

ROAD AHEAD

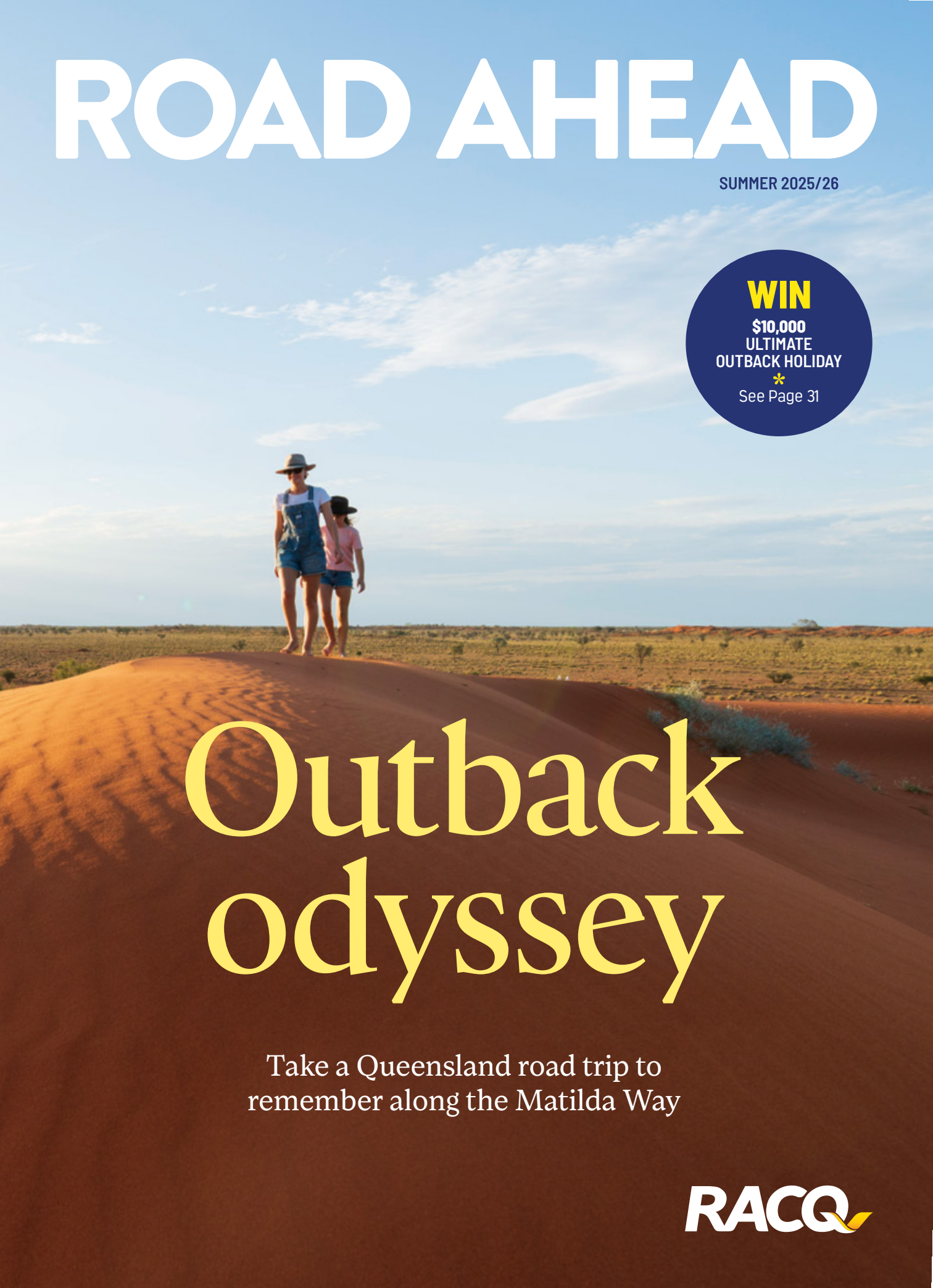
SUMMER 2025/26

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See Page 31



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RACQ?

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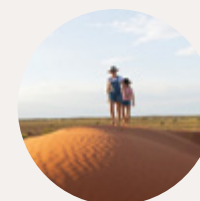
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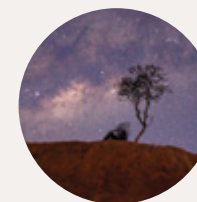
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ROAD AHEAD

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Cairns, Townsville)

ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE 13 1111

Acknowledgement of Country
We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which our business operates and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We also acknowledge the important role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within RACQ and the communities in which we live and work.



RACQ Foundation volunteers who were part of the team that visited Etheridge shire in October, from left, Albert Budworth, Demae McMahon, Rach Quinn, Hannah Kennedy-Goodwin and Will Soutar.



FOUNDATION MILESTONE

The RACQ Foundation reached a significant milestone in October, delivering its 30th Community Assistance Project.

Since 2016, the RACQ Foundation Community Assistance Program has been dedicated to supporting Queensland communities impacted by natural disasters.

The program brings together what is now colloquially known as 'RACQ's blue army', which includes staff, members and those passionate about volunteering working alongside local councils and community groups to provide practical on-the-ground support.

What started as providing mechanical assistance to farmers experiencing drought has evolved to general volunteering, trade repairs, technology support and working alongside partners, like Thread Together and Farm Angels to help communities recover and better prepare for natural disasters.

In October, RACQ's volunteers rolled up their sleeves yet again to help the Etheridge

shire in Far North Queensland.

At the Georgetown Golf Club and Georgetown Race Club, volunteers spent time upgrading facilities and repairing awnings and screens to improve the structural durability of infrastructure.

At the Forsayth CWA, community garden beds and greenhouse structures were installed to promote food security.

RACQ Foundation Manager Bridgette Muller said she was proud to have played a role in all 30 Community Assistance Projects.

"We started these projects with the intention of supporting farmers affected by drought and our work has now evolved into helping entire communities build greater disaster resilience," Ms Muller said.

"It's been a privilege to watch the RACQ Foundation grow over the years and to see that our work is making a difference across the State."

The RACQ Foundation will also celebrate 10 years of delivering Community Assistance Projects in January 2026

WIN A \$250 GIFT CARD

THE ROAD AHEAD is giving readers the chance to win a \$250 EFTPOS gift card*. To enter, tell us what you think about this edition of the magazine at racq.com/trasurvey.

The survey opens on 1 December 2025 and closes at 5pm (AEST) on 16 January 2026. *Terms and conditions apply.



RAY'S NOTE

Welcome to the summer edition of *The Road Ahead* in which we unveil a refreshed magazine design.

We're excited to introduce the fresh look that enhances readability and brings a more visually engaging experience to your RACQ magazine.

We love this updated design as it reflects our commitment to making your reading experience more enjoyable, and hope you do too.

In this edition, we feature a special section on Queensland's iconic Outback, showcasing the Matilda Way.

From sweeping landscapes to charming towns and unforgettable adventures, the Outback offers something for every traveller.

From page 29 you will find stories highlighting its unique attractions, and rich culture, with practical tips on how best to explore this remarkable region.

Created in partnership with Tourism and Events Queensland, we hope this special section inspires you to venture west and experience the beauty, history, and hospitality that define Outback Queensland.

You can also find out how you could win \$10,000 worth of travel, courtesy of HelloWorld vouchers, to make even more of your Outback holiday.

There's never been a better time to discover what lies beyond the western horizon!

Ray Andersen

Managing Editor



Viewpoint

The festive season is a wonderful opportunity for Queenslanders to come together and celebrate, yet it's also a crucial time to remember the importance of staying safe on our roads so everyone can enjoy special moments with loved ones.

The recent surge in road deaths and serious injuries is a sobering reminder that too many families are facing heartache when they should be celebrating with their loved ones. With 2024 seeing a tragic spike in road deaths, and forecasts predicting a new 16-year high in 2025, it's never been more urgent to prioritise road safety because everyone deserves to get home safely when using our roads.

That's why we launched our 'Get Serious on Road Safety' campaign, which is a heartfelt plea and roadmap detailing clear actions that can be taken to make a real difference. Right now, one person dies on Queensland roads every 29 hours, with each death devastating families, workplaces, and communities. This must stop and we're calling on the Queensland Government to take real, meaningful steps to make our roads safer for everyone.

It's clear that reversing this distressing trend will take time and an unwavering commitment. Our promise to you is simple: we will continue to advocate for road safety reforms to reduce the number of lives lost. Read more on page 8.

ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE PLEDGE

When we announced our strategic partnership with IAG last year, one of the commitments we made was to reduce the price of our roadside assistance products.

At this year's 120th Annual General Meeting (AGM) in October, I was pleased to confirm that we will reduce our member roadside assistance prices by around 10% and the Club is working towards delivering this for our members from January. This means our 1.2 million roadside assistance

members will enjoy the benefit that comes from the price reduction.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

At the AGM, it was also a privilege to formally welcome our new directors, Richard Umbers, Liz Savage and Mark Rearick. Read more about our new directors and the specialist skills they bring to the board on page 6.

I'd like to extend a special thank you to members who joined us at the meeting. I had the pleasure to meet some of you, and was delighted to hear about your long-standing membership, loyalty and belief in your Club. As we look to the future, we promise to keep growing, listening to members, and working tirelessly to drive a positive future for all Queenslanders.

Take care and may you and your loved ones stay safe this festive season and beyond.

Leona Murphy

President

BELOW Leona with 50-year member John Godfrey at the AGM. John's mother was also a Gold50 member.



Meet RACQ's new directors

During the year, RACQ welcomed three new directors to the board – Mark Rearick, Richard Umbers and Liz Savage.

MARK AND RICHARD were appointed to the RACQ Limited board in recognition of the specialist skills and experience they bring to the board and organisation, and Liz was elected by members to represent South East Queensland at October's Annual General Meeting.



RICHARD UMBERS
APPOINTED RACQ DIRECTOR

Q What attracted you to RACQ?

A RACQ has an extraordinary heritage in supporting communities across Queensland. It has a strong sense of purpose, and is a well-run, professional business dedicated to its members.

Q What are the skills and experiences you're excited to be leveraging through your role on the board?

A RACQ is a member-focused organisation, and I believe I can use my experience working in customer-facing roles throughout my career to help the Club to strengthen its connection to members, and to execute on the Club's vision to help Queenslanders move and live safely, securely, and sustainably.

Q As we look to the future, what do you hope RACQ achieves in the digital space?

A There are two clear opportunities – one is the way we utilise technology and data to run the business better, to be more efficient and effective behind the scenes, and to have a better understanding of our members' needs. This means our systems are better and easier for our team members to use, which can be very empowering, and that we are better placed to deliver the right products and services to our members.

The second aspect is how we use technology and data to improve the way we engage with our members, making us easier to deal with, and more effective in our response. Members should be able to engage with us in a number of ways – phone, website, digital app, or even social media and receive the same high standard of service.

Q What do you believe are the biggest opportunities and challenges for Queensland in the near to long term?

A Queensland's exposure to climate change and the impact this has on communities and individuals is a key challenge. As the State's largest club, we need to ensure we're doing the right thing to help our members. This includes helping members through the energy transition and the shift to electric vehicles. Regardless of the type of car our members want to drive – petrol, electric or hybrid – we are well positioned to provide advice and support.

The 2032 Olympics is an incredible opportunity for Queensland, with implications across our transport infrastructure. RACQ can advocate on behalf of our members and be a strong and positive voice as we plan for this event, and for the long-term future of Queensland.



MARK REARICK
APPOINTED RACQ DIRECTOR

Q What attracted you to RACQ?

A I have spent my entire career

working in the mobility sector and most of that time with Ford. The directorship with RACQ offered me the opportunity to play a role in making a real difference in the future mobility landscape and helping Queenslanders transition to EVs, autonomous vehicles and new exciting technologies.

Q What are the skills and experiences you're excited to be leveraging through your role on the board?

A There are many strategic opportunities for RACQ right now following the transition of the insurance business (to IAG). I hope to leverage my experience working as a chief strategy officer to help the organisation think about the way we further support our members into the future. Our solar business is a great example of thinking differently – where RACQ offers a service that supports the transition to EVs. Additionally, through my role as Chair of the People and Purpose Committee I hope to look at ways for RACQ to be even more purposeful.

Q As we look to the future, what do you hope RACQ achieves in the mobility space?

A We are a leading example for member-based organisations and automotive clubs around the world in bringing real value for our members across the mobility ecosystem. RACQ is focused on assisting members in the transition to EVs, which

includes the installation of solar panels and home batteries for clean-energy home charging. Our partnership with Evie also supports the installation of charging stations across all of Queensland. Lastly, we have the opportunity to work in partnership with government and other stakeholders to reduce road congestion.

Q What do you believe are the biggest opportunities and challenges for Queensland in the near to long term?

A Road safety is a key challenge for Queensland and remains a big focus for the organisation and our board in how we make our State and roads safer.

The 2032 Olympics also present a once in a generation opportunity to look at the transport infrastructure required to manage the Games but also the projected population growth of Queensland. Technology could play a real role in managing congestion, looking at how we can tap into vehicle connectivity and infrastructure. Organisations, like RACQ, can play a big role in helping to shape this.



LIZ SAVAGE
RACQ ELECTED DIRECTOR FOR SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND

Q What attracted you to RACQ?

A I've always admired what RACQ stands for – helping Queenslanders when they need it most and giving back to our communities. I admire its proud history of trust and advocacy, and the fact that it's a

member-owned organisation that genuinely works for the people it serves. The idea of contributing to an organisation with such a strong, community-minded purpose really appealed to me.

Q What are the skills and experiences you're excited to be bringing to the board?

A I've spent more than 30 years leading teams and organisations through growth and change, mostly in travel and tourism, and serving on boards that focus on governance, people and purpose. I'm excited to bring that experience in customer and member strategy to help RACQ evolve while staying true to what matters most – delivering value and care for members.

Q As we look to the future, what do you hope RACQ achieves in the area of member value?

A Member value means different things to different people, but at its heart it's about being there when it counts and making everyday life that bit easier. I'd love to see RACQ build even stronger connections with members right across Queensland, and continue to grow beyond our roots in assistance, insurance and banking – expanding into everyday services that our members value, both at home and on the road.

Q What do you believe are the biggest opportunities and challenges for Queensland in the near to long term?

A Queensland's growing fast, and that brings both opportunities and pressures. We've got huge potential in areas like clean energy, transport and tourism, but we also need to make sure regional communities aren't left behind and that we stay prepared for natural disasters. I think RACQ can play an important part in helping Queenslanders stay safe, connected and ready for the future.

DIRECTOR VOTING EXPLAINED

At RACQ's Annual General Meeting in October, members queried the process to elect board directors. President and Chair Leona Murphy provided the following explanation:

EACH YEAR, MEMBERS help shape our Club's future by electing directors to the board – fellow members committed to serving with purpose. Directors provide strong governance and support RACQ's management team to work towards our vision: to be a trusted partner, helping our members move and live safely, securely, and sustainably.

Serving on the RACQ board involves substantial work overseeing a large complex and commercial organisation and carries all the obligations of a company director in Australia, including those specific to financial services.

As outlined in the Constitution, the board includes both directors elected by members (from South East or Regional Queensland) and those appointed for their unique skills – appointed and elected directors can serve for up to 12 years. However, every three years, an elected director must retire by rotation but may nominate for re-election.

The election process is overseen by the Company Secretary and General Counsel. Criteria for candidates are set based on the particular skills, experience and expertise required to effectively govern an organisation the size of RACQ and guide its strategic direction.

Director positions are advertised to members via our website and Club News. Candidates that apply with suitable experience are interviewed and have background checks, with a panel recommending preferred candidates to the board (excluding any director nominating for re-election from discussions). The candidates recommended by the board are then presented to members at the AGM, where you have the final say with your vote.

To be elected, a candidate must receive more than 50% of votes cast in favour of their election at the AGM. Ultimately, your vote as a member decides who joins the board. Your participation ensures RACQ stays strong, member-led, and ready for the future.

Why it's time to Get Serious on Road Safety

By Michael Hylard



RACQ Managing Director and Group CEO David Carter at the campaign launch with Queensland Trucking Association CEO Gary Mahon and SARAH Group Founder Peter Frazer. Photos Dave Pattinson.

RACQ has launched a road safety campaign to demand stronger laws, smarter enforcement, and urgent reforms to tackle dangerous driving, speeding, drug use, and motorcycle fatalities.

IN 2024, QUEENSLAND recorded 302 road deaths – the highest toll in 15 years.

Now, 2025 is on course for a worse number with 250 deaths recorded up to 26 October – 11 more than to that date in 2024 and 20 more than the five-year average for that period.

Behind these numbers are families shattered, communities grieving, and a system struggling to keep dangerous drivers in check.

During Queensland Road Safety Week 2025, RACQ joined forces with leading national organisations to launch its Get Serious on Road Safety campaign – demanding stronger laws and smarter enforcement to reverse this tragic trend.

RACQ General Manager Advocacy Joshua Cooney said the campaign laid out a clear blueprint for change.

“One of the biggest law and order problems in Queensland is unfolding on our roads – it’s evident in the number of offences, deaths, and serious injuries,” Mr Cooney said.

“Each fatal crash leaves behind more than just wreckage.

“It tears families apart and leaves first responders impacted forever.”

At the heart of the issue is dangerous driving.

Transport and Main Roads data shows over the past four years 4,000 of Queensland’s most dangerous drivers have racked up more than 95,000 traffic offences – an average of 23 offences each.

“Each fatal crash leaves behind more than just wreckage.”

To shine a light on the crisis, RACQ has launched a Fatal and Serious Crash Dashboard – an interactive tool that breaks down crash data by electorate from 2019 to 2023.

Over five years, serious and fatal crashes have cost Queensland \$35.7 billion – a figure that accounts for social aspects like insurance claims, emergency response, infrastructure repairs and the heart-breaking toll of lives lost and communities impacted.

You can view the map and campaign website at racq.com/getseriousonroadsafety

By partnering with the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons Qld, Safer Australian Roads and Highways (SARAH), and the Queensland Trucking Association, RACQ is sending a strong message to the State Government: it’s time to get serious on road safety.

Continued next page



SPEEDING

A culture of risk

SPEEDING REMAINS one of the deadliest behaviours on our roads.

Between 2020 and 2024, an average of 79 people were killed each year in crashes involving speeding – nearly one-third of the road toll.

RACQ research shows only one-third of drivers consistently obey speed limits and, alarmingly, many young drivers believe speeding up to 11km/h over the limit is safe.

“We’re seeing a dangerous shift in driver behaviour,” Mr Cooney said.

“Speeding, drink and drug driving, and motorcycle fatalities have all risen sharply since COVID.”

RACQ IS CALLING FOR:

- More point-to-point speed cameras in high-risk zones.
- Expanded impoundment laws to confiscate vehicles from serious or repeat offenders.

DRUG AND ALCOHOL DRIVING

A silent epidemic

QUEENSLAND'S ROADSIDE drug testing rates are among the lowest in Australia, yet drivers here test positive at more than twice the rate of NSW.

On average, according to Transport and Main Roads, 57 deaths per year involve a drink driver, and 59 involve a drug driver.

"We need people doing the wrong thing to feel they will be caught – and that there will be real consequences," Mr Cooney said.

RACQ IS ADVOCATING FOR:

- A doubling in random roadside breath testing.
- Mandatory drug testing for all road users involved in crashes.
- Greater support for rehabilitation services targeting drug and drink drivers.



VEHICLE SECURITY

Stopping stolen cars from becoming weapons

STOLEN VEHICLES are far too regularly involved in fatal crashes, yet Queenslanders have no reliable way to assess a vehicle's security.

RACQ is advocating for a vehicle security standard to help consumers choose safer cars and deter theft-related crime.

"A trusted rating system will help consumers choose safer vehicles and aftermarket products and deter theft-related crime," Mr Cooney said.

A CALL TO ACTION

RACQ'S ROAD SAFETY reform package is more than a list of recommendations – it's a powerful call to action aimed at restoring order on Queensland roads, saving lives, and holding reckless drivers accountable.

With a deep commitment to representing its members, RACQ is actively pushing for the urgent changes our State needs to address the road safety crisis. Behind every statistic is a real person, and every life lost is one too many.

While RACQ continues to lobby government for stronger policies and enforcement, road safety is a shared responsibility.

Whether you're behind the wheel or on two wheels, your actions matter.

By staying alert, making safe choices, and respecting others on the road, you can help reduce the road toll.

It's time we all take road safety seriously – because everyone has a role to play. **MM**

Visit racq.com/getseriousonroadsafety to find out more.

Pedal to the medal

By **Tori Mayne**



BMX freestyle rider and Olympic bronze medallist Natalya Diehm hopes her journey from a regional skate park to the international stage will inspire young girls through the QAS YouFor2032 program.

IF THERE IS someone who knows what it's like to succeed after overcoming adversity, it's Natalya Diehm.

Natalya (pictured) has had six knee surgeries and multiple broken bones in her career, but has taken it all in her stride and says achieving bronze in Paris made it all worthwhile.

"To make history and be the first Australian woman to win a medal in BMX freestyle still feels unbelievable," Natalya said.

"When I was standing on the podium, I felt an overwhelming sense of relief after all the injuries I've overcome and all the help my family has given me over the years.

"The medal was a thank you to my support network, while also being for the next generation of girls in the sport."

Growing up in Gladstone, Natalya remembers the thrill of her first visit to a skate park at just eight years old.

"I remember riding up to the ramp with my eyes closed. I dropped in, and once I'd had that first rush of adrenaline, I was hooked," she said.

However, a few years later, she began to comprehend her first challenge in the sport.

"When I got a little bit older, I started feeling intimidated being the only girl at the skate park," Natalya said.

"The number of times I heard, 'I can't be beaten by a girl,' motivated me to push even harder."

Natalya is now using her platform as a Queensland Academy of Sport YouFor2032 Ambassador to inspire the next generation of girls to pursue a career in BMX.

"I'm living my dream of being a BMX rider, but I'm also living my dream of driving change and creating opportunities for girls in the sport," Natalya said.

"Seeing the start of this shift has been a privilege, and I hope to continue this by being the female role model I didn't have when I was younger."

Young Queenslanders who dream of competing on the world stage can now test their skills through the Queensland Academy of Sport YouFor2032 Talent Search app, driven by RACQ.

Queenslanders with sporting dreams aged between 13 and 23, or between 13 and 30 for Para-sports, are invited to test their skills via the app.

If they measure up, athletes will be matched to their best-suited high-performance sport and connected with elite coaches, expert insights, and the support they need to pursue greatness.

Athletes who test in the app by 1 February 2026 will be eligible for the next round of in-person testing during the YouFor2032 Regional Tour from February 2026.

Learn more and download the app at racq.com/qas **TM**

This story is the third in RACQ's series, featuring QAS YouFor2032 ambassadors.

Councils unite for disaster readiness

By Tori Mayne

A new program, backed by RACQ Foundation and led by LGAQ, is helping councils build stronger resilience through shared expertise.

When disaster strikes in Queensland, it's local councils that step up first, and support communities throughout their recovery.

From coordinating evacuations to managing recovery efforts, councils are at the front-line of disaster response, drawing on deep local knowledge and community connections.

As Queensland faces increasingly unpredictable and severe weather events, councils are helping each better prepare for these events through a new Council to Council (C2C) Building Capacity Pilot, run by Local Government Association Queensland (LGAQ) and funded by the RACQ Foundation.

LGAQ CEO Alison Smith said the original C2C program helps councils support other councils by providing skills and expertise that fit seamlessly into operations, as well as providing help with fatigue management when organisations are responding to natural disasters.

"In a state where 73 of 77 councils were disaster activated in the past year alone, resilience can't begin with a response – it needs to start with relationships, local knowledge and preparation, which is where the C2C program comes in," Ms Smith said.

"Now, thanks to the support of the RACQ Foundation, we have been running a pilot program of C2C, which brings together disaster management professionals from Far North Queensland, South East Queensland and First Nations councils to swap their familiar landscapes for new terrain, new risks and new ways of working.

"While the C2C program is well-established as a disaster response and recovery network, the C2C pilot program marks a shift to proactive preparedness and is providing professional development of local government disaster management professionals ahead of the next disaster season."

RACQ Head of Sustainability Will Soutar said the relationship with LGAQ was one of five new RACQ Foundation partnerships launched ahead of Queensland's severe weather season.

"We are proud to have announced five new resilience partnerships aimed at building safer, more resilient communities in the face of growing disaster risk," Mr Soutar said.

"It's also been great to see a changing attitude amongst Queenslanders as we approved more than \$800,000 in resilience grants through the RACQ Foundation in FY25.

"Whether it's through community grants or by working alongside organisations like LGAQ, RACQ Foundation will continue providing on-the-ground support where it is needed most."



RACQ's Zia Mellican captured this dramatic photo of an October storm over Brisbane from Coorparoo.

For more information on how you can prepare for severe weather season visit racq.com/storm-hub

What to expect this storm season

By Tori Mayne

Queensland meteorologist Tony Auden is urging Queenslanders to know their risk this severe weather season.

After flooding in the North, a tropical cyclone in the South East and bushfires impacting parts of the State, Queenslanders have seen the full spectrum of severe weather this year.

Despite facing often unpredictable weather, almost half of Queenslanders (44%) admitted in an RACQ survey* that they only start preparing for storm season when they were alerted to a weather event in their area.

7 News Brisbane meteorologist Tony Auden said the most recent severe weather season should serve as a lesson for Queenslanders.

"Tropical Cyclone Alfred was a good reminder that we can see cyclones in South East Queensland, and we still do need to be prepared for these big systems," Tony said.

"My simple plea ahead of the severe weather season is a little bit of preparation now will save you a lot of anxiety later."

Tony said large-scale weather events would continue to intensify.

"We're expecting potentially the full gamut of severe weather right across Queensland this storm season," he said.

"We're already seeing some bad fire and dry conditions across much of the State and we're expecting the storm season to really kick into gear in November and December.

"While technically the climate drivers are fairly neutral, the warm water could provide

fuel for flooding and cyclone events, more so around the Christmas to New Year period."

In the same way short-term preparation is important, so too is thinking of the long-term improvements you can make to improve resilience. RACQ data revealed 42% of Queenslanders were unaware of the retrofits they could make to their home to increase its resilience but wanted to learn more.

Tony said it was essential to understand your weather risk.

"...a little bit of preparation now will save you a lot of anxiety later."

"I would encourage Queenslanders to know their risk, whether that be fire, storm, cyclone or flood, and prepare for stronger cyclones, hotter conditions and larger rain events," Tony said.

"There are some long-term changes you can make to your home to increase its resilience, like raising items off the bottom level of your property, raising electrical boxes or reinforcing your roofing and guttering to sustain strong winds."

*Survey findings from RACQ Quarterly Consumer Omnibus FY26 Q2.

TONY AUDEN'S TOP TIPS

- Secure loose items around the home.
- Have an emergency kit packed with essential items.
- Check on your neighbours and have an emergency plan.
- Clear your gutters, downpipes and drains.
- Watch 7 News to stay across weather alerts.

Turning a transport vision into reality

By Tristan Vorias



What will getting around the South East look like beyond 2032? This is what RACQ members would like to see.

PICTURE A SOUTH East Queensland where travel feels effortless with frequent electric buses gliding through suburbs, rail stitched neatly into daily journeys, and outer ring motorways diverting through-traffic away from local streets.

This vision isn't just a pipe dream; it reflects what RACQ members said they wanted most as a lasting transport legacy beyond the 2032 Games.

More frequent public transport topped their wish list in the Club's 2025 Future Brisbane Survey, followed by investment in major motorways, and safer, healthier and more accessible neighbourhoods.

RACQ's General Manager Advocacy Joshua Cooney said if we addressed those priorities, congestion and patchy connectivity would start to give way to much better commutes.

"The foundation must be frequency," Mr Cooney said.

"In this vision, Brisbane Metro serves as the high-capacity trunk services while a network of Metro Glider services (smaller, more manoeuvrable, electric buses) extends reliable, turn-up-and-go travel deeper into the suburbs.

"Because Metro Gliders can run on upgraded road corridors rather than dedicated busways, they can be deployed quickly – lifting reliability, comfort and reach without decade-long lead times.

"The Adelaide Street bus tunnel shows how surgical links can amplify the entire system – better connections, shorter journeys and less congestion with a relatively small footprint."

In this future, electric buses carry much of the load at lower cost and with faster payback.

RACQ sees heavy rail complementing SEQ's bus backbone.

Projects such as Cross River Rail and The Wave (Sunshine Coast Direct Rail) will further strengthen the core of the network, but the real transformation comes from frequent suburban feeders that make transfers to high-frequency direct routes simple and predictable.

Mr Cooney said another key pillar in our transport network must be the Brisbane Airport corridor.

"It's practical changes that would make a big difference..."

"Imagine stepping onto the AirTrain with sub-10-minute frequencies running all day, and a fare structure seamlessly integrated with TransLink making the system simple and approachable for visitors and locals alike," Mr Cooney said.

"Enhanced bus connections into the airport precinct would further ease pressure on the Gateway Motorway, enabling both commuters and airport shift workers a smoother journey.

"It's practical changes that would make a big difference, improving performance and public confidence in the travel experience and boosting our tourism sector."

On the roads, targeted upgrades to the outer ring of major motorways would allow vehicles that don't need to enter Brisbane to bypass it, freeing suburban streets for local movement and commutes.

Any big new links – whether a north-western bypass or a mooted Gympie tunnel – would be planned as part of the broader network, not stand-alone monuments, so bottlenecks aren't simply shifted from one choke point to another.

"The aim is clear – keep through-traffic out, keep local streets moving, and give public transport priority where it delivers the greatest benefit," Mr Cooney said.

A staged program of deliverable upgrades – Metro extensions, Metro Glider corridors, motorway interchange upgrades – can make a visible difference while the big infrastructure builds come online over time.

It's a strategy that could turn this vision into lived experience, without overpromising. **TV**

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19

‘Money mule’ scam disguised as job offer

Learn how to spot the signs of a rising scam and take steps to protect yourself, and avoid possible criminal consequences.

RACQ IS WARNING members to be aware of money mule scams.

This scam typically sees victims lured with fake job offers promising high earnings for minimal effort.

RACQ Bank Head of Operations and Financial Crimes Sarah Richardson said money mule scams often appeared as legitimate work-from-home opportunities, but they were designed to trick individuals into laundering money.

“Scammers are becoming increasingly sophisticated,” Ms Richardson said.

“They’re targeting people with ads that look professional and convincing, often using

fake websites and social media pop-ups to appear genuine.”

The scam typically starts with an offer to earn easy money by receiving and forwarding funds or purchasing gift cards.

Victims are told they’ll receive a commission for their help, but in reality they are being used to disguise the origin of illicit funds.

“Once scammers have your information, they will often send you money to on-forward for them as a goodwill gesture and to build trust,” Ms Richardson said.

“A common method is asking you to purchase gift cards and provide the details to them electronically.

“This is not just risky, it could lead to criminal charges if you’re found to be involved in money laundering.”

FOLLOW THESE TIPS TO PROTECT YOURSELF

DO YOUR RESEARCH: Google the company before providing any information, check their official website and Scamwatch to ensure you are liaising with the genuine business. Do not provide any information until you have completed your own due diligence.

DON’T SHARE INFORMATION: Scammers often try to create urgency. No matter what is said, do not share personal or financial details like your PIN, passwords, driver licence number or passcodes. The urgency is to try to get you to ‘apply now’ so you don’t miss out on the ‘opportunity’.

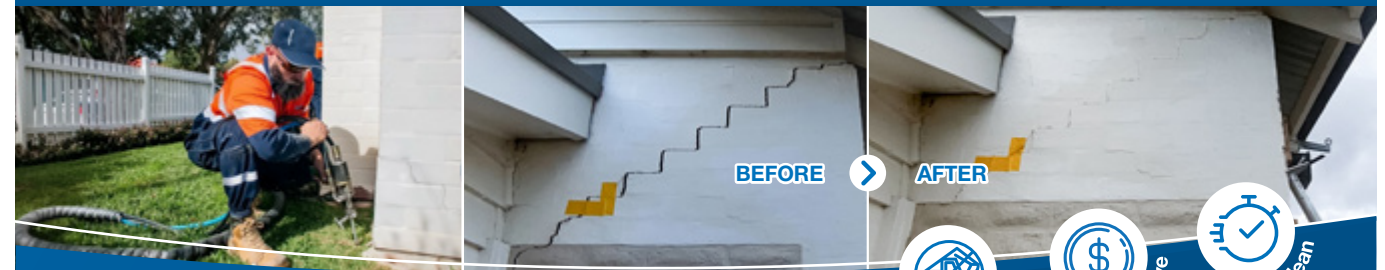
UNDERSTAND ALL THE FACTS: If you send and receive funds on behalf of someone, this could be considered money laundering and lead to criminal charges if you are unable to confirm the source of the funds and the purpose of the transfers.

REPORT SUSPICIOUS OFFERS: If you believe you have fallen victim to this scam, stop the activity and call your bank immediately.

For more information or to report a scam, visit scamwatch.gov.au or contact your bank.

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To Book!

STOP AT 'STOP' SIGNS

I COMPLETELY AGREE with the article from Stewart El-dridge, Geebung (Spring TRA). Every day, while waiting to pick up my grandson after school, I see at least 10 vehicles that simply slow down at a 'stop' sign, treating it more like a 'give way' sign. Also, if I am the second vehicle waiting at a stop sign, I am continually checking my rear-view mirror when it's my turn to 'completely stop' – to the disgust of the following driver. More enforcement and better understanding of road rules are urgently required, as many drivers have lost respect for our road rules and signs.

JOHN KENNEDY Albion



DON'T DRIVE TOO CLOSE

I DON'T THINK people realise they will not get to where they are going any faster by following closer to the car in front. The general rule of thumb is to leave a two- or three-second gap to the car you are following, but how many people really apply this seriously? However, even if you diligently keep that gap, you're still not getting there any faster or slower because the speed limit is the speed limit. No matter where I drive, car after car will be driving too close behind the car in front. I often drive slower than the speed limit, simply keeping a large gap between me and the car in front, and I have rarely, if ever, been late to any appointment.

PIERS DANCE Mudgeeraba
See Road Rules, page 66

TIME TO STOP THE HATE

IN RESPONSE to 'E-bike double standard'. Yeah, I get it.

You pay rego, insurance, are careful on the road – and what do you know, you spot someone doing crazy speed on an e-bike. Let's all have a hate session on e-bikes.

I'll tell you a secret: it isn't the bike – it's the person riding it.

Most e-bike and analogue bike owners do pay registration on vehicles that they choose to leave at home.

I have two e-bikes, a motor-bike and a motor vehicle, but I nearly always choose to ride my e-bike for short trips within a couple of suburbs.

As for the speed, yes, many times I have broken the 25

km/h barrier to get away from wandering dogs and vehicles, etc. Most commuters do not ride, but somehow are willing to judge cyclists that go too slow or too fast or block their way. Please stop the e-bike hate. There are vastly more reckless drivers to be concerned about.

MARK HOLLYWOOD Parkinson

Your Say



HUMMOCK HILL WORTH VISITING

I'D LIKE TO add some relevant information to your article on the road trip between Bundaberg and Mackay (Spring TRA). Between Bundaberg and Bargara, there's a hill that rises just 96m above sea level.

At the top is a lookout known as The Hummock, built by members of the Bundaberg branch of RACQ. A plaque at the site provides details about its history. From the sheltered lookout, you can see in all directions – it's a must-visit stop on your way to regional attractions like the Mon Repos Turtle Centre.

The Bundaberg branch of RACQ purchased the land for the lookout in October 1930 and officially opened the RACQ Hummock Lookout on 17 October 1931.

The project included land acquisition, road construction, and site beautification efforts such as fencing and tree planting, all carried out by RACQ members through working bees.

JOHN BALDWIN Bundaberg



GOLF CART REGULATION

I LIVE A kilometre from my local golf course and own an electric golf cart, which I drive to the course twice a week. To do this legally, the cart must be registered and covered by third-party insurance. I also need to hold a current motor vehicle driver's licence and apply to the local police station for a permit to travel on a designated route to the course. I'm

not allowed to use the cart for any other purpose. To get to the golf course, I travel along a shared walking path. The top speed of my cart is 15km/h. During these trips, and when I'm walking the path, I'm constantly overtaken by e-bikes and e-scooters travelling at high speeds, ridden by people of all ages, very rarely wearing helmets. Some of the e-bikes are larger than trail bikes and capable of high speeds. These vehicles don't require registration or insurance, and their riders don't need licences. I face restrictions to drive an electric golf cart. Why aren't there similar requirements for electric bikes and scooters?

FREDERICK BIRD Yeppoon

DON'T BLAME ELDERLY DRIVERS

I AM WRITING to express my concern about the way road safety discussion in Australia is often framed, particularly regarding elderly drivers. In recent reports and commentary, there seems to be a tendency to attribute a disproportionate level of blame to elderly people for road accidents. However, publicly available data and crash

statistics show that the majority of road accidents are caused by young and middle-aged drivers, not older people. While it is true that some elderly drivers may face challenges related to health or reflexes, it is misleading and unfair to single them out as the main cause of accidents when the evidence points elsewhere. This kind of framing

risks stigmatising older Australians, many of whom rely on their independence and safe driving as an essential part of their daily lives. It also diverts attention from where the majority of accidents originate and where road safety policies should be focused. I respectfully urge authorities and media outlets to present a more balanced

and evidence-based picture, acknowledging the actual demographics responsible for most accidents. Addressing risky behaviours such as speeding, drink driving, and distracted driving – common among younger drivers – would more effectively improve road safety outcomes for everyone.

RICARDO ESCOBAR Shailer Park

SPEED LIMITS BEING IGNORED

THE PURPOSE OF speed limits is to ensure the safety of both motorists and pedestrians who use our roads. Speed limits are reduced to 40km/h in school zones to further ensure the safety of children going to and from school. I live in a school zone and not a single motorist would comply with the 40km/h speed limit during the times that it is operating, with most exceeding the limit by 10-20km/h.

No amount of reporting, over many years, to the relevant authorities has stirred even the slightest interest in turning the situation around. With an array of devices to choose from for speed monitoring, the police do not even need to be present, yet they elect not to use them.

If speed limits are irrelevant why have them at all? Not enforcing speed limits implies that public safety, and children's safety in particular, is irrelevant. It disturbs me to watch vehicles speed through the children's pedestrian crossing situated literally on my doorstep. It is extremely frustrating too that the authorities employed specifically to enforce the law show no commitment to doing so. It would appear that road safety on suburban streets is a long way down the list of priorities nowadays.

PRU BLANCHARD Caloundra



RACQ ROADSIDE TO THE RESCUE

WHILE TOWING OUR caravan recently our carefully maintained tug suddenly went into 'creep' mode, fortunately just at the top of a hill that leads down and into Boonah.

We were able to safely roll into an information area at the bottom. A call was made for assistance and the cavalry soon arrived in the form of a highly appreciated RACQ vehicle and very informative driver. To be caught so far from home with not only a car that needs specialist attention but a caravan as well, does not conjure up happy thoughts.

The RACQ soon had the vehicle on the back of a flat-top truck and the caravan hooked onto the back and we were off in grand style back to the Gold Coast (in fact, our back yard as it was a Sunday). The Club also provided a near new car to enable us to get around while our vehicle attended the HiLux hospital. RACQ, take a deep bow. Your service was and is highly appreciated.

KEV AND TINA ROBERTS Ormeau

RED-LIGHT RUNNERS

I AM WITNESSING daily a disturbing increase in total disregard for drivers obeying the road rules and the safety of other drivers. In particular, the increase in 'red-light runners' is top of my list. Regularly, I experience drivers blatantly

crossing in front of me when I have a green traffic light. It has reached epidemic levels, with these drivers showing total disregard, and disrespect to all other road users. Can I suggest the installation of red-light cameras at all traffic lights? This may rein in many disrespecting red-light runners.

DENNIS SMALLCOMBE Aspley



ISSUE WITH E-BIKES

I REFER TO the letter 'E-bike double standard' (Spring TRA), and no, George, you are not the only person who thinks this way. Why should you have to pay all that money for annual registration when you ride your

beautiful old bike only five or six times each year? What would be fairer is for registration fees to be based on the kilometres we travelled – some of us do very few. Also, there will be many more accidents, perhaps some fatal, before stringent rules come into effect for e-bike riders. I was under the misconception that it was illegal to overtake another driver/rider on the inside lane. With regard to courtesy, as I have stated previously, common courtesy is not so common these days.

JULIE BERRY Murgon

RACQ CLUBHOUSE

EMAIL roadahead@racq.com.au.

MAIL The Road Ahead, PO Box 4, Springwood, Qld 4127. Please include name and address. Letters will not receive an individual reply and should be no more than 120 words.

Cruising past fairytale towns, castles, and vineyards aboard Uniworld's luxurious Super Ship *Victoria* was a journey through history and elegance.

Cruising European rivers in luxury

By Leonie Jarrett

Tourist passenger boats cruise along Lake Lucerne, Switzerland.

Nearly every destination in The Rhine, Moselle & Belgium Grand Discovery tour was a first for me.

I was excited to travel in luxury through five countries and to over 15 towns – and to do it without any stress.

There were no bags to lug, no trains or planes to meet, no car to drive on the 'wrong' side of the road, no hotels to find, no handwashing in the bathroom sink. And I only unpacked once.

OH, THE PLACES I SAW

This was a stellar 15-day itinerary, starting in Brussels and finishing in Basel, including Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, France and Switzerland (with Luxembourg too, if you opted for a day excursion there).

There was some scenic sailing (special mention to the Upper Middle Rhine Valley, which is chock-full of fairytale castles), but most days were spent in port, where you could stay on the beautiful

SS *Victoria*, wander off at your leisure, or join one of the included guided tours.

Generally, there were two included tours to choose from.

On one occasion my husband opted for a guided hike including a suspension bridge crossing while, not liking heights, I chose a tour of Reichsburg Castle in Cochem and a guided walking tour.

Reuniting for lunch, we both bubbled over with news of our morning adventures.

Uniwold offered a few bike tours and had bikes onboard, which could be used free of charge for adventures. We tried both.

This was a fabulous itinerary for cycling, as the Dutch canals and the Moselle and Rhine rivers have flat bike paths.

We loved cycling as a small group – a great way to make onboard friends – and enjoyed venturing out on our own.

WINE WAS A CONSTANT THEME

We enjoyed various included tours where we were educated, particularly about riesling.

With a group of new friends, we enjoyed an unforgettable evening visit to the oldest riesling winery in the world – Schloss Johannisberg, perched above Rüdesheim in Germany.

On a guided tour explaining riesling production, we watched the sunset from the organic winery's panoramic terrace and then tasted different rieslings in candlelit cellars dating from the 1700s.

Another memorable guided tour and tasting at Doktorenhof,

near Speyer in Germany, centred around vinegar.

Dressed up in robes (channeling Harry Potter but looking more like monks), we learnt that vinegar is a non-alcoholic product of wine with health benefits.

Doktorenhof produces about 40 varieties of vinegar for drinking and medicinal purposes. They also make 17 varieties of mustard.

A fun fact I learnt that day – vinegar, like honey, never goes off.

We also opted for a Swiss Alps hike, which involved a cogwheel train journey and a boat trip across Lake Lucerne.

The views were almost too much to take in – mountains as far as the eye could see, turquoise lakes, grassy fields, and cows with their bells constantly chiming.

MY FLOATING, LUXURY BOUTIQUE HOTEL

My 23.5 square metre suite on SS Victoria came with some added benefits, including unlimited laundry (I could get used to that).

With two vanities and a full-sized shower, the lavish and

spacious bathroom offered a level of luxury rarely found on a cruise ship.

The floor-to-ceiling windows were a feature we loved. With the touch of a button, the glass lowered halfway to create a balcony-like effect.

This 'magic' window features in all SS Victoria staterooms.

FOOD, GLORIOUS FOOD

The food quality onboard SS Victoria was excellent. Buffets for breakfast and lunch, and à la carte for dinner.

There were also special, small-group dining experiences for an extra fee.

The Chef's Table was sublime, and the Progressive Dinner was a unique behind-the-scenes experience – including a visit to the engine room, canapés in the galley, and soup in the laundry.

There was a different soup and a different carvery at every lunch and dinner, as well as different sides and desserts.

The wine also kept changing to reflect the region we were travelling through.

WHAT IS LUXURY?

Everything onboard was included.

To me, this was luxury.

I also had the freedom to choose what I wanted to do each day.

Several countries and languages are experienced on this itinerary, but I never had to worry about logistics. All I had to do was decide what to wear and be ready at the pre-arranged meeting time.

Travel is about seeing people and places – their history and their culture. Seeing all that from a beautiful floating boutique hotel and not having to worry about a thing – that's the ultimate luxury. 🇩🇪

The writer was a guest of Uniworld Cruises on the Rhine, Moselle & Belgium Grand Discovery cruise from Brussels to Basel.

Visit travel.racq.com.au/cruises for the latest cruise offers from RACQ Travel.



Reichsburg Castle overlooking the picturesque town of Cochem on the Moselle River.

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Per person twin share

FROM \$1,980*

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★ Flights to Darwin & from Broome ex Brisbane
★ Luxury 'Gold Class' coach travel
★ 2 nights Darwin
★ Litchfield National Park
★ 2 nights Kakadu with 30-minute scenic flight
★ Yellow Water wetlands cruise
★ 1 night Katherine with sunset dinner gorge cruise
★ 3 nights Kununurra with Ord River cruise
★ Bungle Bungles flight
★ 1 night Halls Creek
★ 1 night Fitzroy Crossing
★ 2 nights Broome
★ Willie Creek Pearl Farm
★ Cable beach camel ride
★ 35 meals

Per person twin share

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CANBERRA BALLOON SPECTACULAR & EAST COAST HIGHLIGHTS

8 DAYS

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Image credit Tourism Australia

✈️ One-way airfare from Canberra**

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★ Luxurious 'Gold Class' coach travel
★ Overnight stays in Port Macquarie, Hunter Valley & Toukley
★ Lake Wallis eco lunch cruise, Forster
★ Hunter Valley horse & carriage tour with wine tasting
★ Broken Bay Pearl Farm
★ 2 nights at Briars Country Lodge, Burradoo
★ Australian Wildlife Sanctuary
★ Canberra Balloon Spectacular festival
★ Parliament House
★ Australian War Memorial tour & Last Post Ceremony
★ 20 meals

Per person twin share

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★ Return flights from Brisbane to Hobart
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★ Guided tour of Port Arthur and harbour cruise
★ Wall in the Wilderness
★ 3 nights in Strahan Village with Gordon River cruise & West Coast Wilderness Railway
★ Tasmanian Devil feeding tour
★ 2 nights Devonport
★ Chairlift ride at Cataract Gorge, Launceston
★ 1 night St Helens
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★ Australian Age of Dinosaurs at Winton
★ 1 night Cloncurry
★ 2 nights Karumba with sunset dinner cruise
★ Iconic Gullfander rail journey
★ 2 nights Cobbold Gorge: cruise & helicopter flight
★ Savannahlander rail journey
★ 1 night Undara Lava Tubes
★ 1 night Cairns
★ Flight from Cairns to Brisbane
★ 33 meals

Per person twin share

FROM \$7,920*
GOLD CLASS

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★ 3 nights Christchurch
★ TranzAlpine rail journey
★ 1 night Franz Josef
★ 1 night aboard the Milford Mariner
★ 1 night Te Anau
★ Larnach Castle
★ Wildlife cruise to Taiaroa Head
★ 52 meals

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COASTAL EXPLORER, GREAT OCEAN ROAD & UNESCO WONDERS **11 DAYS**

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✈ One-way airfare to Adelaide**

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Per person twin share **FROM \$6,400***

BRIGHT AUTUMN FESTIVAL & ALPINE HIGH COUNTRY **8 DAYS**

EARLY BIRD DEAL!
SAVE UP TO \$100pp*
May date: Book by 31 Dec

✈ One-way airfare to Melbourne**

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Per person twin share **FROM \$4,620***

OUTBACK ESSENCE AND ISLANDS OF QUEENSLAND **13 DAYS**

EARLY BIRD DEAL!
SAVE UP TO \$150pp*
July date: Book by 31 Dec

✈ One-way airfare to Cairns**

DEPARTS > 15 JUL 2026

★ Flight from Brisbane to Cairns ★ Opulent 'Diamond Class' coach travel ★ Overnight stays in Cairns, Parkhurst & Gladstone ★ Lake Barrine cruise ★ 2 nights Undara Volcanic Park ★ Undara Lava Tubes tour with Savannah Guide ★ 2 nights Townsville ★ Magnetic Island day tour ★ 2 nights Hamilton Island ★ Ocean Rafting jet boat tour of the Whitsundays ★ Capricorn Caves ★ 2 nights Heron Island with guided tours ★ 1 night Agnes Water ★ Childers ★ 32 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$8,920***

1770 & LADY MUSGRAVE ISLAND ECO ADVENTURE **4 DAYS**

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★ Luxurious 'Gold Class' coach travel ★ Maleny Botanic Gardens & Bird World with Devonshire morning tea, buggy hire, farm animals & interactive aviary ★ 1 night Agnes Water ★ Full day on pink LARC navigating Eurimbula National Park ★ 2 nights at Turtle Sands, Bargara ★ Full day Lady Musgrave Island taking guided island walks, glass bottom boat cruise, underwater observatory, swimming, & snorkelling ★ Monsoon Aquatics Coral Farm at Bargara ★ 10 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$2,420***

ICONS OF OUTBACK QUEENSLAND **8 DAYS**

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May date: Book by 31 Dec

DEPARTS > GOLD: 6 JUN; 22 AUG 2026; DIAMOND: 9 MAY; 13 JUN; 1 AUG 2026

★ Overnight rail journey in Sleeper Cabins aboard the Spirit of the Outback ★ Opulent 'Diamond Class' or luxury 'Gold Class' coach travel ★ 3 nights Longreach ★ Qantas Founders Museum ★ Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame ★ Sunset cruise with dinner & show ★ Winton ★ Australian Age of Dinosaurs ★ 2 nights at Toogunna Plains Farmstay ★ Eromanga Dinosaur Museum tour & dinner ★ Bilby encounter ★ 1 night Roma ★ 21 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$4,525****
GOLD CLASS, QPCV CONCESSION

ALICE SPRINGS, KINGS CANYON & ULURU **8 DAYS**

Return airfares included**

DEPARTS > 1 JUN; 27 JUL 2026

★ Return flights Brisbane to Alice Springs & Uluru to Brisbane ★ 3 nights Alice Springs ★ Outback bush BBQ dinner ★ West MacDonnell Ranges ★ 1 night Kings Canyon ★ Light Towers by Night show ★ 3 nights Sails in the Desert, Yulara ★ Sunrise Field of Light experience ★ Mutitjulu Waterhole, Mala Walk & scenic drive around the base of Uluru ★ Uluru camel trek adventure ★ 25-minute helicopter tour of Uluru and Kata Tjuta ★ Sounds of Silence dinner ★ 19 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$7,200***

CARNARVON GORGE & HERON ISLAND **9 DAYS**

EARLY BIRD DEAL!
SAVE UP TO \$150pp*
May date: Book by 31 Dec

Image credit Tourism Australia

DEPARTS > 25 MAY; 13 AUG 2026

★ Opulent 'Diamond Class' coach travel ★ 1 night Roma ★ 2 nights Carnarvon Gorge National Park ★ Guided gorge walks with nature guide including Moss Garden ★ Greycliffe Homestead at Biloela ★ 1 night Gladstone ★ 2 nights Heron Island Resort with daily naturalist eco & bird watching tours ★ 2 nights Town of 1770 ★ Full day amphibious LARC tour to Bustard Head Light Station ★ Dingo Creek Winery lunch ★ 25 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$5,225***

SOUTH WEST QUEENSLAND & LIGHTNING RIDGE ROVER **8 DAYS**

EARLY BIRD DEAL!
SAVE UP TO \$100pp*
Apr date: Book by 31 Dec

DEPARTS > GOLD: 27 APR; 6 JUL 2026; DIAMOND: 31 AUG 2026

★ Opulent 'Diamond Class' or luxury 'Gold Class' coach travel ★ 1 night Roma ★ 1 night Charleville ★ Charleville Bilby Experience ★ Big Sky Observatory Outback Stargazing ★ 2 nights St George ★ Riversands Wines tour with lunch & wine tasting ★ Thallon Silo Trail ★ Australian Opal Centre ★ 2 nights Lightning Ridge with guided tour ★ 'Chambers of the Black Hand' ★ 1 night Goondiwindi ★ Albert River Wines final  long lunch ★ 22 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$4,275***
GOLD CLASS

KANGAROO ISLAND, FLEURIEU PENINSULA & CRUISING ON THE MURRAY **11 DAYS**

EARLY BIRD DEAL!
SAVE UP TO \$150pp*
Aug date: Book by 31 Dec

Return airfares included**

DEPARTS > 26 AUG; 4 NOV 2026

★ Return flights from Brisbane to Adelaide ★ Luncheon at Hahndorf Inn ★ 2 nights Adelaide & tour ★ 3 nights Kangaroo Island ★ False Cape Wine tasting & lunch ★ Emu Bay Lavender Farm ★ Birds of Prey display at Raptor Domain ★ Remarkable Rocks ★ Lunch at Emu Ridge Eucalyptus Distillery ★ Australian sea lions at Seal Bay Conservation Park ★ 5 nights on the Proud Mary in River View Rooms ★ Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park ★ 30 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$7,920***

BRIGADOON AT BUNDANOON FESTIVAL **6 DAYS**

Return airfares included**

DEPARTS > 16 APR 2026

★ Flight from Brisbane to Sydney ★ Sydney Harbour lunch cruise ★ 3 nights Sutton Forest ★ Australian Wildlife Sanctuary ★ Bradman Museum & International Cricket Hall of Fame ★ Highland Gathering of the Clans Festival at Bundanoon with massed pipe bands, highland games, markets & more! ★ Hydro Majestic high tea ★ Mount Panorama ★ 1 night Mudgee ★ 1 night Goondiwindi ★ Toowoomba ★ 15 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$3,820***

LAKE EYRE, COOPER PEDY & FLINDERS RANGES **8 DAYS**

EARLY BIRD DEAL!
SAVE UP TO \$100pp*
May date: Book by 31 Dec

Image credit Peter Rowe

Return airfares included**

DEPARTS > 6 MAY; 4 JUN; 10 JUL 2026

★ Return flights from Brisbane to Adelaide ★ 2 nights Adelaide ★ Wadlata Outback Centre ★ Overnight stays in Port Augusta, Coober Pedy & William Creek ★ Umoona Opal Mine tour & fossick ★ Scenic flight from Coober Pedy over Painted Hills to Anna Creek Station for tour & drinks then to William Creek ★ 1.5 hour scenic flight over Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre & surrounds ★ 2 nights Wilpena Pound with 30-minute scenic flight ★ Jeff Morgan Gallery at Hawker ★ Adelaide city sights tour ★ 20 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$6,310***

TASMANIA EAST COAST, CRADLE MOUNTAIN & HEARTLAND EXPLORER **8 DAYS**

Return airfares included**

DEPARTS > 17 APR 2026

★ Return flights from Brisbane to Hobart ★ Opulent 'Diamond Class' coach travel ★ 3 nights Hobart ★ Drunken Admiral specialty seafood dinner ★ Salamanca Markets ★ Port Arthur Lavender Farm ★ Port Arthur Penal Settlement ★ Carnarvon Bay cruise ★ 1 night Orford ★ Wineglass Bay Cruise ★ 1 night St Helens ★ 2 nights Launceston ★ Cradle Mountain ★ Cataract Gorge chairlift ride ★ Richmond Bridge ★ Tour & wine tasting at Puddleduck Vineyard ★ 20 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$5,200***

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North Lakes | Robina | Toowoomba | Townsville

Savings offers have already been incorporated into the advertised prices. Travel advisor fees are not included. **Further conditions apply, visit racq.com/travel for more information. Members Travel Group Pty Ltd | ABN 45 144 538 803 | A11470

Tasmania's untamed North West

By Kerry Heaney



Discover Tasmania's wild North West where rugged coastlines, quirky towns, and unforgettable characters make for a memorable road trip.

I am standing on the Edge of the World, horizontal rain and wild wind threatening to sweep me into the ocean below, where bleached tree limbs lie in tangled heaps.

It's freezing, and my jumper isn't cutting it.

Tasmania's North West coast is off the beaten path, as proved by the wombat strolling across Arthur River's main road, looking like he'd just finished a morning latte.

Here, locals surf mid-winter if the swell's right, and steaks come from Cape Grim, just up the road.

This journey began in Launceston, Tasmania's second-largest city and the gateway to the North West.

The region is known for raw coastlines, just-caught seafood, and plenty of eccentric characters.

The welcome is warm and the conversation lively, whether about politics or where to find the best chippies.

Despite multiple visits to Launceston, I'd never made it to the mythical Cradle Mountain. So, that was my first stop.

Unused to driving on roads where snow lines the edge, warnings of icy patches kept me cautious on the winding country drive.

By mid-afternoon, I reached Discovery Resorts Cradle Mountain Village under blue skies.

Reception staff advised me to head straight for the Visitor

Centre, as the weather here can swing from sunshine to snow in minutes. Yesterday, the road into the park was closed until midday.

I jumped on the 3pm bus for a golden-hour glimpse of Dove Lake before the last return at 4pm. Miss that, and it's a two-hour trudge.

The lake glowed in the late afternoon light, and I returned to our cabin content.

Even if tomorrow brought closed tracks, I'd ticked the box.

After a dinner at the resort's Hellyers restaurant, I soaked in the spa bath, fire blazing, wondering what morning would bring.

Sun again, so I made a second trip to Cradle before taking the scenic Murchison Highway, leaving ice-warning signs behind.

Two hours later, I reached Stanley, wrapped around an ancient volcanic plug called The Nut.

In summer, there's a chairlift to the top, but in winter, the 152m climb was a hard pass.

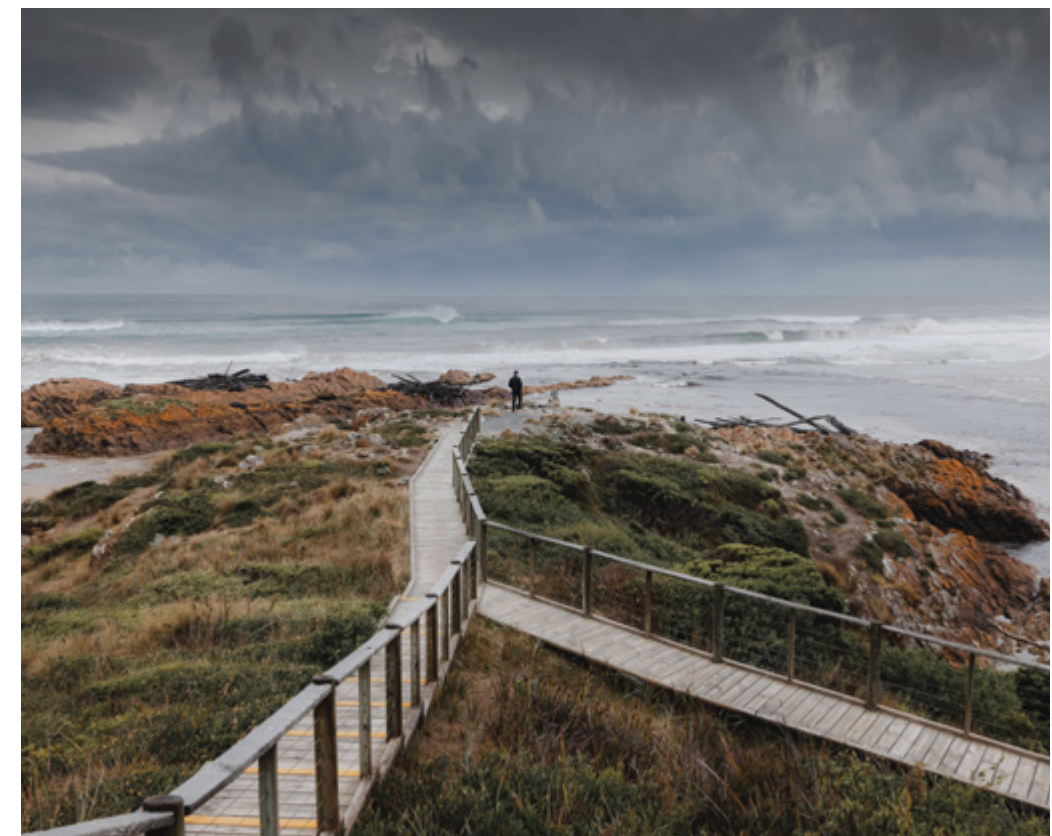
Instead, I checked into a luxury beach house at The Inlet, glass of Tassie red in hand, wallabies grazing outside.

It was almost enough to keep me in, but the lure of the Stanley Hotel's oysters, abalone, flathead and crumbed scallops won.

Locals played pool, a jukebox blasted classics, and the fireplace roared.

Stanley's quirks go back to the 1800s, with its standout being Highfield Historic Site, built in 1832.

LEFT Cradle Mountain and Dove Lake. Photo Luke O'Brien Photography.
RIGHT Gardiner Point at the mouth of the Arthur River in a part of North West Tasmania known as the Edge of the World. Photo Jess Bonde.



Visiting here is like walking in the footsteps of the colonial founders.

The regency manor has sweeping coastal views and, if you're lucky, or unlucky, ghosts.

I felt a chill upstairs and wouldn't step into the basement.

From Stanley, Arthur River, and the Edge of the World are just an hour away.

Stop at Smithton for a taste of La Cantara's artisan Venezuelan-style cheese and a tour of the 24/7 robotic dairy.

It's a revolution for dairy farmers, and the cows quite like it too.

Don't miss a Cape Grim steak sandwich at the Marrawah Inn or surfers braving icy waters at Green Point.

Huge sheets of black, rubbery bull kelp sometimes wash ashore here.

That night, seafood still called, so Hursey Seafoods

Drive it once, and you'll be planning your return before you've even unpacked the car.

delivered briny oysters and fresh caught crayfish metres from their trawlers.

On the drive back, I detoured to white-sand Boat Harbour Beach for a Palawa cultural walk with Tunapri guide Jye Crosswell around the rugged headland.

Foraging between the rocks, I discovered edible plants and age-old practices.

Later, snuggled into a sand circle, I learnt how bull kelp can be transformed into practical and attractive traditional baskets.

This is another spot where it's hard not to linger and luckily, I had booked Sol at Sisters Beach, an Airbnb

holiday house with sauna, underfloor heating and decor straight from a glossy mag.

A short walk led to the magnificent Rocky Cape National Park coastline, where sunset painted the water in breathtaking hues.

The road to Launceston was peppered with a tulip farm, a pause at Penguin (a town), and a stop at The Truffle Farm, where Dougie the labrador unearthed truffles that later blanketed my pizza.

Back in Launceston, Pipers Silo, a hotel crafted from old grain silos, provided a quirky finale.

Its Grain of the Silos restaurant dished up regional fare,

Tamar River views dazzled, and Archie, the resident dog ambassador, sealed the stay.

In Tasmania's North West, every bend in the road feels like the start of another story, whether it's a ghost in a grand old homestead, a wombat on his morning commute, or a fisherman hauling lobsters straight from the sea.

It's raw, rugged and sometimes wild enough to blow you sideways, but it's also welcoming in a way that lingers long after the journey ends.

Drive it once, and you'll be planning your return before you've even unpacked the car. [RACQ](#)

The writer travelled as a guest of Tourism Tasmania.

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31

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Walk to Nelson Falls - Emilie Ristevski

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Best of the west

Your guide to the ultimate
Outback road trip holiday

**FROM BOUJEE
TO BUDGET**

30

**EXPLORE FIVE
HIDDEN GEMS**

33

**WALKING WITH
DINOSAURS**

36

**2026 CALENDAR
OF EVENTS**

40

Experience Queensland's Matilda Way

FROM BOUJEE TO BUDGET

Stretching over 1,800km from Cunnamulla in the south to Karumba on the Gulf of Carpentaria, Queensland's Matilda Way is a fully sealed inland drive route that invites you to slow down, meet the locals and rediscover the simple joy of travelling the open road.

From camel races and cowboys to stargazing, dinosaur experiences, mineral-rich artesian springs and some of Outback Queensland's most iconic towns and attractions, the trip along the Matilda Way offers a journey that's as unforgettable as it is unexpected, with hidden gems to be found at every turn.

Whether you travel on a tight budget or with a taste for the finer things in life, the iconic Matilda Way proves there's more than one way to do Outback Queensland.

ABOVE On the road to Charlotte Plains station.
RIGHT Cunnamulla Hot Springs. Photos Tourism and Events Queensland (TEQ).

SOAK, SIP, STAY: DISCOVER THE BOUJEE OUTBACK

ADVENTURE AND REFINED luxury combine on the Matilda Way with bathhouses, glamping, fine dining, sunset tours and stunning scenery just some of the five-star finds that you can indulge in along the way.

Champagne-filled rail tours, picnics perched atop rugged ridges and helicopter tours complete with canapes and Channel Country views are just some of the Outback experiences that you will be able to cross off your boujee bucket list.

Hidden within stunning landscapes or perched high atop ancient plateaus, you will find luxury glamping and exclusive station retreats boasting sweeping vistas, star-filled skies and carefully curated dining experiences.

Perhaps the most indulgent secret of the Outback lies deep underground, winding beneath

the landscape of the Matilda Way. Take a deep dive into the ancient healing power of warm artesian waters which can be experienced at bespoke bathhouses, hot springs and mineral pools dotted throughout, including Cunnamulla, Eulo, Barcaldine, Longreach and Winton.

Here you can soak up, quite literally, some of Outback Queensland's most spectacular locations.



ADVENTURES THAT WON'T BREAK YOUR BUDGET

IF YOU PREFER to travel light and live larger on experiences, the Matilda Way also delivers for the budget-conscious explorer.

Low-cost camping grounds and station stays are dotted throughout the route. Warm yarns by the campfire, chats with the locals at the nearest

watering hole and endless starlit skies are all free of charge.

A crisp coldie and value-for-money pub meal awaits in most towns along the Matilda Way and for adventurous foodies, the authentically Outback (and budget-friendly) camel pie can be found at the Cunnamulla Coffee Shop.

Perhaps the most indulgent secret of the Outback lies deep underground...

For those willing to venture slightly off the Matilda Way, Outback Queensland also boasts some of the State's best nature-based experiences.

From towering sandstone cliffs to sandhills, stunning look-outs, gorges, national parks and wetlands housing hundreds of bird species, there are endless ways to immerse yourself in the Outback without spending a cent.

OUTBACK EVENTS YOU SHOULDN'T MISS

THE OUTBACK also boasts a packed calendar of events unlike anything you'll find anywhere else.

Music lovers of all tastes are catered for, with attractions including the Queensland Music Trail, stretching from Charleville to Mount Isa in 2026, and the Festival of Outback Opera, set against the stunning landscapes of Winton and Longreach.

Other events feature the spectacle of camel racing, the thrill of rodeo, and the celebration of film.

We've made it easy to plan your trip with a schedule of must-see events on page 40.

Read on to discover more of Outback Queensland and the unforgettable adventures that await along the Matilda Way.

TOP OUTBACK TRAVEL TIPS

OUTBACK ROADS can be full of surprises from roaming wildlife to long stretches between fuel stops. Before you hit the highway, follow these top travel tips:

BEST TIME TO GO: April to October. Think crisp mornings, sunny days, and clear, star-filled nights.

DISTANCE: About 1,812km from Cunnamulla to Karumba. Plan at least eight to 10 days to enjoy the journey at a relaxed pace.

PACKING LIST: First-aid kit, water, insect repellent, and warm layers for cool nights. Towns may have limited access to medications so be sure to pack enough for the entire trip.

FUEL AND SUPPLIES: Always top up when you can. Towns are spaced for convenience, but roadhouses and fuel stops can be 150-200 km apart.

KNOW YOUR TOW LIMITS: Have the laden van and vehicle combination weighed to ensure you are not exceeding the specified weight limits, including the ball load.

CHECK YOUR INSURANCE: RACQ offers a range of car insurance options so you can drive the Matilda Way with confidence. Visit racq.com/insurance

HELP ON THE ROAD: Get cover or check your level of RACQ Roadside Assistance to be confident wherever your journey takes you. Visit racq.com/roadside

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Discover the heart of Outback Queensland and its endless stories.

RACQ AND TOURISM & EVENTS QUEENSLAND will give one lucky member a \$10,000 HelloWorld travel voucher* for an awe-inspiring Outback odyssey. As the winner, you might choose to traverse red sand dunes, marvel under vast star-studded skies, follow the ancient footprints of dinosaurs or soak up the atmosphere at a luxury bathhouse or retreat. You will get the chance to build your own iconic itinerary with the help of a HelloWorld representative who will act as your personal travel agent to book and manage your ultimate Outback Queensland holiday. You can then share your extraordinary experiences through words and photos in an upcoming issue of *The Road Ahead* magazine.

This is your chance to experience the trip of a lifetime, inspire fellow travellers, and capture the true spirit of Outback Queensland.

Ready to say yes to adventure?

Find out more and enter today for your chance to win at racq.com/outback-competition

The competition is for RACQ members only and opens at 10am (AEST) on 17 November 2025 and closes at 5pm (AEST) on 22 January 2026. *Terms and conditions apply.

Outback Queensland
Live Australia's story





The Matilda Way

racq.com.au/roadahead

35

Five hidden gems along the Matilda Way

1

WWII SECRET BASE, CHARLEVILLE

STEP BACK in time at Charleville's World War II site, once a top-secret United States Army Air Force (USAAF) base hidden deep in the Outback. Today, visitors can explore restored bunkers and interactive displays that reveal how thousands of American troops trained to defend the Pacific. It's an unexpected military history lesson right in the heart of Outback Queensland.

2

OUTBACK DATE FARMS

JUST OUTSIDE Charleville, Outback Date Farms offers a sweet stopover where visitors can tour the plantation, sample harvested dates and even enjoy a home-cooked date loaf for morning tea. The farm, which includes 500 palm trees, offers a fascinating behind-the-scenes look at food production in Australia's arid zone.

3

DARR RIVER RAIL ADVENTURE

CLIMB ABOARD THE Great Darr River Rail Run. You'll depart from the historic platforms of Longreach Station and pass waterholes, scrub and grasslands. With champagne in hand and a warm breeze on your skin, settle in for the journey as your guide brings the landscapes alive with stories of bush medicine and Outback secrets.

4

TAMBO – BEARS AND BIRDS

AUSTRALIA'S OLDEST TOWN in the Central West, Tambo is famous for its handcrafted Tambo Teddies. A celebration of the region's sheep industry, each Teddie is meticulously crafted from Australian wool. Be sure to time your Tambo visit with Ben's Chicken Races at the town's Schnitzel Stadium – a fun-filled nightly event that will see you enjoy live entertainment and a great pub meal.

5

BLACKALL SCULPTURE TRAIL

BLACKALL IS HOME to an incredible amount of public art and sculptures. Each piece is unique and bears significance to the town's cultural or natural history. The trail's Roly Poly has become a Blackall icon and presents an 'instaworthy' moment along your Matilda Way adventure.

The Roly Poly is a popular stop on the Blackall Sculpture Trail. Photo TEQ.



The Diamantina
Birdsville Bedourie Betoota

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Queensland













A photograph of a sunset over a body of water. In the foreground, several dead, silhouetted trees stand in the water. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright glow and reflecting on the water. The sky is a mix of blue and orange.

Discover the Outback's prehistoric wonders

The vast Outback Queensland landscape is home to ancient lands millions of years in the making, rich with prehistoric fossil finds and hidden gems.

Here, every rock and ridge holds a story just waiting to be unearthed.

From world-class museums and displays to working fossil labs and digs, get hands-on with an archaeological adventure that the entire family will love.

Commence your prehistoric journey at the Eromanga Natural History Museum where you will meet 'Cooper' – a titanosaur that once shook the ground over 95 million years ago.

Get close to the action at the museum's fossil preparation lab, carefully brushing away

ancient dust to reveal the bones of giants. Continue north to Winton, where the Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum stands on a dramatic jump-up overlooking the plains.

Here, you can walk the Dinosaur Canyon, see the world's largest collection of Australian dinosaur

fossils, and feel the thrill of discovery that still drives palaeontologists today.

Take a tour 110km southwest of Winton to the Dinosaur Stampede at Lark Quarry Conservation Park and discover the only evidence of a Dinosaur Stampede on the planet. Daily tours detail the dramatic tale of the hunter

and the hunted from footprints left behind centuries ago. East from Winton, you will also see *Muttaborrasaurus langdoni* – Queensland's very own dinosaur housed at the Muttaborrasaurus Interpretation Centre.

This architecturally designed centre is made from local gidgee stones –

of mighty marine reptiles and partake in a 'Digging at Dawn' tour to unearth their very own ancient marine treasures.

The Flinders Discovery Centre in Hughenden is home to 'Hughie,' a life-sized replica of a *Muttaborrasaurus* skeleton.

Further fuel your palaeontology passion at the centre's light and sound show

and mineral history.

Here you can apply for a fossicking licence and become a real-life 'opal hunter'.

The centre can provide advice on local fossicking sites to explore.

Further afield are the Riversleigh fossil fields, a UNESCO World Heritage site. You can experience the site through

the self-guided Riversleigh Fossil Trail at Boodjamulla National Park or by visiting the Riversleigh Fossil Discovery Centre in Mount Isa.

The Discovery Centre offers interactive displays, life sized replicas and a working fossil laboratory as well as guided tours – making it a must-do stop for dino discoverers.

a stunning sight in itself.

Continue North to Richmond and Hughenden where the focus shifts to marine fossils from the Cretaceous period when the Outback was under water.

At Kronosaurus Korner, visitors can marvel at the remains

which showcases the wonders of nearby Porcupine Gorge.

For those chasing a different kind of ancient treasure, Cloncurry Unearthed showcases the region's dazzling opal

17-19 April

OUTBACK RIVER LIGHTS FESTIVAL

CUNNAMULLA'S OUTBACK River Lights Festival celebrates the Outback through art, music, storytelling and light. Enjoy live music and bush poetry, take part in a creative workshop or see bush tucker and camp oven cooking demonstrations at this three-day celebration that's suitable for all ages.

- 📍 Various venues
- 🌐 cunnamullatourism.com.au/outback-river-lights-festival



24 April – 9 May

QUEENSLAND MUSIC TRAIL

OLD MUSIC TRAILS' flagship event is a one-of-a-kind self-drive musical adventure that will take audiences deep into the Outback. From Charleville to Mount Isa, the 2026 route charts a brand-new course through nine iconic Outback towns, with music as the compass on a journey through country communities, cherished traditions and unforgettable landscapes.

- 📍 Various locations
- 🌐 qldmusictrails.com

1-4 May

BARCALTINE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE FESTIVAL

THE BARCALTINE Tree of Knowledge Festival showcases the community spirit and history of Barcaldine and Outback Queensland. Program highlights include a street party, live music, markets and workshops.

- 📍 Various locations
- 🌐 treeofknowledge.com.au

OUTBACK QUEENSLAND'S MUST-SEE EVENTS IN 2026

14-17 May

MUSIC IN THE MULGA

MUSIC IN THE Mulga will take place in the country music capital of Queensland, Thargomindah. Enjoy four days of country music, yabby races and more. Visitors from all over Australia are attracted by the relaxed country atmosphere.

- 📍 Thargomindah
- 🌐 musicinthemulga.com.au

19-25 May

FESTIVAL OF OUTBACK OPERA

OPERA QUEENSLAND'S (OQ) Festival of Outback Opera brings world-class performances to the breathtaking landscapes of Winton and Longreach. Unlike any music event you have experienced, the Festival of Outback Opera showcases extraordinary music against the backdrop of iconic Outback locations.

- 📍 Winton and Longreach
- 🌐 oq.com.au/whats-on

25-28 June

STARS OF CHARLOTTE PLAINS

HOSTED AT Charlotte Plains, this three-day, family-friendly camping event combines the very best of the bush with live music, kids' activities, local food vendors and all the usual trappings of Charlotte Plains including their artesian baths and hot springs.

- 📍 Charlotte Plains, Cunnamulla
- 🌐 charlotteplains.com.au

26 June – 5 July

VISION SPLENDID OUTBACK FILM FESTIVAL

THIS HIGHLY REGARDED Outback Film Festival celebrates Australian storytelling through film. The festival's program includes special events, film location tours, a short-film competition as well as premier screenings. Set against the backdrop of the historic Royal Open-Air Theatre in Winton, this is a must-do event for film lovers and history buffs alike.

- 📍 Winton
- 🌐 visionsplendidfilmfest.com

7-9 July

BIG RED BASH

BIRDSVILLE'S BIG RED Bash is back in 2026 with an epic line-up including Missy Higgins, Hoodoo Gurus, The Living End, Birds of Tokyo, Jessica Mauboy, Shannon Noll, Kate Ceberano, The Whitlams, Tim Finn, Troy Cassar-Daley, and more. The festival offers live music and entertainment including charity fun runs, camel rides and outdoor film nights.

- 📍 Big Red Sand Dune, Birdsville
- 🌐 bigredbash.com.au

July

DESERT CHAMPIONS WAY

ENJOY ALL THE thrills of camel racing with the Desert Champions Way: Outback Camel Trail. This epic journey follows major racing events from Jundah and Birdsville through to Bedourie, Boulia and Winton. More than just a sporting spectacle, the Desert Champions Way is a cultural experience, celebrating the legacy of the cameleers who shaped the region.

- 📍 Various locations
- 🌐 thediamantina.com.au

9 August

MOUNT ISA RODEO

AUSTRALIA'S BIGGEST, boldest and richest rodeo takes place each year in Mount Isa. For three epic days, you can see the power of bulls, broncs and Australia's toughest rodeo stars live in action. Expect world-class competition, big-name entertainment, family fun and a buzzing atmosphere.

- 📍 Buchanan Park, Mount Isa
- 🌐 mountisarodeo.com.au

Stories in the stars

Discover the darkest skies in the world and the stories they tell.

Far away from the bright city lights, the skies of Outback Queensland are said to be among the most impressive in the world.

Here, the night sky comes alive in an ancient map of stars, telling stories that have been shared for tens of thousands of years.

For Indigenous Australians, the night sky is a library of wisdom, law, and connection.

The stars have guided travel, marked the seasons, and preserved creation stories that explain life and our place within it.

In Winton, astronomy guides share these stories and explain the evolution of the night sky and links to earth as part of

the Gondwana Stars Tour conducted at Australia's first internationally certified Dark Sky Sanctuary.

Perched high on a jump-up at the Australian Age of Dinosaurs in Winton, the sanctuary is the perfect place to view one of the darkest skies in the world.

The sanctuary also offers a free viewing area that is open

year-round. Bring your telescope, binoculars, picnic and enjoy the spectacular southern skies!

Charleville is also a great location for star exploration with their Cosmos Centre offering both day and night-time experiences.

Here the stars feel almost close enough to touch with

powerful telescopes revealing Saturn's rings, distant galaxies and the shimmering Milky Way in breathtaking clarity.

The centre's expert guides blend science and storytelling, exploring the history of astronomy and ancient stories of Australia's First Nations peoples, to show how the sky has guided life, culture, and Country for tens of thousands of years.

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Whether you are soaking under the stars in a hot spring or watching the sun set over timeless vistas, where ever you are along the Matilda Way, simply look up to see the universe on show.

The brilliant Outback Queensland night skies are among the world's best. Photo TEQ.



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Trip to the tropics

Delve a little deeper into the heart of Queensland's tropical north across a 620km road trip between The Whitsundays and Cairns, with an island pit stop off Townsville along the way.

The northern leg of the Pacific Coast Way takes in the breathtaking wonders of the Great Barrier Reef and the ancient landscapes of the Wet Tropics rainforest, blended with bold fresh flavours and new reasons to stay just that little bit longer.

AIRLIE BEACH, WHITSUNDAYS

Arriving in Airlie Beach, the iconic Whitsundays colour palette of azure blue fringed by the emerald green of swaying palm trees, instantly evokes that relaxed tropical holiday feeling we all crave.

STAY: While the pull of staying on one of the Whitsundays' incredible islands is hard to resist – the award-winning BIG4 Adventure Whitsunday Resort is the perfect base for those travelling by road.

PLAY: For a change of pace, dial up the adrenaline with Ocean Rafting – zip and dash across the water, snorkel fringing reef and walk on some of the most pristine silica sand in the world. From the reef to the rainforest, tackle the trails of Conway National Park with Bike and Hike Whitsunday on a mountain bike tour through the ancient canopies.

DINE: Watch the sunset over the water with a fresh seafood platter and a tippie in hand at Northerlies Beach Bar & Grill.

Tucked away on a secluded beachfront just 15 minutes from the heart of Airlie Beach, Northerlies is also home to a piece of Hollywood, as the coconut trees around the property were used in the filming of *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales*.

NEXT STOP, TOWNSVILLE

Travel time between Airlie Beach and Townsville is about three hours. Break up the drive by grabbing a holiday happy snap in front of the Big Mango in Bowen or spend a little longer in town with a walk along the beach at Horseshoe Bay.

MAGNETIC ISLAND, TOWNSVILLE

Pull up to Townsville Marina and roll onto the ferry bound for Magic Island. The SeaLink passenger ferry will have visitors on island time within 20 minutes while the Magnetic Island Ferries vehicle ferry takes about 40 minutes.

STAY: Sleep under the stars at Magnetic Island Glamping. Having opened in 2023, the property is perfectly located behind Nelly Bay and offers eight luxury safari-style tents for an island stay that's a little different.

PLAY: Visit secluded bays and learn about the reefs, beaches and landscapes of Magnetic Island from Steph and Adam Hinks, 'Maggie' locals and



Jarramali Rock Art Tours venture into the ranges north-west of Cairns.
TOP RIGHT Bike and Hike Whitsundays uses trails through Conway National Park. Photos TEQ.



owners/Master Reef Guides of Aquascene Magnetic Island. Or cruise the waters around the island on a sunset sail with Pilgrim Sailing to finish the day.

DINE: Sit back and soak up the sunshine and serenity at Barefoot Food Art Wine Cafe in Horseshoe Bay which serves up a great collection of artwork alongside a scrumptious menu.

NEXT STOP, ATHERTON TABLELANDS

Travel time between Townsville and the Atherton Tablelands is about four hours and 15 minutes. Heading into the rainforest, discover the love story behind Paronella Park, walk among the canopy at Manu Tropical Skywalk or wander through the moody mists of the Waterfall Circuit.

STAY: Pull into Atherton Holiday Park to recharge in one of the park's cabins or villas, hook up the van to one of the powered sites or pitch a tent for a good old-fashioned family camping experience.

PLAY: A region that speaks to food lovers, start the day with a caffeine boost at Skybury Cafe and Roastery followed by an indulgent Charley's Chocolate Tour and an afternoon tippie at Mount Uncle Distillery. Alternatively, jump onboard Brett's Outback Tasting Adventures and let the team transport your tastebuds on a mouth-watering journey.

DINE: Still hungry after a day of taste testing? Our Place Restaurant in Yungaburra combines Australian and Mediterranean cuisine in a homely setting just a 15-minute drive from Atherton.

NEXT STOP, CAIRNS

Travel time between Atherton and Cairns is about one hour and 20 minutes. For a heart-pumping pit stop, hike to the top of Walsh's Pyramid for 360-degree views of the mountain ranges and patchwork of cane fields below.

CAIRNS AND GREAT BARRIER REEF

Discover something new in one of Australia's most loved holiday destinations where the reef meets the rainforest.

STAY: For the final pit stop of this road trip be treated to a relaxing resort stay at one of three Crystalbrook Collection properties sitting proudly in Cairns CBD. Both Crystalbrook Riley and Crystalbrook Flynn boast Esplanade frontage, while Crystalbrook Bailey serves up an artistic flare just one street back from the waterfront.

PLAY: Uncover the deep cultural connection that spans the Great Barrier Reef, Wet Tropics Rainforest and rugged cape that makes up this awe-inspiring region. Learn Dreamtime stories of the Great Barrier Reef on a Dreamtime Dive and Snorkel outer reef tour, get hands on and paint at Janbal Gallery in Mossman or embark on an epic journey to the remote ranges north-west of Cairns with Jarramali Rock Art Tours.

DINE: Finish a Pacific Coast Way road trip on a culinary high at NuNu in Palm Cove, or for a more relaxed meal closer to Cairns, pop into Hemingway's Brewery overlooking Trinity Inlet for locally brewed beers and delicious brewpub grub.

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Calgary calling

By Briar Jensen

Gateway to the Canadian Rockies, Calgary combines cosmopolitan culture with western heritage.

Amidst the marble grandeur of the Hawthorn Dining Room in Calgary's Fairmont Palliser, built in 1914 for travellers on the Canadian Pacific Railway, General Manager Chas Jones presents showstoppers from the cocktail menu.

My gin-based Whispering Fog is a berry blush amidst a swirl of dry ice, while my husband's whiskey-based Spiced Solstice materialises inside a smoke-infused glass cloche.

Cheers to one of Canada's fastest-growing cities.

Calgary, gateway to the Canadian Rockies, is Alberta's largest city, but it proves easy to navigate, both on foot and in our hire car from our base downtown at the Residence

Inn by Marriott, which has one of Canada's top restaurants, the eclectic and cosy Orchard, right next door.

As first-timers to the city, with only a couple of days to explore, we join a few tours.

The Iconic Eats of Calgary tour, which starts at the Fairmont Palliser, proves the perfect introduction to the city's cool culinary scene.

Owner of Alberta Food Tours Karen Anderson, a food journalist, is passionate about the province's agrarian abundance.

Nearly one third of Alberta is devoted to agriculture; cattle outnumber people by a million.

Beef, wheat and canola seed top the exports, but root vegetables, chickpeas, mustard seeds and honey are up there. We sample the latter two on a

green salad tossed tableside, with mustard dressing made with honey from the hotel's own hives. Over a salumi board at Charcut, Karen shares the story of bison.

Considered a keystone species that roamed North America for thousands of years, they were decimated by settlers and colonising governments, in part to subjugate the First Nations Peoples who relied on them as a nose-to-tail resource.

Bison numbers plummeted from an estimated 40 million to a mere 400 or so.

Thankfully, conservation efforts have seen numbers rebound. Wood bison are now protected and have been re-introduced to national parks while plains bison are farmed as livestock and appear on many menus.

Alberta's rich agricultural industry is celebrated every July at the Calgary Stampede, a 10-day extravaganza billed as the 'Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth'.

Like an Aussie agricultural show on steroids, it's a celebration of country and western heritage – rodeo, chuckwagon races, carnival rides and concerts.

It attracted nearly 1.4 million people this year and visitors can get a feel for the action year-round at the newly opened SAM Centre.

Resembling an enormous ranch house, it showcases the Stampede's 100-plus year history through interactive and immersive exhibits that invoke the fun, fear, drama and excitement of the Stampede.



Displays of saddlery, statuary, posters and pins fill the walls and we listen to personal stories including from the 'cow milking lady' and a proud First Nations representative.

Since its inception in 1912 the Stampede has included Indigenous culture, thanks to the insistence of founder Guy Weadick.

Back then First Nations Peoples were confined to reserves but Weadick sought exemptions for them to attend and display their tribal traditions.

A 270-degree multimedia projection on reclaimed barn wood plunges us into Stampede action.

"I kinda have butterflies in my stomach," says a rodeo rider before his bronco bucks across the screen to the roaring crowd.

"That electricity, you can just feel it," says a horsewoman as hoofbeats thunder around us.

I swear I can taste dust in the air and smell the famous pancakes.

Mechanical horsepower is the star of Gasoline Alley, a motor museum located at Heritage Park.

Meticulously restored vehicles from a 1905 Cadillac through to 1950s station wagons show automobile evolution, and motoring memorabilia includes gasoline pumps and garage signage.

Bow-tied guide Brian knows the story behind every vehicle, but most incredible is the fact almost everything was donated from the private collection of local businessman Ron Carey.

Studio Bell, home of the National Music Centre, celebrates Canadian music in all its forms from singers, songwriters and musicians.

There's a tribute to the Beatles' Canadian tour, outfits worn by K. D. Lang and Shania Twain, instruments to play and info on music therapy.

I love the Kimball theatre organ's array of sounds used to accompany silent films, but hubby is intrigued by TONTO, the aircraft cockpit-like analogue synthesizer, used by Stevie Wonder on *Superstition*.

Guide Tom describes it as a 'Frankenstein of instruments' requiring aircraft cables from Boeing to manage the electrical currents.

Later, we squeeze in a stroll with Judy from Calgary Walks starting at the Central Library, an architectural homage to blonde timber, curvaceous lines and natural light.

She shows us the Plus 15 climate-controlled enclosed walkways connecting city buildings, so called as they're built 15 feet above the ground, before taking in artworks in the Municipal Building and outdoor sculptures.

Heading out of town we stop at Calgary Farmer's Market West to stock up from the array of fresh and prepared produce, boutique brews and handmade sweets.

At Yamnuska Wolfdog Sanctuary we learn the canines were bred as exotic pets after the end of the fur trade, mixing wolf with domestic breeds like huskies, German shepherds, or malamutes.

The dogs are classified by their percentage of wolf, but any amount makes them challenging pets, and the animals here have been rescued or surrendered.

Along with caring for them, the sanctuary provides public education promoting responsible breeding and ownership.

Following our guide, we crunch over snow and take a seat in an enclosure as she offers treats to the pack of four dogs.

Beguiling with fluffy coats and piercing eyes, they are timid and wary.

Wolfdogs are hard to train although these ones sit on command, but there's no toy they can't destroy.

Only two of them approach us cautiously for the treats we share in an open palm.

It's a sad story of domestication for profit – one the sanctuary is trying to right, while also advocating for wolves in the wild. [B](#)

KEY INFORMATION

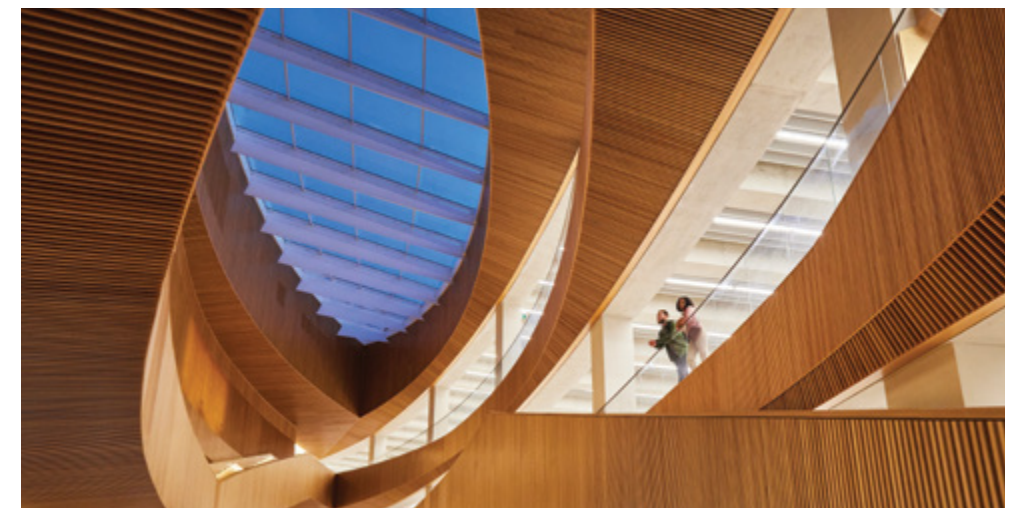
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Winter view of the Calgary skyline with the Saddle dome arena in the foreground. Photo Roth and Ramberg.



TOP The SAM Centre tells the story of the Calgary Stampede. Photo Briar Jensen.

RIGHT Curvaceous lines and natural light are a feature of the Central Library's architecture. Photo Colin Way, Tourism Calgary.

Go with the flow

Discover a regenerative retreat in the Northern Rivers, where rainforest walks, glow-worm magic, and soulful landscapes offer a nature-rich escape.

By Cath Johnsen



Whipbirds herald the start of my day in Bangalow, New South Wales; their insistent call rousing me from my slumber.

I draw back the curtains in my cabin to catch a glimpse of the early birds. No such luck, but the flood of light reveals a rainforest vista reminiscent of the ancient Gondwanan forests that were once prolific in the Northern Rivers region.

This is not age-old rainforest, but rather new trees shooting up towards the sunshine, planted by the property's owners Mike and Cathy Tomkins, who are on a mission to regenerate the more than 80ha (200 acres) they call home.

Amaroo, meaning beautiful place, has been a labour of love for the couple who bought the property in 2016.

At first, they camped along the ridgeline under the canopy of countless camphor laurels, which they soon realised were suffocating the native rainforest trees.

Then began a campaign of removing the invasive species and planting in their place 45,000 seedlings and saplings of endemic flora.

At first, the birds left, and the neighbours voiced their scepticism at this massive undertaking.

But now, the new natural order is flourishing; the birds have flocked back, and other animals like koalas and platypus have been sighted on the spring-fed land and in its waterways.

The Tomkins are no longer camping but instead live atop the hill in their new home, overlooking their grazing cattle, clucking hens, thousands of trees (including eucalypts for the koalas), and the four cabins they've built so that they can share this piece of Eden with others.

"The accommodation gives us a source of income which helps us to keep planting," Mike said.

"We're not here for the money. We're here to have people come and enjoy, and then we keep planting. So eventually, this will become its own ecosystem."

And what a luxurious ecosystem it is.

The four well-appointed cabins all have ensuites, kitchenettes and wood-fired heaters.

But the showstopper is the central pavilion area, which boasts a crackling fireplace, commercial kitchen, indoor and outdoor entertaining spaces, a heated pool, wood-fired pizza oven and a fire pit set in a modern parterre garden.

Nature complements this human-made beauty with dazzling



sunsets on one side of the ridge and warming sunrises on the other. Well-placed swings hang from trees, providing a whimsical place to sit and take in the sweeping views.

From the vantage point of Amaroo, you can also spy the township of Bangalow, especially the red-bricked steeple of St Kevin's Catholic Church, whose belltower regularly tolls over the cafe-culture-meets-arts-hub village which is thrumming with life below.

Only 15 minutes from Byron Bay, the Bangalow township is where you can easily while away a morning sipping turmeric lattes (or cappuccinos if you prefer), trawling through antique wares, discovering locally-made fashion labels, or devouring all-day-breakfasts like The Woods Cafe's Summer Hinterland Plate – marinated feta, fresh dressed tomatoes, roast potatoes, poached egg, miso gochujang mushrooms, radish herb salad and Byron Bay haloumi.

Not far from Bangalow (named after the Bangalow palm tree) lives Brazilian-born, but now hinterland local, Cristiano (Cris). A former travel journalist and avid surfer, Cris fell in love with the Northern Rivers region and now showcases its beauty to visitors under the banner of Rise Up Tours.

Cris picks me up along with some international tourists from the centre of Byron Bay.

He's come straight from the surf, and his surfboard is still in the back of the minivan as he drives us deep into the hinterland to the soundtrack of Ziggy

Marley. He talks about the counterculture that the area is so famous for.

We experience a little of that alternative lifestyle later when Cris takes us to a long-standing hippy commune in the rainforest for dinner – its ageing founder welcoming us in around the fire.

But before we find ourselves sitting in a circle eating rainbow salad while listening to the hum of the didgeridoo, Cris first takes us to a local's swimming hole for a freshwater dip, with cascading waterfalls that are roaring thanks to recent heavy rains.

Back in the bus, Cris whisks us past macadamia plantations and banana farms to yet another spectacular waterfall.

We stand atop the viewing platform, marvelling at the constant surge of water plummeting 100m over rhyolite cliffs.

After dinner, we are taken to a secret spot in the forest where Cris knows thousands of glow worms will be waiting for us (not worms at all, as it turns out, but the bioluminescent larvae of small flies).

Luminescent fungi also put on an evening light show, as our multi-talented guide pulls out a flute and plays a poetic melody under the canopy of starlight.

Later, I'm tucked up in the linen-sheeted bed back in my cabin at Amaroo, a cup of tea in hand and a sense of gratitude at having such beautiful landscapes to enjoy, just a few hours' drive from Brisbane. [@](#)

The writer travelled courtesy of Amaroo Bangalow and Rise Up Tours.

LEFT Amaroo's luxurious cabins include ensuites, kitchenettes and wood-fired heaters. **TOP** A swing with a stunning view at Amaroo. **BOTTOM** Waterfalls roaring after heavy rainfall.





Hands-off approach

By Ged Bulmer

Mercedes-Benz pioneered Level 3 autonomous driving with its Drive Pilot system.

The era of self-driving vehicles is inching ever closer, but experts say we're not there yet.

Imagine a world where you can hop into your vehicle and instead of taking the wheel you get into the back seat, take out the laptop and finish some work, or don a face mask and grab some shut-eye, leaving it to your self-driving car to ferry you autonomously to the destination requested.

This is the 'glorious future' that tech-entrepreneur and Tesla CEO Elon Musk envisages, telling an audience in October 2024 that the car-maker's Level 3 driverless technology would be ready for roll-out on the brand's Model 3 sedan and Model Y SUV in California and Texas in 2025.

"We'll move from supervised Full Self-Driving to unsupervised Full Self-Driving, where you can fall asleep and wake up at your destination," Musk said.

At the time of writing, the promised Level 3 roll-out in the USA had not occurred, but Tesla has since released in Australia the same Level 2 autonomous driving technology its vehicles in America and elsewhere are capable of.

Labelled 'Full Self-Driving (Supervised)', the feature costs \$10,100, or \$149 per month, and is available as an Over the Air (OTA) update on vehicles equipped with the company's HW4 computer hardware.

Earlier model Tesla's equipped with HW3 software are currently unable to access the feature, despite some owners having paid for the technology in advance at the time of purchase.

Levels of autonomous driving are certified internationally by the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE), which defines six levels, ranging from zero (no automation) to five (full automation). These levels describe the extent to which a vehicle can perform dynamic driving tasks.

Many modern cars already offer Level 1 technology, which includes features like adaptive cruise control, autonomous emergency braking and lane-keep assist, and a growing number of new vehicles have Level 2 capability.

Level 2, as deployed by Tesla in September, is the highest level of automation currently available to the public in Australia.

It means a vehicle can automatically steer, brake and accelerate, but only with a human driver supervising and being ready to take over the controls.

Level 3 autonomous driving is a higher level of automation again, where the vehicle can handle all driving tasks under specific conditions, but the driver must be ready to take control when prompted by the system.

"There is no vehicle currently available in Australia safe enough to operate in 'self-driving' mode without a driver monitoring the driving task."

Under current Australian law, a licensed human driver must always be in control of the vehicle, meaning more advanced systems, including Level 3 and above, are not yet permitted on public roads.

A statement on Queensland's Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) website says there are currently no commercially available Level 3 or above automated vehicles approved to drive on Queensland roads, with no expected timeframe for release.

"There is no vehicle currently available in Australia safe enough to operate in 'self-driving' mode without a

driver monitoring the driving task," TMR says.

"Until completely self-driving cars are available without any monitoring or support from a human, the driver will always need to be an attentive while operating an automated vehicle."

Most car makers are working towards increasing the level of autonomous driving tech in their cars, with Tesla one of the keenest advocates.

But the company has drawn criticism from some quarters for being too eager to deploy the technology on public roads before it is fully proven.

The car-maker has faced lawsuits in the States in relation to crashes involving its vehicles, some of which have been fatal, and over the potentially misleading naming of its 'Full Self-Driving' technology.

Ironically, it was German luxury car maker Mercedes-Benz and not Tesla that won the race to sell the first Level 3 autonomous driving system in the USA with its Drive Pilot system gaining approval in Nevada in 2023 and California the following year.

The on-road development of autonomous vehicles is mostly being carried out with robotaxis.

Tesla, in June this year, launched its Robotaxi pilot in Austin, Texas, using Model Y vehicles.

The program is available by invitation only, operates in a limited geographic area and requires a safety monitor seated in the passenger seat to oversee and intervene if necessary.

Tesla says it plans to roll out the service to other cities and countries, pending regulatory approvals.

There are other robotaxi autonomous vehicle trials being conducted without in-car

Tesla has introduced Level 2 autonomous driving in Australia.

driver monitors by Waymo in the US, and by Uber in the UK.

Of these, the Waymo trial is by far the biggest and most advanced, with the subsidiary of Google's parent company Alphabet Inc. having tested fully driverless cars on public roads since 2015. In 2020 Waymo became the first company to offer fully driverless robotaxi rides in Phoenix, a service it has since expanded to San Francisco, Los Angeles and Austin.

These fully driverless vehicles are overseen by human-staffed control rooms where operators can remotely take control of a vehicle if necessary.

In a December 2024 report Waymo stated its robotaxis had surpassed 50 million miles.

During this time Waymo vehicles have been involved in traffic accidents but the company claims its extensive data set, which is publicly available, shows its robotaxis are involved in fewer crashes and injuries than human drivers, with significant reductions in pedestrian, cyclist, and

intersection crashes.

Clearly, vehicles that can drive themselves raise some significant legal, moral and ethical issues, including the question of who is liable if a self-driving car crashes.

RACQ's Head of Public Policy Michael Kane said the Club broadly supported driver assistance technologies, with certain caveats.

"If and when fully autonomous vehicles are proven to be safer than human drivers and we have the right regulatory framework in place, then it will be a good thing as it will mean less road trauma," Mr Kane said.

He said even with self-driving switched on the driver was still legally responsible and must be ready to take control of the wheel at any time.

"The worst thing you can do if you buy a car fitted with Level 2 software is to think you can relax and let the car do the driving," Mr Kane said.

"If there is a crash and the fault is at your end, you may be charged." ^{GB}

THE SIX LEVELS OF AUTONOMOUS DRIVING

LEVEL 0 NO AUTOMATION

The human driver performs all driving tasks. The vehicle may have audible warnings but no automated control.

LEVEL 1 DRIVER ASSISTANCE

The vehicle can assist with either steering or acceleration/deceleration, but not simultaneously.

LEVEL 2 PARTIAL DRIVING AUTOMATION

The vehicle can control both steering and acceleration/deceleration at the same time. The driver must remain fully engaged and ready to take control.

LEVEL 3 CONDITIONAL DRIVING AUTOMATION

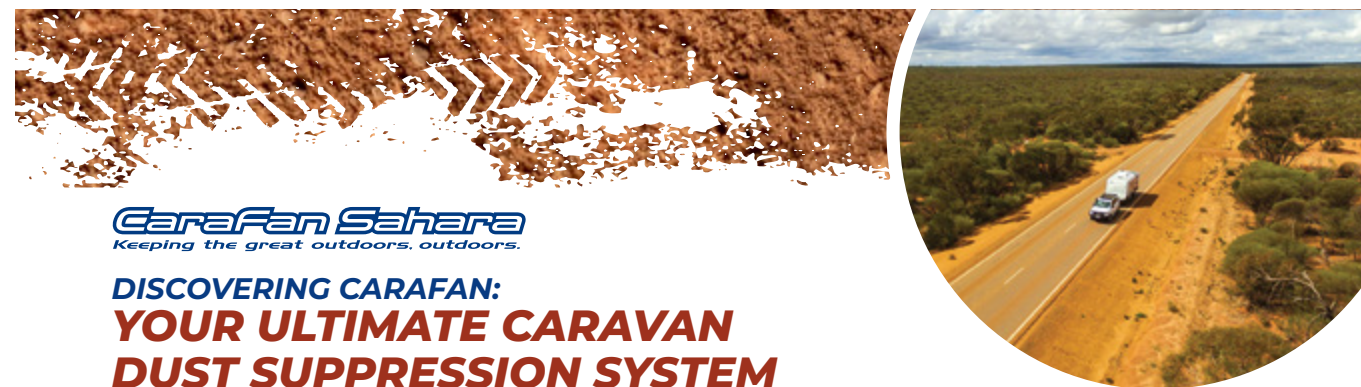
The vehicle can handle all driving tasks under certain conditions, but the driver must be ready to take over when prompted.

LEVEL 4 HIGH DRIVING AUTOMATION

The vehicle can handle all driving tasks in most situations without a human driver, and can intervene if something goes wrong.

LEVEL 5 FULL DRIVING AUTOMATION

The vehicle can handle all driving tasks in all conditions. The car can operate without any human input and may not need a steering wheel or pedals.



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or visit www.carafan.com.au.

Your caring heart is urgently needed

More families than we've seen in years are struggling to put food on the table. Homelessness is a constant concern — and for many, Christmas is a luxury they can't afford.

For someone like Paula, who escaped domestic violence, finding a safe home and starting a new life has never been harder. When she left with her children, Paula felt completely helpless and lost.

"It was the hardest moment of my life. I was just crying in the rain, saying, 'Please help me. I can't do this anymore. God have mercy on me, because I don't know what I'm doing'."

Your kindness is needed urgently to give families like Paula's the practical, emotional, and compassionate support they need.



"If it wasn't for the Salvos, I wouldn't have made it through."
— Paula



You can be the hope families are praying for.

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salvationarmy.org.au/christmas2025



*Name changed to protect privacy

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6 OF THE BEST CHEAPEST CARS TO OWN FOR 2025



Light Car

SUZUKI SWIFT HYBRID HATCHBACK (MY25)

QUEENSLAND'S LEAST expensive car to own and operate is once again the Suzuki Swift – a small three-cylinder powered five-door hatchback boasting a CVT transmission and fuel-saving mild-hybrid technology. In a category where purchase price ranges from the Swift's \$28,350 to stablemate the Suzuki Jimny's \$40,195, the former's combination of low sticker price, and reasonable fuel efficiency helped place it ahead of the second-placed Hyundai Venue and third-placed Toyota Yaris. The Yaris's podium place is impressive given its relatively high \$33,770 purchase price, with the Toyota fighting back courtesy of having the best fuel efficiency and the lowest servicing costs. A word of caution with the Suzuki is that it carries only a three-star ANCAP safety rating, where the Venue is a four-star car and the Yaris boasts a five-star rating. For buyers on a budget the Swift makes an unassailable case but those who can find the extra \$64 a month for the Yaris will have the peace of mind of its superior safety rating. Among the other notable take-outs from this category is the MG MG3 Hybrid, which has the highest registration and insurance costs and highest servicing costs, but manages to fight its way back into fourth spot overall.

SPECIFICATION: 1.2-litre inline three-cylinder petrol, mild-hybrid (61kW/112Nm), CVT transmission
PRICE: \$28,350 (estimated on-road)
MONTHLY: \$874 (category average \$979)
ANNUAL: \$10,494 (category average \$11,749)
FIVE-YEAR TOTAL: \$52,468
RESIDUAL: \$13,500



Small Passenger and SUV

BYD DOLPHIN ESSENTIAL (MY25)

PROPOSERS OF ELECTRIC vehicles (EVs) have long argued that despite their higher purchase price, EVs are more cost effective over the long haul. It's a position backed up by this research which places BYD's compact electric hatchback on the top step of the affordability podium in the Small Passenger and SUV segment. Despite being ranked fourth on purchase price behind category rivals the Chery Tiggo 4, Hyundai i30 and Mitsubishi ASX, the Dolphin came storming back into contention courtesy of having both the segment's lowest fuel costs and the lowest servicing costs. For readers wondering how we calculate fuel costs of electric vehicles, it's based on the vehicle's official power consumption as provided by the manufacturer and an averaged domestic electricity tariff of 32.99c/kWh. A similar weighted average fuel cost is used for combustion-powered vehicles, such as the second-placed Chery Tiggo 4 Urban, and third-placed Hyundai i30 Sedan. The front-wheel drive BYD Dolphin has a claimed 427km (WLTP) range, a five-star ANCAP safety rating, and comes with an eight-year or 160,000km battery warranty and a six-year or 150,000km vehicle warranty.

SPECIFICATION: Single electric motor (70kW/180Nm), front-wheel drive, 44.9kWh battery
PRICE: \$32,509 (estimated on-road)
MONTHLY: \$890 (category average \$1039)
ANNUAL: \$10,677 (category average \$12,465)
FIVE-YEAR TOTAL: \$53,384
RESIDUAL: \$14,500



Medium Passenger and SUV

MAZDA CX-5 G20 MAXX (MY25)

MEDIUM SUVs REMAIN one of the biggest selling and most competitive segments of the Australian new car market and this year we've added medium sedans to the mix, with 14 different models analysed. Confirming that Australians have never had more choice when it comes to powertrains, the segment includes five battery-electric models, four hybrids, one plug-in hybrid and four ICE-powered vehicles. Mazda's popular and dependable ICE-powered CX-5 medium SUV was judged the most cost-effective vehicle to own and operate, edging out the second-placed BYD Sealion 6 PHEV and third-placed Nissan X-Trail, thanks in large part to having the group's lowest purchase price. Had BYD sharpened its pen a bit more on the Sealion 6's retail price, its significantly lower fuel and servicing costs would have swung the balance in its favour. Meanwhile, the four-cylinder petrol-powered CX-5 remains a firm favourite with Aussie buyers, ranking second only to the spectacularly popular Toyota RAV4 in overall segment sales. The Toyota's popularity has seen its price edge up in recent years to the point where it sits sixth in this survey on purchase price, so even its relatively low fuel and servicing costs weren't enough to bring it back into contention.

SPECIFICATION: 2.0L four-cylinder petrol (115kW/200Nm), six-speed automatic, front-wheel drive
PRICE: \$39,165 (estimated on-road)
MONTHLY: \$1,154 (category average \$1,306)
ANNUAL: \$13,852 (category average \$15,674)
FIVE-YEAR TOTAL: \$69,261
RESIDUAL: \$17,900

RACQ's annual Vehicle Operating Costs survey analyses a range of data to provide a guide to the average costs of owning and operating a selection of popular models across different categories on a monthly, annual, and five-year basis. The survey looks at purchase price, loan repayments (assuming 100% finance or a novated lease), registration and insurances, fuel, servicing and even

tyres. Calculations are based on privately owned new vehicles, operating for five years, and travelling 15,000km per year. The costings are indicative only for comparison purposes, and not necessarily an indicator of actual costs. For full details of methodology, category winners and comparative cost breakdowns, visit racq.com/voc.



Large SUV

SUBARU OUTBACK AWD (MY25)

LIKE THE SUZUKI Swift in the small car segment, the Outback seems to have a lock on the top step of the vehicle operating costs podium. This year marks the fifth year in a row Subaru's versatile wagon has topped the table as Australia's most cost-effective large SUV. It's true that the vagaries of official vehicle segments give the Outback an advantage by placing it alongside bigger and more expensive seven-seat SUVs and 4x4s, but that's no fault of Subaru's. In the 12 months since our last survey the Outback's price has crept up \$1,192 but it's still \$9,000 less expensive than the seven-seat turbodiesel-powered Kia Sorento which claimed silver, and \$12,500 less expensive than the third-placed Isuzu MU-X LS-M 4x4 wagon. That sort of price advantage is more than enough to compensate for the fact the high-riding Outback's horizontally opposed four-cylinder engine is not especially economical, ranking third in terms of fuel expenses, while its servicing costs are ranked fourth. Fans of V8 power, towing performance and off-road ability probably don't care to compare the costs of owning the likes of a burly Nissan Patrol, but we'll do it for them; at \$2,836 the Patrol's monthly running costs are \$1,444 higher than the Outback, a variance which blows out to \$86,654 over five years.

SPECIFICATION: 2.5-litre four-cylinder petrol (138kW/245Nm), CVT transmission, AWD
PRICE: \$50,065 (estimated on-road)
MONTHLY: \$1,392 (category average \$1,955)
ANNUAL: \$16,704 (category average \$23,460)
FIVE-YEAR TOTAL: \$83,519
RESIDUAL: \$24,900



Light Commercial 4x4

BYD SHARK 6 PREMIUM (MY25)

THE ARRIVAL of alternative powertrain technology to Australia's enduringly popular ute segment has been one of the big stories of 2025, with BYD beating rivals to the draw by becoming the first brand to launch a petrol-electric plug-in hybrid (PHEV) ute. Consumers have responded positively to the Shark 6's impressive combination of performance and efficiency, with September sales figures showing the Chinese ute has come from nowhere to establish itself as the country's fourth-best selling ute. No doubt a big part of the appeal is the Shark 6's price, which is around \$7,500 less expensive than the second-placed Mitsubishi Triton GSR, but it's also due to the BYD's impressive fuel efficiency, courtesy of its PHEV drivetrain. The latter combines a 1.5-litre turbo-petrol engine with a 29.58kWh LFP battery and twin electric motors to deliver fuel consumption as low as 2.0L/100km when driving with a fully charged battery. The Shark 6 can also travel up to 100km (NEDC) on battery power alone. It's not like BYD is short-changing consumers on safety or features, either, with the Shark 6 boasting a five-star ANCAP rating and a generous level of equipment in its singular Premium variant.

SPECIFICATION: Plug-in hybrid, twin electric motors (321kW/650Nm), all-wheel drive, 1.5-litre turbo-petrol engine, 29.58kWh LFP battery.
PRICE: \$61,217 (estimated on-road)
MONTHLY: \$1,571 (category average \$1,911)
ANNUAL: \$18,854 (category average \$22,932)
FIVE-YEAR TOTAL: \$94,272
RESIDUAL: \$29,500



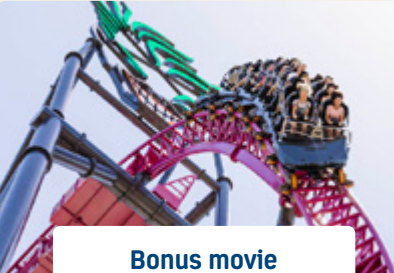
People Movers

HYUNDAI STARIA BASE


ANYONE WHO HAS shopped for a people mover in recent times will know that the pickings are slim in the sub-\$70k segment, despite this vehicle style arguably being better suited to ferrying kids to school than the ubiquitous large SUV. Korean cousins Hyundai and Kia offer some of the segment's best options in the form of the Staria and Carnival respectively, with the Ford Transit-based Tourneo the only other vehicle reviewed this year. The segment-winning Staria offers both 3.5-litre V6 petrol and 2.2-litre turbodiesel powertrain choices, but only the V6 in its most affordable variant. Fuel efficiency isn't a particular strength of the V6, with the Staria's \$235 monthly fuel cost higher than both the Carnival with the same engine and the Ford with its thrifter 2.0-litre turbodiesel. The Staria holds a slight edge with servicing costs, as it does with its purchase price which undercuts the Carnival by \$2,000 and the Tourneo by a massive \$18,000. Whether it's a lack of choice in this segment, the unfashionability of the vehicle style, or the fact running costs aren't that much cheaper than for a large SUV, September year-to-date sales of 9,764 people movers versus 106,321 sub-\$80k large SUVs indicates which Aussies prefer.

SPECIFICATION: 3.5-litre naturally aspirated petrol V6 (200kW/331Nm), eight-speed automatic, front-wheel drive
PRICE: \$55,708 (estimated on-road)
MONTHLY: \$1,580 (category average \$1,714)
ANNUAL: \$18,968 (category average \$20,565)
FIVE-YEAR TOTAL: \$94,842
RESIDUAL: \$24,000

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Planning a summer road trip?

DO THESE CHECKS FIRST

Before heading off on your summer road trip, do some basic checks to ensure your vehicle is ready.

QUEENSLANDERS LOVE A road trip. But before you start packing the car, it's recommended you do some planning, beyond choosing snacks and playlists.

RACQ Auto Services Manager Duane Wisby said conducting basic vehicle checks could help prevent breakdowns and keep your journey incident-free.

"If your car is near its scheduled service date or you have concerns, get a service and safety check from a qualified mechanic. Otherwise, there are basic checks you can do yourself," Mr Wisby said.

1. IS YOUR CAR DUE FOR A SERVICE?

IF YOUR SERVICE is due, get it done before you go. RACQ research revealed nearly one in three (32%) Queenslanders were postponing essential car maintenance due to cost-of-living pressures. It's vital your car's scheduled servicing is up to date, especially before a long road trip.

Members save \$25 off the RRP on selected RACQ Auto services*

*RACQ member discount of \$25 is off the recommended retail price. No further discounts apply. Discounts for repair and replacement available for each piece of glass repaired or replaced. Does not apply to in-store chip repairs. Offer is available until further notice, subject to change without notice and may be withdrawn at any time. ~In-store chip repairs are \$80 for RACQ members and non-members. Mobile chip repairs are available at an extra fee. All prices are inclusive of GST. Offer is available until further notice, subject to change without notice and may be withdrawn at any time. No further discounts apply.

2. FLUIDS

CHECK OIL and fluid levels, including engine coolant, power steering fluid, and brake and clutch fluid. If your car isn't due for a service, pop the bonnet and inspect the levels yourself.

3. WIPERS AND WASHER FLUID

WIPERS ARE ESSENTIAL for clearing rain, dust, and bugs. Replace them if they shudder or streak. Check windscreen washer fluid levels and top up if needed.

4. CHECK YOUR WINDSCREEN

CHECK YOUR WINDSCREEN for chips or cracks. These can become a bigger problem and require a windscreen replacement if not repaired.

The cost of RACQ in-store chip repairs is \$80, for a limited time~

5. TYRES

ENSURE TYRES have at least 3mm of tread (legal minimum is 1.5mm) to effectively displace water in heavy rain. Look for cracks or bulges. Check tyre pressure – including the spare – using your car's placard or manual for recommended levels.

6. BATTERY

WATCH FOR SIGNS of a weakening battery, such as the engine starting slowly or sounding different. Other signs include warning lights, due to low voltage, and clocks or radios losing their settings. If in doubt, get the battery tested and replace it if recommended. RACQ's roadside assistance fleet responded to 736,924 calls for help in FY25, with nearly half (45%) related to battery issues.

7. LIGHTS AND INDICATORS

CONFIRM ALL LIGHTS and indicators are working. Faulty lights are a safety hazard and can result in fines. Check them regularly.

8. ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE

NO MATTER HOW prepared you are, there's always a risk of an unwanted roadside incident. If you have RACQ roadside assistance, check that it provides the right cover for your trip. If not, consider purchasing it. Visit racq.com/roadside

9. FIRST-AID KIT

IT'S RECOMMENDED motorists carry a first-aid kit and high-vis vest in case of a breakdown or emergency.

Completing these checks will help ensure a safe and smooth summer road trip.

Get your essential mechanic and car services at your nearest RACQ Auto store. Visit racq.com/auto



Forester fires up for new era

By Ged Bulmer

The sixth-generation Subaru Forester delivers comfort, capability and hybrid efficiency in a refined package that hits the mark for modern Aussie drivers.

There are cars that you can spend a week at the wheel of and never quite feel at home, and others that you slip so comfortably into that they feel like a favourite pair of jeans.

The new Subaru Forester falls into the latter camp, so much so that after a week at the wheel of the versatile medium SUV, I found myself searching for excuses to extend my time in it.

This new-generation Subaru Forester arrived in June of this year, a few months shy of

seven years after the launch of its fifth-generation predecessor.

The new model debuts a bold design and two powertrain options including a hybrid four-cylinder version of its trademark Boxer engine.

The Forester comes in a seven-variant range comprising four petrol and three petrol-hybrids.

Prices are up across the board with the petrol range starting at \$43,490 for the Forester AWD, and extending to \$50,990 for the Forester AWD Sport.

The hybrid line-up starts at \$46,490 for the Forester AWD Hybrid, rising to \$54,990 for the Forester AWD Hybrid Sport, and topping out at \$55,990 for the Forester AWD Hybrid Touring tested here.

Justifying price hikes of up to \$5,000 to some extent is the fact this new model has been re-engineered inside and out, with a significant boost in standard specifications, more features across the range, and an improved hybrid drivetrain.

Headlining the new line-up are the three hybrid variants equipped with Subaru's next-generation e-Boxer hybrid powertrain.

The e-Boxer pairs a 2.5-litre horizontally opposed four-cylinder petrol engine with a 90kW electric motor and a 1.1kW battery system, with drive sent to all four wheels via an updated continuously variable transmission (CVT) and Subaru's mechanically linked all-wheel drive system.

The hybrid drivetrain is around 0.5L/100km more fuel efficient than the previous Forester hybrid, returning combined cycle fuel consumption of 6.2L/100km versus 7.9L/100km for the non-hybrid variants.

The system brings a meaningful increase in power and torque, too, with maximum power of 145kW versus 110kW for the old 2.0-litre mild-hybrid, and 136kW for the non-hybrid.

The electric motor contributes an additional 276Nm to the combustion engine's 212Nm, where the non-hybrid offers 247Nm all up.

Dimensionally, the new Forester is similar in size to its predecessor but it's bolder stylistically, featuring a bluff grille and flared wheel arches which

Mobility

Car Review



create a more athletic look.

Handsome 19-inch alloy wheels, steering responsive LED headlights, roof rails and a rear spoiler add to the attractive package.

Inside, the Forester AWD Hybrid Touring boasts dual-zone climate control, sunroof, heated and electrically adjusted leather seats, a leather-trimmed steering wheel and gear shifter, and a portrait-oriented 11.6-inch infotainment screen.

The screen provides access to satellite-navigation, wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, AM/FM radio, plus a quality Harmon Kardon audio system.

Ahead of the driver in the top-spec variants is a customisable 12.3-inch digital instrument cluster, with large and easy-to-read gauges.

The 484-litre boot is accessed via a powered tailgate, with handy curry hooks on both sides of the luggage bay, a 12-volt accessory plug and quick release levers to fold the rear seats, expanding cargo space

to 1,162 litres. While it's not an off-roader in the true sense, all Foresters come standard with Subaru's Symmetrical All-Wheel Drive, plus X-Mode all-terrain system which provides enhanced grip and stability on slippery surfaces and challenging terrain.

The combination of all-wheel drive traction and 220mm of ground clearance gives the Forester a level of capability that provides peace of mind for anyone needing to traverse rough, unsealed roads and tracks.

What isn't so reassuring is the fact Subaru has ditched the Forester's full-size spare wheel to package the hybrid system.

The car maker does at least offer a solution in the form of a dealer-fit mount on the towbar, but it's not the most elegant solution. Petrol-powered Foresters retain a full-size spare wheel.

Towing capacity is another weak point, with the Forester Hybrid rated at just 1,200kg, where the petrol variants can haul 1,800kg.

Safety is well accounted for,

though, with nine airbags, a 360-degree camera and the latest iteration of Subaru's EyeSight driver assist system which incorporates a host of the latest Advanced Driver Assistance Systems.

Out on the road the electrified powertrain delivers the sort of effortless torque that makes the Forester Hybrid a pleasure to drive. A moderate press of the accelerator achieves a pleasing level of response when tackling an incline or overtaking slower traffic.

Under hard acceleration the CVT gearbox sits the engine in the meat of its torque curve, rather than kicking down like a conventional automatic, creating a droning engine soundtrack which is par for the course for this type of gearbox.

The alternative for drivers who like to get more involved is to control the eight manually selected 'gear' steps via steering-wheel mounted paddles.

That's not such a bad option when hustling the Forester through bends, where its responsive steering and well balanced fully independent suspension really shine.

The suspension does a wonderful job of soaking up road irregularities, too, delivering exceptional ride quality.

A favourite of Aussie families and outdoor adventurers for decades, the new Forester continues the nameplate's reputation for comfort, safety, capability and reliability, even if its pricing is no longer particularly budget-friendly. **GB**

PRICE

\$55,990 (MRLP)

WARRANTY

Five years/unlimited kilometres

POWERTRAIN

2.5-litre horizontally opposed four-cylinder petrol; (121kW/212Nm), electric motor (90kW/276Nm); CVT automatic transmission; all-wheel drive.

ANCAP CRASH RATING

Five stars (2024)

FUEL CONSUMPTION

6.2L/100km, (140g/km CO₂)

FOR

Smooth and refined drivetrain; solid performance; improved fuel consumption; comfortable ride; polished handling; good NVH; all-terrain capability; user-friendly touch screen controls.

AGAINST

No spare tyre (repair kit); reduced towing capacity; price rise over previous model; more expensive and not as fuel efficient as some key rivals.



ADVERTORIAL

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– Jeff, NSW

"Extremely easy to use and all the same hearing benefits as my other pair of \$8000 hearing aids. Diamond Stream looks better as it is very slim fit behind the ear."

– Noelene, NSW

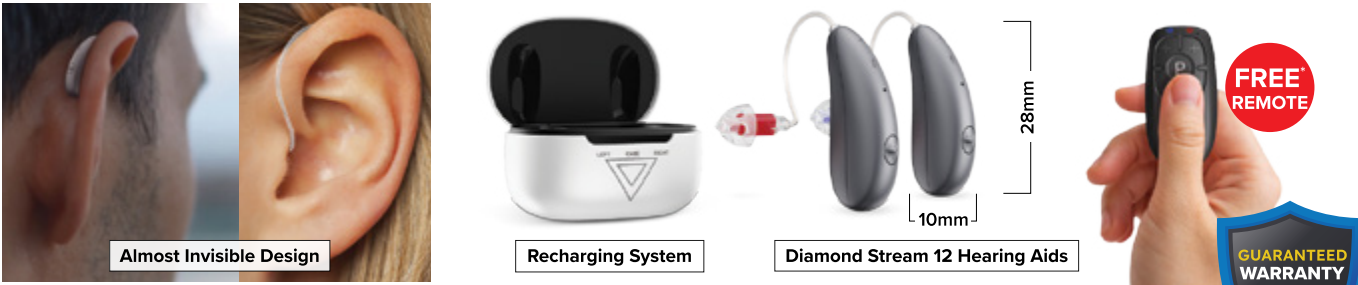
"I've seen your ads for years. I honestly didn't believe it was possible to get this kind of result without a hearing clinic being involved. Received it in days. Now I'm a believer."

– Stephen, VIC

"After trialling a hearing aid from a well known company, I was not prepared to pay from \$6,000 upwards for something that I did not feel satisfied me. The app would not always work and there was a constant static sound coming through the hearing aid. I purchased the Diamond Stream 12 from PocketAid and it has not missed a beat. The remote is perfect for me and simple to set up and the hearing aid has been perfect. Such a difference in price, under \$2000. Thank you."

– Vicki, QLD

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For too long, Australians who needed advanced, top-tier hearing aids were forced to make an unfair choice: pay about \$6,000 per ear for the premium hearing aids they truly needed, or settle for basic, or stripped-back models that couldn't deliver real clarity and lacked these premium features.

Many hearing aid wearers told us they'd dreamed of a simple, comfortable device that just works, with essential premium features like automatic speech enhancement in noisy places, wireless Bluetooth streaming included, and natural crystal-clear sound for comfortable all day use. But at \$6,000 per ear at a hearing clinic, those premium hearing aid options felt out of reach. So they compromised. But now, they don't have to.

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Mobility

Car Review

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GEELY STARRAY EM-I INSPIRE

By Ged Bulmer

Chinese car maker Geely is among the wave of newly arrived brands on the Australian market and has just released its second new model, the Geely Starray EM-i Super Hybrid.

Geely is one of China's automotive heavyweights with a star-studded line-up of brands in its portfolio, including Volvo, Polestar, Lynk & Co, Zeekr, Lotus, Smart, and Proton Cars.

The Starray EM-i is a plug-in hybrid powered medium SUV and is built on the same platform as Geely's only other local model, the battery-electric EX5.

It's available in a simple two-variant line-up, starting at \$37,490 (MRLP) for the entry-level Complete, and rising to \$39,990 (MRLP) for the better-equipped Inspire model.

Key extras that come with the Inspire include larger 19-inch alloy wheels, a panoramic sunroof, ventilated front seats with memory function for the driver's seat, a 16-speaker premium sound system, head-up display, front parking sensors,

wireless phone charger, power tailgate, and 256-colour ambient lighting.

Dubbed E-Motive Intelligence (hence EM-i), the powertrain combines a 1.5-litre naturally aspirated petrol four-cylinder outputting 73kW/125Nm, with a 160kW/262Nm electric motor.

Combined power is 193kW, but Geely does not provide a combined torque figure.

The vehicle can drive on battery power alone, in hybrid mode with drive alternating between the electric motor and petrol engine, or in Power mode with the electric motor and petrol engine working together.

Exterior styling is sophisticated and contemporary looking, with a strong focus on aerodynamic efficiency resulting in a low drag coefficient, which contributes to combined-cycle fuel consumption of just 2.4L/100km.

EV-only range is a useful 83km, and the Starray EM-i boasts a combined range of up to 943km with its battery fully

charged and its 51-litre fuel tank brimmed.

Charging is via either AC (6.6kW) or DC (30kW) outlets and the vehicle features V2L (vehicle-to-load) functionality of up to 6.6kW, so can be used to power electric tools and other appliances.

The cabin is nicely designed and well finished, with a large 15.4-inch touchscreen holding centre stage, complemented by a 10.2-inch digital cluster and a head-up display.

It's also impressively roomy, with excellent head and leg-room and 428 litres of boot space, expanding to 2,065 litres when the rear seats are folded.

Out on the highway, the Starray-EM-i is smooth and quiet. The engine can be heard kicking in when accelerating hard but it's not overly intrusive.

Performance is brisk without being breathtaking, the benchmark 0-100km/h sprint achieved in 8.0-seconds.

The fully independent suspension is deceptively soft and comfortable at low speeds but loses its composure on lumpy, potholed roads. The steering is lifeless, being too lightly weighted and with minimal feel.

In the big scheme of things these are relatively small criticisms and it's impossible to deny that the Starray EM-i represents excellent value for money, given its sharp pricing, spacious interior, generous list of standard features and impressive all-round performance. **GB**

PRICE

\$39,990 (MRLP)

WARRANTY

Seven years, unlimited kilometres vehicle; eight years, unlimited kilometres battery.

POWERTRAIN

1.5-litre naturally aspirated petrol four-cylinder (73kW/125Nm); single electric motor (160kW/262Nm); planetary gear CVT; front-wheel drive; 18.4kWh lithium iron phosphate battery.

ANCAP CRASH RATING

Not tested

FUEL CONSUMPTION

2.4L/100km
(55.68g/km CO₂)

FOR

Attractive exterior and interior design; smooth, quiet and powerful; excellent fuel efficiency and touring range; well priced; good performance.

AGAINST

No spare wheel (run flat or inflator kit); intrusive driver assistance systems; underdone suspension; real-world fuel consumption closer to 6.5L/100km.



NISSAN ARIYA ADVANCE+

By Ged Bulmer

In the music industry 'the difficult second album' refers to the struggle some artists have in following up a successful debut with an equally compelling second record.

Turns out it's a thing in the car industry, too; at least when it comes to Nissan and its electric vehicle program.

Way back in December 2010 Nissan shocked the world becoming the first car maker to launch a mass-market electric vehicle, the Leaf.

Tesla had already dabbled with its low-volume Roadster, but it would be another 18 months before the Model S arrived.

Given its head start, you'd be forgiven for thinking that Nissan might have rushed to fill its development pipeline with an array of new EVs. But you'd be wrong.

In fact, it would take until late 2022 before the Japanese car maker launched a follow-up, in the form of its all-new Ariya crossover.

Fast forward another three years and the Ariya is finally here, in a four-grade line-up comprising Engage, Advance, Advance+, and Evolve e-4ORCE.

The first two feature a smaller 63kWh battery while the Advance+, and Evolve e-4ORCE come equipped with a larger 87kWh battery. Only the top-grade gets dual motors and all-wheel drive, with the rest being front-wheel drive.

The Advance+ we're testing

has the best claimed range, at 504km (WLTP) and is generously equipped.

Pricing starts at \$55,840 (MRLP) for the Engage and rises to \$71,840 (MRLP) for the Evolve e-4ORCE, with the Advance+ lining up at \$63,840 (MRLP).

Like its lower-grade stablemates, the Advance+ is front-wheel drive but gets the larger-capacity battery and a bump in power to 178kW (up from 160kW), and the same 300Nm of torque.

Superior range is the key benefit of the bigger battery, with the Advance+ managing an impressive 504km (WLTP) on a single charge, where 63kWh models manage 385km (WLTP).

Standard features include heated steering wheel, hands-free automatic tailgate, Bose 10-speaker sound system, black synthetic leather with Ultra-suede trim, head-up display, panoramic glass roof, a power sliding centre console, and heated and cooled front seats.

The interior is roomy and tastefully designed, featuring a contemporary twin-12.3-inch digital screen display and capacitive touch icons integrated into timber-effect trim sections.

There's also eye-catching 'Andon' lighting in the lower doors and footwell, designed to emulate a traditional Japanese paper lantern.

The comfortable driving position offers good visibility and

there's plenty of adjustment for the shapely sports seats ahead of a nicely proportioned leather-trimmed steering wheel with sporty flat-bottom design.

Rear-seat accommodation is generous, except for foot-room which is on the tight side, and there are 466 litres of boot space accessed via a hands-free electric tailgate.

Out on the road the Ariya's ride and handling balance is well judged, with all-independent suspension providing impressive isolation from road and wind noise.

Performance is strong, smooth and quiet, although the single motor variants don't have the pin-you-to-the-seat thrust of an equivalent Tesla.

Attractively styled, generously equipped and with competitive range and pricing, the Nissan Ariya Advance+ is a compelling alternative in the small-to-medium electric SUV segment. **66**



PRICE

\$63,840 (MRLP)

WARRANTY

10 years vehicle and battery (if serviced through Nissan's dealer network).

POWERTRAIN

Single electric motor (178kW/300Nm), front-wheel drive; Electric Continuously Variable Transmission (eCVT), 87kWh battery.

ANCAP CRASH RATING

Five stars (2022)

RANGE AND ENERGY CONSUMPTION

504km, 17.2 kWh/100km (WLTP)

FOR

Attractively styled; well finished; good range, generously equipped; 10-year warranty (if serviced with Nissan); strong dealer network support.

AGAINST

No full-size spare (tyre repair kit); expensive compared with some Chinese rivals; can't match the acceleration of key single motor rivals; lack of cabin oddment stowage; slower DC fast charging rate than some rivals.

ISUZU D-MAX X-RIDER 2.2

By Ged Bulmer

The old automotive adage that there's no substitute for cubic capacity still rings true at Isuzu Ute Australia (IUA), which has replaced its entry-level 1.9-litre four-cylinder turbo-diesel engine with a new 2.2-litre unit for both the D-Max Ute and MU-X seven-seat SUV.

Already in showrooms as an MY25.5 update, the new 2.2-litre four-cylinder turbo-diesel engine joins the four-cylinder 3.0-litre unit in Isuzu's local engine line-up, with the shortlived 1.9-litre engine now discontinued.

The new engine, codenamed RZ4F-TC, is EURO5 emissions compliant and develops a more robust 120kW/400Nm versus the outgoing 1.9-litre's 110kW/350Nm.

Buyers wanting to match the new engine with a manual transmission will be disappointed, however, as it is available exclusively with a new eight-speed automatic.

There's also no other styling or features upgrades, with the new engine and gearbox combination available only on SX and X-Rider variants of the D-Max,

and in LS-M, LS-U and LS-T variants of the MU-X.

Standard features of the LS-M-based X-Rider include black and gloss-black exterior accents, unique grille, Bi-LED headlights with high beam control, 17-inch alloys, a sports bar, and soft tonneau cover.

Buyers wanting additional features like push-button start with smart keyless entry, dual-zone climate control, and larger 9.0-inch infotainment screen will need to step up to a 3.0-litre powered LS-U or Blade.

We spent a day driving both the new D-Max and MU-X in the Gold Coast hinterland, covering a mix of tarmac touring and off-road terrain.

Out on the highway the new diesel has the characteristic sound and feel of an Isuzu engine.

It's somewhat unrefined in terms of noise and vibration, something highlighted by the introduction of new fuel-saving stop-start technology, which isn't the smoothest such system we've experienced.

There's some initial lag when you first step on the gas, but the D-Max then moves reasonably assertively, slurring quickly up

through the ratios to find top gear and holding on stoically, requiring a determined press of the throttle to achieve kick-down.

Once up and running at highway speeds revs drop to a lazy 1,650rpm at 100km/h and the X-Rider 2.2 easily maintains a comfortable highway touring speed, with enough in reserve for safe overtaking.

It doesn't have the muscle of the 3.0-litre, however, with lag noticeable when you come off the throttle and reapply, so you need to drive accordingly.

Given the strong skew towards towing among Isuzu owners, the big question for many will likely be, 'can the new engine make a decent fist of it?'

We never had the chance to test the 2.2-litre engine's towing chops, but Isuzu obviously thinks it's up to the job, rating the new 2.2-litre range at 3,500kg braked towing capacity, 500kg more than the old 1.9-litre and equal to variants powered by its four-cylinder 3.0-litre engine.

No doubt the larger engine, with its 140kW/450Nm outputs, will remain the preferred choice of the heavy towing brigade, as it should, but the new 2.2-litre now presents as a slightly more cost-effective alternative for buyers on a budget. **68**



PRICE

\$59,500 (MRLP)

WARRANTY

Six years/150,000km

POWERTRAIN

2.2-litre four-cylinder turbo-diesel (120kW/400Nm); eight-speed automatic transmission; rear- or four-wheel drive; high and low range.

ANCAP CRASH RATING

Five stars (2022)

FUEL CONSUMPTION

7.1L/100km, (188g/km CO₂)

FOR

Isuzu's strong reputation for durability and reliability; excellent off-road performance; decent fuel efficiency; comprehensive safety kit; less expensive than 3.0-litre variant.

AGAINST

More expensive and less power than key rivals; diesel lacks refinement compared with best in class; ageing dash design.

TAILGATING

This summer, with many Queenslanders hitting the road to explore our wonderful State, or visit friends and family, RACQ is reminding drivers about the requirements for keeping a safe following distance. For more information about the Queensland road rules please contact the Department of Transport and Main Roads at tmr.qld.gov.au or 13 23 80.

Tailgating is the No.1 'pet peeve' for Queensland drivers, according to RACQ surveys. It lowers your margin for error and increases the risk of a crash. It is also viewed as aggressive driving behaviour by many people.

Queensland Road Rules state that a driver must drive a sufficient distance behind a vehicle travelling in front of them, so that the driver can, if necessary, stop safely to avoid a collision with the vehicle.

There is no minimum distance specified in this rule. RACQ's recommended minimum following distance is at least two

seconds in good conditions and at least double that in rain or other adverse conditions.

A minimum following distance is specified for drivers of 'long vehicles' – which are defined as a vehicle (along with any load or projection) that is 7.5m or longer.

These minimum distances apply when the driver is travelling behind another long vehicle and are 200m for a road train, and 60m in other situations.

The minimum distances for long vehicles do not apply if the driver is driving on:

- a multi-lane road;
- a length of road in a built-up area; or
- overtaking.

While penalties for these offences include one demerit point and a \$389 fine, rather than just avoiding a ticket, RACQ encourages all motorists to avoid tailgating to help create a less-stressful road environment with fewer crashes and delays.

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