International Automobile Federation (FIA), has been appointed the CEO of the Australian Trucking Association (ATA).

Before joining the FIA, Mr McKellar was CEO of the Australian Automobile Association (AAA) and the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries (FCAI).

In government, he was a senior advisor to successive Australian industry ministers from 1996 to 1998. He also worked as an economist and research officer in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Commonwealth Treasury and the Queensland Treasury.

ATA chair David Smith said Mr McKellar would lead the ATA to new levels of effectiveness and member service.

"The board was very impressed by Andrew's experience in international advocacy for road

safety during his tenure at the FIA and his understanding of the emerging trends influencing safety, sustainability and competitiveness in road transport and mobility globally," Mr Smith said.

"Andrew's extensive skills and experience in public policy and advocacy will be indispensable as he makes the case for improving our industry's productivity, and as he protects the interests of trucking businesses in the discussions about truck charges that are ahead.

"The board was also impressed by Andrew's knowledge of association strategic planning and his dedication to leading the ATA in the interests of its members," he said.

Mr McKellar said that he looked forward to working to represent a sector that is so crucial to the future strength of Australia's economic performance.

"The trucking industry is part of the lifeblood of the Australian economy. I am dedicated to advancing the interests of those who rely on the industry for their livelihood and to promote the future vision of the industry," he said.



Andrew McKellar

PLEASE FORWARD ANY NEWS OF PERSONNEL MOVES TO:
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STELLANTIS NAMES EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT

By NEIL DOWLING
STELLANTIS, the merger of Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) and Groupe PSA, has announced the appointment of its Top Executive Team and nine dedicated committees covering company-wide performance and strategy.

The Stellantis Top Executive Team consists of a strategy council with Carlos Tavares (CEO of Stellantis); Mike Manley (head of Americas); Silvia Verneti (global corporate office); Emmanuel Delay (chief performance officer); Yves Bonnefont (chief software officer); and Philippe de Rovira (chief affiliates officer).

The regional CEOs are: Maxime Picat (Europe) with deputy Davide Mele and Eurasia manager Xavier

Duchemin; Mark Stewart (North America); Antonio Filosa (South America); Samir Cherfan (Middle East and Africa); Gregoire Olivier (China); and Carl Smiley (India and Asia Pacific, including Australia) with deputy Christophe Musy for the ASEAN countries.

Brand CEOs are: Christian Meunier (Jeep); Timothy Kuniskis (Chrysler and Dodge); Mike Koval (Ram); Vincent Cobee (Citroen); Olivier Francois (Fiat and Abarth); Michael Lohscheller (Opel and Vauxhall); Linda Jackson (Peugeot); Jean-Philippe Imparato (Alfa Romeo); Beatrice Foucher (DS); Luca Napolitano (Lancia); Davide Grasso (Maserati); and Brigitte Courtehoux (Free2Move).



Carlos Tavares

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FLETCHER DEPARTS FCAI

By NEIL DOWLING
THE Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries (FCAI) has announced the resignation of its public affairs director Lenore Fletcher, who has joined Motorsport Safety and Rescue (MSR) as director of operations.

FCAI chief executive Tony Weber said: "We would like to thank Lenore for her substantial contribution to the organisation over the past two years.

"Her work across communications, strategic planning and stakeholder relations, both internally and externally, has been an asset to the organisation."



Lenore Fletcher

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Harder edge



Mitsubishi teases new-generation Outlander SUV while showing off improved rough-road abilities

By CALLUM HUNTER

MITSUBISHI Motors Corporation (MMC) has started a teaser campaign in the lead-up to the reveal of its all-new Outlander mid-sized SUV, releasing a video this week showing an advanced development vehicle undergoing its final testing and calibration.

The 16-second clip posted to YouTube features a heavily



camouflaged development vehicle being put through its paces on a variety of surfaces in equally varied conditions with the new model set to debut on February 16.

Given MMC's 'Super All-Wheel Control system' has long been one of the Outlander's drawcards, it is fitting that all the clips contained within the video were shot off-road with just a single snippet being captured on a bitumen surface.

With a new catch-phrase of "tested to be tough" it would be safe to assume MMC is looking to up the Outlander's off-road credentials with the new model, a notion

reflected by the difficulty of some of the terrain covered including a particularly steep gravel ascent, deep mud pit and ice.

"We took everything we know about on- and off-road driving from the rally experiences to apply the

latest Super All-Wheel Control technology in our newly developed platform," chief engineer Kentaro Honda said.

"We also specifically developed a new drive mode selector to provide confident driving at all times and in

all weather conditions.

"We hope that many customers will have great experiences with the enhanced driving performance of the all-new Outlander."

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FULL NEW CAR DIARY: [CLICK HERE](#)



Skoda's all-new Scala hatch finally arrives in Australia this month, set to take on the likes of the related Volkswagen Golf.

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Renault plans for value, not volume

Moving from a 'car company working with tech to a tech company working with cars'



The year ahead – industry wish list

AADA and AAAA outline their focus to strengthen the industry in 2021

That's the Spirit

MTAA Super and Tasplan officially join to become Spirit Super

By NEIL DOWLING

FRESH from cutting its model range in Australia, Renault has announced a broad plan to focus on making money and not on increasing product volume, dropping its output to 3.1 million units from the current 4m units by 2025.

Renault has outlined its “Renaulution” goal that was big on plans to engage in:

- “Resurrection” – from now until 2023 that will concentrate on margin and cash generation; then,
- “Renovation” – to renew the product range from now until 2025; and then,
- “Revolution” – from 2025 onwards to move the company to a broader focus on technology and energy issues.

The trio of programs aim to make Groupe Renault a frontrunner in the value chain of new mobility, said company CEO Luca de Meo in a digital launch of the plan.

This new model will create a “rebalanced and more profitable” product portfolio with 24 launches by 2025, half in the C and D segment. Of these, least 10 will be full EVs.

Renault said that the new value-driven organisation and product offensive will drive a better pricing

and product mix and lower the group’s break-even point by 30 per cent by 2023.

Rationalisation of platforms from six to three will mean that 80 per cent of Renault Group volumes will be based on three Alliance (shared with Nissan and Mitsubishi) platforms. At the same time, the powertrain family will be halved, from eight to four.

Much of this will happen quickly. Renault said that all models to be launched on existing platforms will be in the market in less than three years, with the first sighting for Australia being the Arkana SUV that arrives later this year.

Renault Australia said it is early days for Renaulution, however Australia has felt some effect of the rationalisation with the end of the Clio, Kadjar and Zoe Electric and the reduction of the Megane range to one car from three.

The Kadjar is out because it sits on an old platform and will be replaced late this year by the coupe-styled Arkana SUV, underpinned by new architecture.

Other changes are a refreshed Captur, Koleos and Megane RS in the first half of this year.

Continued next page

“Renault’s new business unit, Mobilize, is expected to generate more than 20 per cent of the group’s revenues by 2030 as it develops data, mobility and energy-related services for its customers.”

Continued from previous page

The Renault plan, aiming at restoring Renault’s competitiveness, indicates it will improve the efficiency of its engineering and manufacturing business to reduce fixed costs and improve variable costs.

In becoming a “value-driven organisation”, Mr de Meo said Renault would “no longer measure its performance on market shares and sales but on profitability, cash generation and investment effectiveness.”



Luca de Meo

By 2023, it aims to have more than 3 per cent group operating margin which will result in about €3 billion or \$A4.7b in cashflow. It is also looking for a fixed cost reduction of €2.5b (\$A3.9b). By 2025 it is aiming for an operating margin of 5 per cent (€6b or \$A9.4b) and a fixed cost reduction of €6b.

“The Renault plan will ensure the group’s sustainable profitability while keeping on track with its Zero CO2 footprint commitment in Europe by 2050,” said Mr de Meo.

“The Renault is about moving

the whole company from volumes to value. More than a turnaround, it is a profound transformation of our business model.

“We’ve set steady, healthy foundations for our performance. We’ve streamlined our operations starting with engineering, adjusting our size when required, reallocating our resources in high-potential products and technologies.

“This boosted efficiency will fuel our future line-up: tech-infused, electrified and competitive.

“We’ll move from a car company working with tech to a tech company working with cars, making at least 20 per cent of its revenues from services, data and energy trading by 2030.”

Renault’s new business unit, Mobilize, is expected to generate more than 20 per cent of the group’s revenues by 2030 as it develops data, mobility and energy-related services for its customers.

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Tesla faces screen test



Model S

US safety watchdog warns failures of big screens could be fatal in 160,000 cars

By NEIL DOWLING

TESLA has been asked by the US safety watchdog to recall almost 160,000 cars to replace the giant infotainment screens, warning that they control many of the cars' safety functions and that failure of the screen could lead to injury or death.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has asked Tesla to recall approximately 158,000 Model S and Model X vehicles that could have a problem related to their display screen, reversing camera, window defogger and defroster, and other safety-related functions, the agency said in a letter sent to Tesla.

The US Consumer Reports organisation said the NHTSA said failure of the reversing camera or

window defroster and defogger can lead to injury or death.

Tesla has already replaced 12,588 media control units (MCUs) at the centre of the problem that relate to the central touchscreen that is the hallmark of the brand's cars. One US customer has had the MCU replaced three times.

MotorTrend magazine in the US said the problem lies with the MCU that runs the central display screen.

"If it fails, the screen goes dark, which means that neither the backup camera nor the climate controls will be displayed," it said.

"Because Tesla displays its climate controls on the centre screen, that means there's no way to turn on the defroster or defogger.

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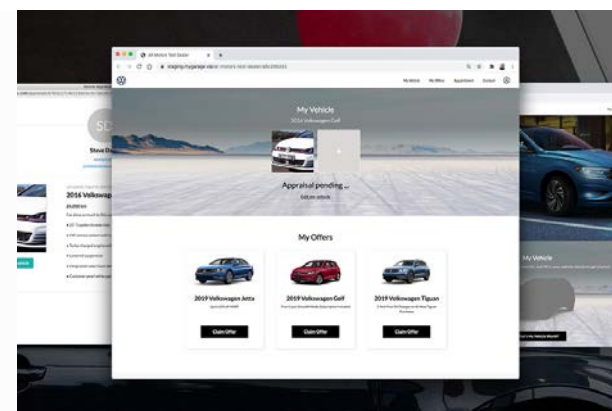


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Eagers' profit doubles despite COVID



Soaring new-car and truck margins a windfall for Australia's biggest car retailer

By NEIL DOWLING

A **BOOMING** new-car and truck market has rocketed the 2020 year trading returns for Eagers Automotive Ltd, scoring an underlying profit before tax of \$209.4 million – more than double its return in 2019.

The profit figure is also higher than what Eagers expected in its December announcement to its shareholders and the Australian Securities Exchange.

Eagers managing director Martin Ward in December said he expected Eagers to end 2020 with a full-year profit of \$195 million to \$204m. This compares with the 2019 full-year return of \$100.4m.

“The improved profit result compared to guidance has been

delivered by stronger underlying operating profit before tax for both the car and truck retailing businesses,” he said.

In its December statement, Mr Ward said the 2020 year represented the first full year of trading since the company bought Automotive Holdings Group Ltd (AHG).

Of the year, he said: “Vehicle sales have continued to rebound strongly from the historical lows experienced during April and May 2020 when nation-wide COVID-19 restrictions were in place.”

“Customer orders have continued on their strong trajectory and supply constraints caused by global manufacturer factory closures during the June quarter have



Martin Ward

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started to ease as demonstrated by the 12 per cent uptick in national vehicle deliveries recorded during November by VFacts.

“The industry's tight inventory position, combined with the company's cost reduction initiatives implemented following the merger with AHG and in response to COVID-19, have driven Eagers Automotive's strong underlying trading performance.”

The \$209.4m profit – which

will be confirmed by the company on February 24 following the completion of an external audit – does not include business acquisitions, disposals, property valuation changes, compensation and COVID payments and any compensation from Holden.

During the 2020 year, Eagers sold its Daimler Trucks 16 national truck and bus and service centres and property on which Stillwell Trucks is located for \$108m.

It said that this would result in an estimated net gain of \$32m to \$36m. This sale is expected to be finalised in the first quarter of this year and not included in the 2020 figures.

During the 2020 year, it also bought some of the property on which its dealerships are sited.

This included a 4.3-hectare (10.6-acre) site in Castle Hill, in the north-west of Sydney.

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The year ahead – industry wish list



AADA and AAAA outline their focus to strengthen the industry in 2021

By NEIL DOWLING
THE year 2020 has been one to forget, but one that has taught the industry and its players important lessons about the fluid nature of our natural world and its unpredictability that affects seemingly unrelated fields as selling or repairing a car.



James Voortman

With those lessons learnt in 2020, and with an unexpectedly buoyant new-vehicle market and healthy automotive industry, we ask two leading bodies about their wishlist for 2021 – what they want to sustain and grow the industry and its people.



Stuart Charity

The Australian Automotive Dealers Association (AADA), with about 3200 franchises and 1500 owners, sees its main priority for 2021 to further reforms on automotive franchising. AADA CEO James Voortman told *GoAutoNews Premium* that 2020 saw some gains on this issue with the implementation of an automotive schedule to the franchising code; the news that dealers would be exempt from needing authorisations to collectively bargain; and the extension of unfair contract term protections to more of its members.

“Despite all of these reforms, General Motors showed us that manufacturers are still able to ruthlessly exploit dealers and we believe stronger reforms need to be enacted as soon as possible



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given many OEMs are considering making significant changes to their networks and business models,” Mr Voortman said.

The Australian Automotive Aftermarket Association (AAAA) said the passing of the mandatory data sharing law was likely to dominate the year ahead.

AAAA CEO Stuart Charity said his association will be informing its members and car owners about what choice and fair competition will

mean after the legislation becomes law on July 1, 2022.

It also has a busy year in other areas. Mr Charity said the AAAA is setting up the Automotive Service and Repair Authority (ASRA) which will support the new law by providing access to secure data release and supporting the accreditation of independent repairers.

“The new Road Vehicle Standards Act becomes law in July 2021 and

this new law has implications for our Second Stage Manufacturers (SSMs),” he said.

“We are working closely with governments to make sure that our world-class suspension and GVM (gross vehicle mass) upgrade industry continues to support business fleet purchasers seeking to modify vehicles before first registration.”

[FULL STORY: CLICK HERE](#)

BMW, Audi, Merc cancel subscriptions



BMW X6 M (left) and X5 M

Subscription programs come adrift in the US as OEMs struggle to make them work

By NEIL DOWLING

BMW has become the latest luxury car-maker after Mercedes-Benz and Audi to suspend its subscription service in the US, dropping the program after almost three years.

BMW said the 'Access by BMW' program was only intended as a pilot and it has been suspended – meaning existing members continue with the service but no new members can join – because it “had reached its capacity limits”.

Audi ended its service this month in the US after persevering since September 2018, while Mercedes-Benz dropped its program in June 2020. Cadillac ended its program in 2018 and then resurrected it as a much smaller offering last year, while Ford sold its subscription business in 2019 citing poor returns.

OEMs use subscription service programs primarily to attract consumers to their brand and allow them to sample a range of models.

But OEMs are finding the programs are labour intensive and need high administration hours on avoiding fraud and to ensure high customer satisfaction.

However, programs offered by non-OEM businesses have done very well.

Carly in Australia says that it has been “watching with interest the experience of other subscription programs overseas”.

The company told *GoAutoNews Premium*: “The approach of the OEMs overseas appears to have been ‘build it and they will come’, but they have forgotten that subscription is very different to retailing.

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“We have found that subscription customers are seeking a more flexible option than buying or finance but they still require value for money. The luxury brands aimed their products at the top one per cent expecting they would be attracted by the opportunity to try multiple models and pay a premium for this. But this is a very niche market.

“Carly has found that the ability to switch cars or pause a subscription

is highly attractive but it is driven by more practical needs such as changes in family size, commuting behaviour or time of year.

“A subscription service requires a much deeper and lengthy relationship with the customer than traditional retail. This is a major benefit for the OEM because it presents a constant opportunity to engage and upsell, however it does come with obligations and risk.

“Some OEM subscription

programs have encountered fraud and damage to vehicles. Car rental companies have dealt with this for years and have developed sophisticated systems to identify and prevent fraud. OEMs that are not working with an experienced partner may take some time before they can refine their systems and processes to minimise fraud risk and still maintain high conversion.

FULL STORY: [CLICK HERE](#)

That's the Spirit



MTAA Super and Tasplan officially join to become Spirit Super

By JOHN MELLOR

THE much-anticipated merger between super funds MTAA Super and Tasplan will take effect from April 1 this year with the new entity to be known as Spirit Super.

Spirit Super will be Australia's newest industry super fund. It will have about \$23 billion in funds under management with about 326,000 members across Australia.

MTAA Super brings \$13b in funds and 200,000 members to the merger and Tasplan brings \$10b and 126,000 members.

Tasplan is primarily Tasmania-based but has members in mainland Australia as well.

MTAA Super was launched in 1989 by the Motor Trades Association

of Australia (MTAA) to handle the superannuation needs of people working in the motor trades and other allied industries in the wake of the 1985 National Wage Case that required a 3 per cent employer superannuation contribution to be paid into an industry fund.



Naomi Edwards

The state-based motor trades bodies got together through the MTAA to establish the fund because until that point very few people working in the motor trade had superannuation.



Leeanne Turner

While the MTAA Super membership is mostly motor industry focussed with a motor industry DNA, membership has been available to anyone.

Coinciding with the merger, the long-standing chairman of MTAA

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Super, former Victorian state premier John Brumby, will retire. Naomi Edwards, who has been chair of Tasplan since 2011, will chair the new combined board.

On completion of the merger, current MTAA Super CEO Leeanne Turner will assume the CEO role of Spirit Super.

Ms Turner said in a statement that the new name “perfectly represents the fund’s drive to be a national super fund that offers superior

service, value, and member focus”.

“Spirit Super captures the energy of what we’re about. It’s fresh and optimistic and innovative — everything we want to be.

“The new name also speaks to the past achievements of our funds,” Ms Turner said. “MTAA Super and Tasplan are both outstanding funds and take great pride in providing historically strong long-term returns, excellent value and service to our members.

“As Spirit Super, we will have greater capacity to continue improving our products and service and to really embrace a member-first approach to everything we do.”

The merger follows a successful year for MTAA Super and Tasplan, with both funds receiving Platinum ratings by SuperRatings and being named ‘Best Value for Money’ funds for 2020.

FULL STORY: [CLICK HERE](#)



Consumption tax answer to EV charging

Payment app developed in Melbourne makes paying for EV charging a painless exercise

By NEIL DOWLING

TAXING EV owners on the distance they travel is costly, inefficient and open to abuse, said a company that is now talking to governments about a simple consumption tax metered at the EV charging point.

Global Electric Transport (GET), based in Melbourne and with major shareholders including Srecko Lorbek of Lorbek Luxury Cars, has developed a payment app that it claims completely mitigates the need for a rudimentary logbook method of collecting a distance-based tax.

The taxation of EVs has been proposed by some governments and the Victorian independent advisory body Infrastructure Victoria as a road-user charge and the main proposal is to use logbooks as the tax register.

GET CEO Harry Hamann told *GoAutoNews Premium* that a


logbook method “was not a fair way to calculate a road-user charge” and that GET’s proposal was to apply the tax when the EV motorist recharged.

“People say electric cars, and hydrogen and all the other technology, is completely new so as a result, we have to completely rethink everything associated with cars,” he said.

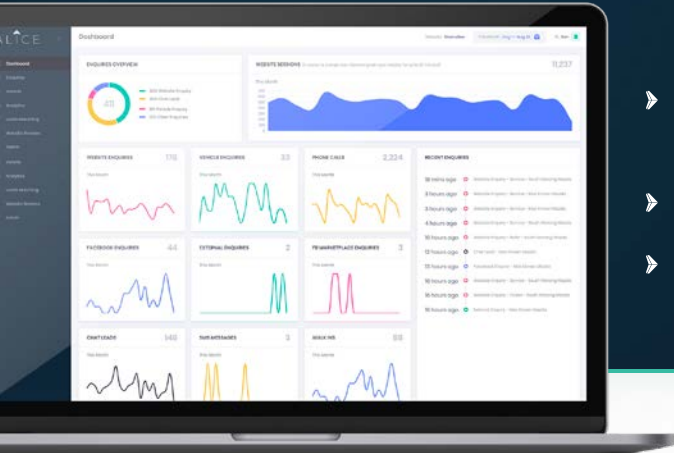
“But the reality is, there is no difference between an electric car, hydrogen car, and petrol or diesel car apart from the method by which it’s propelled.

“And the nature in which we use our cars is not fundamentally changed.

“So our logic was, well, they introduced a fuel excise levy nearly 100 years or so ago. It hasn’t materially changed in that time.




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Mr Hamann said an electricity charge-based tax is a much simpler and fairer method of collecting revenue from EV owners and has many similarities with the federal fuel excise system.

“The problem with going down a distance-based model is it’s going to require everyone to submit, manually or automatically, the odometer reading,” he said.

“And they’re going to get sent a bill. For most people, if they get a bill for \$300, that’s a significant amount of money.

“On the other hand, under a consumption tax as in the case of refuelling a car with petrol, you go to the petrol station, fill up your car, pay your portion of tax, and drive away.

“Plus, you don’t get a separate line item on your receipt saying your fuel excise portion is 40 per cent of what you’re paying. It just

disappears into the total amount paid for your fuel (electricity) and, as a result, you don’t see that cost.

“A distance-based model also results in rural and regional road users to pay a proportionally higher amount of tax, given the higher kilometres they travel and the lower per-kilometre fuel/energy consumption they use as opposed to stop-start city drivers.

FULL STORY: [CLICK HERE](#)

Ford and Geelong make it a century



Andrew Birkic (left) and Brian Cook

World's longest sporting sponsorship to extend to 100 years with 2025 agreement

By NEIL DOWLING

FORD Australia and the Geelong Football Club have a sponsorship union cast in stone after becoming the Guinness World Records' longest sporting partnership – now it has gone further with the signing of a deal to take it to 100 years.

Ford Australia president and CEO Andrew Birkic and Geelong Football Club CEO Brian Cook signed the contract at GMHBA Stadium, securing the deal for a further five years.

First signed in 1925, Ford and the Cats are listed in the Guinness World Records as having the longest-running partnership in sporting history.

Ford said: "This milestone demonstrates the long-lasting bond between the two Victoria-based

organisations, and Ford's ongoing commitment to Geelong, with its global research and development hub in Norlane, Geelong, the Ford YouYangs Proving Ground, and strong roots embedded across the community."

Mr Birkic said: "If there's one thing footy and Ford have in common, it's the dedication and passion of their fans right throughout our histories."

"To put it into historical terms, Ford first signed on when we were making the Model T and we're still here with the club as our Australian team works on advanced technology and engineers vehicles of the future.

"We've gone through nine Geelong premierships, 18 grand finals, and 52 finals series together."

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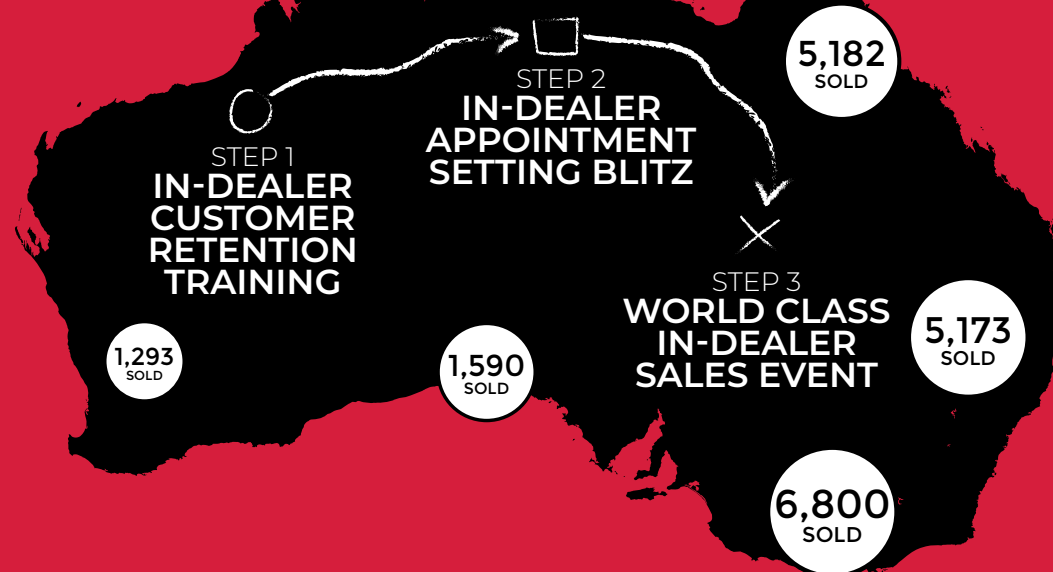
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