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Andrew Moore, Sarah Pearson

MANAGING DIRECTOR, GROUP CEO

David Carter

THE ROAD AHEAD

MANAGING EDITOR

Ray Andersen

MOTORING EDITOR

Ged Bulmer

roadahead@racq.com.au

TRAadvertising@racq.com.au

PO Box 4, Springwood,
Queensland 4127

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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.



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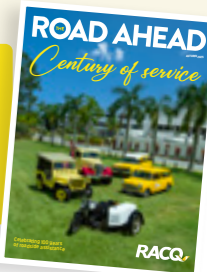
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COVER PHOTO:
Former roadside patrol vehicles from RACQ's historic fleet. Story pages 14-15.
Photo Jake Ryan.



BRISBANE METRO SERVICE EN ROUTE FOR EXPANSION

BRISBANE CITY COUNCIL officially launched its first Metro service earlier this year, the electric M2 running from the University of Queensland to the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital every five minutes during peak times.

The services have been welcomed by RACQ as a transformative investment to combat congestion as South East Queensland (SEQ) continues to experience rapid population growth.

The Club is now advocating for and supporting discussions to expand Brisbane Metro services into more areas across SEQ.

Managing Director and Group CEO David Carter said RACQ was particularly keen to see smarter use of existing transport infrastructure for future services.

"The Metro's high frequency and ability to carry large volumes of commuters will start to ease congestion across Brisbane and this is something we strongly support," Mr Carter said.

"Expanding the network by using existing infrastructure means new routes will be quicker to establish and more cost-effective. This is what we want to see in the leadup to the 2032 Games and beyond.

"The launch of Brisbane Metro services must be the starter's gun on SEQ's transport transformation.

"Without a strategic and effective transport management plan, any increase in housing density will only result in negative outcomes for the region's liveability."



Property Assessor Pip Marsden, left, and Chief Executive Insurance Trent Sayers visiting flood-affected Townsville member Nicola De Jongh.

RACQ SUPPORTS FLOOD-HIT NORTH QUEENSLAND

RACQ WAS ON the ground providing important support for members after widespread flooding inundated North Queensland in early February.

As at 10am on 14 February, RACQ had received 733 insurance claims from the significant weather event and continues to prioritise helping those affected.

In the days following the weather event, RACQ deployed its Mobile Member Centre to Townsville and Ingham, and scaled up resources on the phones and on the ground to support members.

Since then, the Club has shifted its focus to helping members and the wider community recover, repair and rebuild.

RACQ Chief Executive Insurance Trent Sayers visited the region and reassured members of the Club's support.

"This disaster has taken a significant emotional toll on our members and communities, and we will support them through this difficult time as they start to rebuild their homes," Mr Sayers said.

"Our team of assessors and builders remain in the region processing claims, evaluating damage and carrying out repairs as quickly as possible.

"We want to assure North Queenslanders we are here for them and will continue to be as the community recovers."

RAY'S NOTE

IF YOU'RE CONSIDERING a road trip this year, North Queensland is a worthwhile option.

With its stunning landscapes, charming towns and rich culture, it's the perfect destination for anyone looking to explore more of our State.

To encourage more Queenslanders to hit the road and discover everything our great State has to offer, *The Road Ahead* is running a series on Queensland road trips in partnership with Tourism and Events Queensland.

We're kicking off with compelling reasons to visit the outback; check out page 20 for a list of some unusual

upcoming events and page 19 for how you can win one of three outback holiday prizes.

In future editions, we'll delve deeper into the Pacific Coast Way, the coastal route that stretches from the Gold Coast to Cairns, showcasing the diversity of Queensland's attractions and natural beauty.

A highlight of the Pacific Coast Way is its northern section, which passes through Ingham and Cardwell.

Unfortunately, both towns were among the many communities severely affected by flooding in February.

The road to recovery will be long, but once the cleanup is complete and these communities are ready to welcome

visitors again, they will need your support.

Consider making a stop in quintessential country towns like Ingham or Cardwell when road-tripping through North Queensland.

Whether it's enjoying the local food, exploring nearby natural attractions, or simply stopping for a coffee and chatting with the locals, your visit will mean a lot to these resilient communities as they recover from the impact of the floods.

RAY ANDERSEN
MANAGING EDITOR



Viewpoint



THE PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

2025 is a momentous year for RACQ as we celebrate the 100-year anniversary of our roadside assistance business.

WHILE MUCH HAS changed over the years, our focus has remained steadfast – to help motorists get back on the road safely and quickly.

From two mechanics patrolling Brisbane roads on motorcycles in 1925 to a fleet of patrols in the modern era servicing cars, bikes, e-scooters and RVs, RACQ has always served Queenslanders no matter how they travel on our roads in one of the most decentralised states in the country.

When the then Automobile Club of Queensland (ACQ) launched roadside assistance patrols, it provided a limited offering to motorists on Sundays.

As time and technology changed, that limited offering evolved exponentially. RACQ now has the State's largest roadside assistance network with more than 500 patrols providing 24/7 support to members from Cape York to the New South Wales border.

In FY24, the RACQ Roadside Assistance fleet responded to 740,300 calls for help across the State, helping 91% of drivers get back on the road with an average response time of 35 minutes.

A core part of the Club's longevity is our people and their dedication to serving our members, particularly our external service providers who have built longstanding connections in remote Queensland communities.

While we will always remain grounded in our legacy, we will continue to evolve to provide members with mobility solutions to help them move and live safely, securely and sustainably.

We are working to upskill our patrols to service a growing number of electric vehicles on our roads and increasing our presence of RACQ Auto stores to provide essential car services for members.

We want to ensure no Queenslanders are left behind in the transition to more sustainable modes of transportation and for us, that means partnering with organisations like Evie Networks to provide members with discounts at 60 EV fast-charging stations across Queensland and northern New South Wales.

You can learn more about the history of our roadside assistance business in our special feature on page 12.

In the same way we continue to evolve our assistance offering, we have changed the way we support Queenslanders with their insurance needs, announcing a new strategic partnership with IAG in November last year.

The new partnership brings together two organisations deeply aligned to building more resilient and safer communities and supporting affordable and accessible insurance for all Queenslanders, now and into the future.

You can read more about what this new partnership means for you on page 10.

As our businesses continue to change so does our board.

With the upcoming retirement of two directors, in early January we started the recruitment for two independent non-executive directors to join the RACQ Limited board this year.

Applications have closed and I will keep you updated as we progress.

As we celebrate our 100 years of roadside assistance, I would like to thank you, our members, who have supported us on our journey so far.

LEONA MURPHY
RACQ PRESIDENT



Photo Dave Pattinson.

YOUR SAY GIVING MEMBERS A VOICE



MEMORIES OF A TRIP TO 'THE TIP'

I was fascinated by Mark Daffey's description of his trip to the tip of Cape York (Summer TRA). My friend and I made the same trip in November 1958 in a long-wheelbase Land Rover. The only 'road' was the maintenance trail along the overland telegraph track, and I believe we were only the second vehicle to make it that year. To cross the Jardine River, we had to lay down strips of metal mesh on its sandy bottom, drive forward 20-30m, go back, pick up the mesh, re-lay it in front and drive forward. As Mark said: "The effort of getting to the northern tip of Australia is an adventure that comes with a sense of accomplishment." Thank you, Mark.

PETER RICHARDSON, CHAPEL HILL

TOO MANY SLOW DRIVERS

I have now lived in Queensland for three years after moving from New South Wales. I have noticed during that time that there is no signage on highways to remind motorists that they are required to stay in the left lane unless overtaking. I'm aware that this is the law in both Queensland and NSW. NSW has signage on all freeways/highways reminding motorists of this law. I'm constantly frustrated when driving from Brisbane to the Gold Coast or Sunshine Coast by cars in all four lanes sitting 5-10km/h below the speed limit. This is such an inefficient use of four lanes.

GRAHAM HEMMINGS, NEWSTEAD

OUR SAY: *In Queensland, if the posted speed limit is 90km/h or more on a multi-lane road, or if the road has a 'keep left unless overtaking' sign, you must not drive in the right-hand lane unless you are overtaking, turning right, making a U-turn, avoiding an obstruction, driving in congested traffic or using a special purpose lane that you are allowed to be in.*



OLDER DRIVERS 'WELL-TAUGHT'

I couldn't agree more with John Stille's opinions (Summer TRA). We older drivers, who have so many years of driving experience, seem more conscious and respectful of road rules and road users than any generation after us. Maybe it's a generational thing, but when we were going for our licences back in the '60s and '70s, we were not only well-taught regarding the handling of the vehicle, but we were also instructed to consider others. I often wonder how stringent the driving lessons and tests are today. Is it too easy to acquire a driver licence? Are learner drivers taught how to navigate roundabouts, how to merge into traffic, understand signs, and to use indicators? It also amazes me when an incident is described as 'the vehicle failed to take a turn.' The vehicle is not to blame for failing to take a turn; the driver behind the wheel is. My reason for writing is because of the sad and sobering statistics which state that a huge percentage of road deaths are innocent people.

JULIE BERRY, MURGON

SIGNAGE SHAMBLES

Shame on you Queensland. My husband and I love to travel in our caravan and we've been to every state and territory many times – from the top to the farthest point south, and from the west to east coasts over many years. Queensland would be the worst state for signage. Many rural roadside signs are either worn out or the print is peeling off. You cannot read the names of upcoming towns, signs are blocked by overgrown foliage, many are vandalised and beaten up with sharp objects, some have been used for

target practice, and some are hanging upside down after the top fastener has broken. I feel great shame that international and interstate travellers see this also; I find it embarrassing. Why are these signs so neglected?

JENNIFER MCGOWAN, MURRUMBA DOWNS



DINGOES NOT THE PROBLEM

I was flabbergasted when I read a comment in *The Road Ahead Summer* edition by a gentleman suggesting all dingoes be removed from K'gari (Fraser Island). Up until recently, we holidayed at Poyungan Rocks for 12 years running and never had an issue with a dingo. Yes, we saw them, and some would hang around the boys when fishing, but never did we feed them, interact with them in any way or make eye contact with them. Also, as much as we loved it there, we did not bring our grandchildren to the island. The reason being our area was not dingo fenced, and a relaxing holiday is not keeping a constant eye on them and at arm's reach. Not everywhere is suitable for children. We always carried a dingo stick when walking but never had to use it. Tourism is taking its toll on the island. For example, our photos of Ely Creek show the destruction of the foliage along the banks over that time from tourists doing the wrong thing. The dingoes should stay and the tourists should think twice to see if this holiday destination is really the right one for them.

LORRAINE SMIT, NORTH ARM

ISLAND FENCING SUGGESTION

I was appalled to read 'Call to remove dingoes' (Summer TRA). Although the writer's point "while the balance could go to a new dingo centre to be established on the island" is worthy of note. However, K'Gari is the dingoes' native habitat and should remain as such with the local Butchulla people as the Traditional Custodians. As pointed out by the writer and my expansion, surely for the dingoes' and tourists' safety, it would be wise to restrict a large area solely for the dingoes to roam naturally in a secure, fenced-off part of the island. Authorised Indigenous

rangers would be the only people to enter this area to monitor them and take tourists on safe, organised tours. Unfortunately, the rise in dingo attacks has been triggered by inconsiderate, selfish and ignorant visitors who feed them, leave fish burly behind and get up-close selfies. We must protect this unique, pure genus pool of dingoes for the future, or they will suffer the fate of far too many Australian fauna species who, since white settlement, have been lost forever. Australia has a poor record of biodiversity decline with more than 100 species formally recognised as extinct. Surely we don't want to add to this appalling record.

GALE WARD, WARWICK



WET WEATHER ISSUE

We recently completed a small road trip along the east coast through New South Wales and South East Queensland, an area we know like the back of our hand but hadn't travelled for three years. Between the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast we struck atrociously bad weather. Travelling 10km/h below the speed limit, as recommended in the wet, we found there were two types of drivers. Many stayed in our rear-view mirror driving to the conditions. However, travelling in the middle lane for several 110km/h sections, we had P-platers, monster utes and trucks flying past on both sides well over the limit. The problem? Their spray completely blinded us so that all we could watch were the dotted lines of the lanes. What will it take for drivers to learn that it is not the roads but their attitude that needs fixing?

CHRIS DARCEY, SUNSHINE COAST

SPEEDING E-SCOOTERS

Driving on a main road on the Sunshine Coast with the flow of traffic at 50km/h, I was startled when two children on electric scooters went past me. Is there an age requirement for riding electric scooters and bikes? If not, there should be. And if these vehicles are going to be on the road, and they are, riders should require a licence. Many of these riders are a danger to themselves and others. There have already been scores of

injuries, and unless authorities step in, there will be many more injuries and even deaths.

STAN HUNT, TEWANTIN

OUR SAY: *In Queensland you must be either at least 16 years or at least 12 years and supervised by an adult to ride an e-scooter. Children under 12 years of age must not ride e-scooters. Visit qld.gov.au/transport/safety/rules/wheeled-devices/personal-mobility-devices for more rules on personal mobility devices.*



MEMBER'S LINK TO EX-EMPLOYEE

I note this year is the 120th anniversary of RACQ operations and thought my photo of a group of service providers might be of interest. My uncle, Harry Hall, is standing second from the left in the back row. I am not certain about the date but guess it might have been around 1935. There may be members that know who the other gentlemen in the photo are. I don't have the original photo, only a paper copy that was given to me by an aunt years ago. I am 91 years old, so would be proud to see this published in *The Road Ahead*.

VINCE CHALLENGOR, HERVEY BAY

SCHOOL ZONES CATCH UNWARY

Until I saw your diagrams (Summer TRA) I had no idea there were four different signs regarding speeds in school zones. I have at times struggled with only one I knew (40km/h from 7-9am, 2-4pm). It is all right if you are in suburbs that you know and are aware that you are approaching a school, but driving in unfamiliar territory poses a much greater risk of unwittingly committing an offence. The 7am-4pm sign is an absolute trap for the unwary and I do wonder if there is an element of revenue raising involved with this confusing and inconsistent signage. The nearest to fairness is the sign with the warning light, so why cannot all the signs have a warning light?

DELROY OBERG, BOONDALL

OUR SAY: *It is worth noting that the standardised school zone speed limit times of 7am-9am and 2pm-4pm, and 7am-4pm were introduced in Queensland in 2012. Some regional councils have slightly different school zone times.*



CARS TOO CLOSE IN FRONT

We are all familiar with overtaking vehicles pulling in much too close in front of us. While this appears thoughtless or rude and is the cause of many a muttered curse, it more often results from the illusion of objects in side-mirrors appearing to be farther away (smaller) than they are. Vehicle manufacturers routinely install convex side mirrors to widen the field of view and decrease the blind spot. If drivers were alerted to this effect and got farther ahead before they pulled in, we might all be happier and our roads safer. A quick head check will also reveal the true distance.

JOHN ELLIOTT, NUNDAH

PAY ATTENTION AT PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS

A pedestrian crossing is the safest way to cross the road if you have the attention of the motorist who is approaching. However, when a pedestrian, with their heads buried in the screen of a phone, or bicycle or scooter rider going flat out on a footpath, suddenly make a left or right turn to come onto the crossing at speed, the motorist must brake hard to avoid putting these people in hospital. I thought the rules for using a pedestrian crossing meant riders had to dismount from their bike or scooter before crossing? This gives the driver time to stop and allows for the person to proceed across the road safely.

W. MITCHELL, SANDSTONE POINT

OUR SAY: *Queensland road rules require bicycle and scooter riders to come to a complete stop before riding across a zebra crossing, but they do not have to dismount. Once they have stopped, they can proceed slowly, giving way to other pedestrians on the crossing and keeping to the left of any oncoming riders.*

'FIX THE BRUCE' A WIN FOR QUEENSLANDERS

BY TRISTAN VORIAS



Government funding commitments to make the Bruce Highway safer followed a long-running advocacy campaign.

Fixing the dangerous Bruce Highway has been on RACQ's advocacy agenda for more than a decade.

It's a national highway, yet it is substandard and dangerous with an average of 35 people killed in crashes on the Bruce each year and more than 400 seriously injured.

Making matters worse, at the beginning of 2024, the Federal Government wound

back its commitment to fund 80% of new regional infrastructure to just 50%, potentially delaying critical upgrades. This sparked RACQ's 'Fix the Bruce' campaign.

To kickstart the Club's advocacy, members were surveyed to determine their top transport priorities and 85% agreed that fixing the Bruce Highway topped the list.

RACQ's campaign to 'Fix the Bruce' was supported by leading organisations including

the Qld Farmers Federation, Qld Trucking Association, Local Government Association of Qld, Royal Australasian College of Surgeons Qld, and Qld Tourism Industry Council.

RACQ Managing Director and Group CEO David Carter said these organisations, united in a common purpose, called on the Federal Government to commit to a long-term funding plan and pay for 80% of future upgrades on the Bruce.

"Our advocacy team held countless meetings with politicians, hosted media events and undertook extensive research to build a case for change," Mr Carter said.

"We made sure our campaign was strong, and evidence-based.

"In January 2025, the Federal Government answered Queensland's calls to Fix the Bruce, committing to fund 80% of future upgrades to ensure all sections of the Bruce achieve a minimum of three out of five stars for safety. The State Government committed to funding 20% of the total package worth \$9 billion.

"When New South Wales and Victoria had their major national highways fixed, the Federal Government covered at least 80% of the funding needed; now it's the Bruce's turn for serious funding. This is a big win for Queenslanders.

"I'd like to personally thank the hard work of our Advocacy team, led by General Manager Joshua Cooney, as well as all the highly respected Queensland organisations that joined our calls for a safer Bruce Highway. We acknowledge that many members of local communities in regional

Queensland were also vocal about the need for investment. That just reinforced to us how important fixing the Bruce is to Queensland."

To understand what upgrading the highway to three stars for safety means, you have to understand the AusRAP Star Rating system.

The system produces a star safety rating for each road section by assessing more than 60 different road attributes, including lane and shoulder widths, road surface, sign and line-marking condition and quality, speed limits, traffic volumes, overtaking lanes and the safety of roadsides and intersections.

RACQ's Traffic and Safety Engineering Manager Gregory Miskowycz said depending on the design and quality, these attributes could increase or decrease the chances of a crash occurring on a road, and a crash's severity.

"Under the AusRAP system, significant lengths of the Bruce Highway are rated at just two out of five stars for road infrastructure safety," Mr Miskowycz said.

"Many of these sections featured narrow lanes and bridges, high speed limits, poor road surfaces, dangerous roadsides and little to no overtaking lanes, increasing the chances of a crash and its severity."

Mr Miskowycz said RACQ would now

continue its work on the Bruce Highway Advisory Council to ensure upgrades are prioritised along the highest risk areas.

"Upgrading these roads to three stars or above could mean the widening of lanes and shoulders, removing roadside hazards, installing safety barriers or widening centre lines to separate oncoming traffic, and adding overtaking lanes," he said.

"As a general rule of thumb, for every increase in star rating, it is estimated that the cost of fatal and serious injury crashes will be reduced by approximately 50%."

Mr Carter thanked RACQ members for their support.

"It's through your membership that we are able to advocate on issues that are important to Queenslanders, and this is a great example of that work," Mr Carter said.

"We also acknowledge the former and current State Governments' commitment and efforts to fight for increased funding for the Bruce and detailed project planning done to date."

For more information about RACQ's campaign visit fixthebruce.com.au.

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SCAN QR TO BOOK

NEW ERA
FOR RACQ
INSURANCE

BY DAVID CARTER
MANAGING DIRECTOR AND GROUP CEO



IAG Managing Director and CEO Nick Hawkins, left, and David Carter at the insurance partnership announcement. Photo Jake Ryan.

It has been a significant few months for your Club, with the announcement of our new strategic partnership with IAG, one of Australia’s leading general insurers.

Our partnership with IAG marks the start of a new era for how RACQ supports Queenslanders with their insurance needs.

Our commitment to supporting Queenslanders with their insurance needs now and into the future remains unchanged, and partnering with IAG gives us greater confidence that RACQ Insurance will continue offering competitive home insurance in Queensland.

As mentioned in my message to you in November, we are excited about the benefits this partnership will deliver to our members, insurance policyholders, employees, and our organisation. For our policyholders, it means access to a wider range of products and leading digital capabilities, and for our people new career and development opportunities.

Like us, IAG is a purpose-led organisation with proven experience working with other motoring clubs. Most importantly, IAG shares our commitment to building more resilient and safer communities and in light of weather events around the world and closer to home in more recent years, this commitment has never been more important.

Members will also benefit from IAG’s ability to manage the increasing volatility of extreme weather, both operationally and financially. They are a national team, with a national supply chain which can be scaled up during severe natural disasters.

At the same time, their size and diversification positions them strongly in the reinsurance market (which provides insurance for insurers), at a time when the outlook both globally and here in

Queensland is under pressure as a result of worsening natural disasters.

While the partnership is still subject to regulatory approval, work is well underway to ensure a smooth transition for our members.

We have established a dedicated transformation team, specifically charged with ensuring the long-term success of the partnership. Pending the relevant approvals, we are working towards a mid-year completion date and will continue to keep all our members updated.

On completion, RACQ will still provide insurance through our stores, online and call centres and IAG will be responsible for products, pricing and claims management.

I acknowledge this is a big change and you may have ongoing questions. I encourage you to visit our dedicated partnerships page (racq.com/insurance/iag-partnership), or to speak to one of our team members in our stores or via our contact centre.

Thank you for your patience as we work through this process, and for your continued support of our Club.

ADVERTORIAL

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"I started with a pair of Jaspa 3 BTE aids and just moved up to the Jaspa 3 Dura rechargeable. I wear them in both ears all day, very comfortable. My family are very happy with not having to repeat everything. I'm happy because I can join in conversations now." – Gary, NSW

"I already had the Jaspa 3 BTE hearing aid which has been life changing for me so I had no hesitation in up grading to the Jaspa 3 Dura when it became available. It has the same excellent quality of the previous model and I strongly recommend it." – Roy, ACT

"Jaspa 3 is the third hearing aid I've had since I commenced using them six years ago. They are by far the best value for money you can buy, in my experience. Each ear can be adjusted individually for surround needs and the 10 levels of volume will cover all requirements. This versatility is a delight. Once you can accustom yourself to the manual operation it is just a dream. Sounds and voices I have not heard for some time are available now. Congratulations to Jaspa 3 for developing this product." – Morton, NSW

"Very discreet and as good for my hearing as my \$6500 pair. They don't give off noises in windy conditions and are much easier to wear." – Stephen, ACT

"My Jaspa 3 hearing aids are better than the \$13,000 ones I had before. It is wonderful to be able to select an appropriate program myself, not needing to visit an Audiologist to do it." – Cornelis, VIC

"Way ahead of my first 8K\$ units, easy to use, recharging system brilliant, have to retrain wife to stop shouting at me! Makes driving safer, easier to join in family activities. Brilliant!" – Trevor, NSW

"I am most impressed with Jasper 3. I was given hearing aids when Covid had just started, they were hopeless, useless and sat in the draw. As hearing aids are so expensive I kept putting it off. Friend told me of Jasper 3. So happy with it, don't get all the background noise in dining room particularly, such as scraping plates and the noise of cutlery on plates. Also able to run down volume on television substantially. Thanks so much, Rosemary." – Rosemary, QLD

"I was not happy with the sound quality of 2 different hearing aids I had purchased from a well-known company. I intended to try a different company, when I read your advertisement, and the comments from users. I decided that the price was affordable so rang the next morning. I am happy with the sound and the operation of my hearing aid, the hearing aid is more comfortable than the others I'd used and my family will tell you I can hear better with this one! Thank you!" – Mary, NSW

"Having not been happy with my government-supplied devices, I purchased 2 of the Jaspa-3-Duras. Could not believe the difference in hearing quality, and all in a rechargeable unit. Left with nothing to pay after claiming with my health fund. Thank you." – Sue, QLD

"They are wonderful. So much better than my expensive ones that fell out of my ears and got lost. I'm about to recommend them to a friend of mine. Thank you." – Lynette, NSW

"As a user, until now, of the free Government supplied hearing aids and of having put up with them for four years there is just no comparison, yours leave them for dead." – Peter, WA

Until now, many pensioners and part-pensioners who have received subsidised hearing aids through an audiology clinic have had nowhere to turn when they were not happy with their devices, with regulations restricting their access to hearing aids to one set every 5 years, and with the subsidy only allowing for coverage of the most basic entry-level devices. Given the enormous expense of in-clinic hearing aids, many people have had nowhere to turn to access quality hearing aids on their own terms.

New ready-to-use hearing aid technology from PocketAid, priced at just 10% of the cost of typical in-clinic hearing aids, is changing that.

"We utilised insights from over 1000 experienced hearing aid wearers from Australia, who had been using hearing aids for many years, to build a new range of ready-to-use hearing aids, that work straight out-of-the-box, and do not even require a hearing test for use. Many of our customers now say these hearing aids perform just as well as, and often better than, the aids they had previously spent thousands of dollars on. Our customers have also been able to overcome many of the challenges they faced with their previous devices.

Many of our customers have solved comfort and sound quality issues, like tinniness and echo, with our new rechargeable behind-the-ear hearing aid. Others, who have always worn behind-the-ear devices, but wanted to try an in-the-ear style, are now doing exceptionally well after switching to our completely-in-canal (CIC) style. Many pensioners with existing hearing aids are so pleased to now have two sets of hearing aids, rather than being reliant on one pair, similar

to owning multiple pairs of glasses. The benefits have been endless and an incredible resolution for many frustrated hearing aid wearers."

Additional features such as automatic noise reduction and automatic speech enhancement technology are included in all of the devices, meaning the PocketAid range of hearing aids are designed to perform well in difficult listening environments, such as in a restaurant and in noisier social settings.

Customers can choose from three different options seen below. If you'd like the hearing aid to be discreetly hidden behind the ear, choose from either the Jaspa 3 Dura Rechargeable (recharging system included), or the Jaspa 3 BTE (takes a standard size 312 hearing aid battery, 2 months supply included). If you'd instead like the hearing aid to be discreetly hidden inside the ear canal, you can choose the Spot Mini 6 (takes a standard size 10 hearing aid battery, 2 months supply included).

All devices are suitable for hearing loss levels ranging from mild to severe, are ready to use straight-out-of-the-box, and give users access to various settings and volume levels via a simple on-board push button. No digital apps or programming are required. Prices range from just \$429 to \$595 per aid.

All PocketAid orders come with a 30-day money back guarantee, and free delivery Australia wide. No hearing tests or appointments are required to use the devices. The hearing aids can be purchased at www.PocketAid.com.au or call 1300 903 355 to order over the phone.

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A Pair for \$1,049

Jaspa 3 BTE

20mm

1 for \$429
A Pair for \$799

Hidden In-the-Ear

Spot Mini 6

13mm

1 for \$565
A Pair for \$965

Always read the label. Follow the directions for use.

HEALTH FUND REBATES NOW AVAILABLE

Those with eligible health fund extras cover often have no out-of-pocket costs when purchasing 2 x hearing aids, as health fund cover averages between \$600 and \$1,200 rebate.*

Simply phone 1300 903 355 or email info@PocketAid.com.au to start the claiming process.

*Check your own health fund cover to determine your eligibility and level of cover for hearing aids.

RACQ'S 100-YEAR LEGACY

BY GLENN TOMS
DEPUTY GROUP CEO

A lot has changed in RACQ's 100 years of providing roadside assistance, but our ethos has remained the same – helping Queenslanders in their time of need.

We've turned bad days into good ones by continually showing up for our members when they need us most, and it's our people who have kept this spirit and legacy alive.

When I reflect on my 35 years working for RACQ and what this milestone means to me, I'm filled with a sense of pride.

I'm proud to be part of the history of such a well-known and trusted Queensland brand, which has never forgotten its foundation or lost sight of its purpose.

Since 1925, we've witnessed the evolution of transport from horse and cart to motor vehicles to e-mobility. We've faced natural disasters, a pandemic and seen incredible advancements in technology.

Yet, through it all, RACQ has never stopped serving Queenslanders in their times of need, irrespective of where they are or when they need us.

Today, we continue this important role for our more than 1.2 million roadside assistance members with a fleet of over 500 roadside patrols and external service providers operating across the State.

While our purpose has never changed, the capability and skillsets of our people have evolved alongside a century worth of vehicle evolution.

Whether it's upskilling our patrols to understand diagnostic equipment in modern vehicles or utilising the latest technology in our call centre, we've continuously improved our service to better support our members and the changing ways they travel.

In recent years, we've reimaged our roadside offering to include auto glass services and provide breakdown

assistance for electric vehicles, caravans, large SUVs, e-bikes, motorhomes and personal mobility devices.

Looking ahead, our biggest challenge is adapting to future modes of transportation. However, we see this as an opportunity to lead the charge and be electric vehicle and e-mobility experts.

As we start our second century of roadside assistance, RACQ has never been in a better position to meet the expectations of members thanks to our highly-trained staff and access to world-leading technology.

If there is one thing we can learn from our past, it's that whatever challenges our Club has faced, we've never let our members down.

It's thanks to our past and present members that we exist and it's thanks to our people that we have been able to serve Queenslanders for 100 years.

While I can't predict the future, I know your Club is in good hands, and we are ready to continue our evolution to support you for the next century and beyond.



JIM'S 45-YEAR JOURNEY WITH RACQ FLEET

BY JIM BUTLER
HISTORIC FLEET COORDINATOR



Historic vehicles track evolution of roadside service

When I started with RACQ as a 15-year-old apprentice mechanic in January 1980, never in my wildest dreams would I have imagined that 45 years down the track I would be working on some of the same makes and models of vehicles that I did back then.

But as the Historic Fleet Coordinator, that's exactly what I do.

No two days are the same, as the needs of the fleet's senior citizens vary greatly; I could be simply preparing a vehicle for a show or exhibition, fabricating a much-needed part that hasn't been available for decades, or searching for a suitable addition to our historic fleet.

I have spent 35 of my 45 years with the Club in the Fleet Vehicle Centre.

Over that time, I have seen major changes in the types of vehicles and equipment used by patrols.

When I started, there was still a significant percentage of four-wheel drives among the fleet.

As time went by, more and more sealed roads and fewer dirt tracks meant patrols

had to attend fewer 'bog recoveries,' and so the need for four-wheel drives diminished.

Before patrols carried batteries, smaller panel-van vehicles like the Ford Escort and Mazda 323 sufficed.

There was then a shift to style-side utes with fibreglass canopies. This allowed the concept of patrols carrying batteries to be trialled. Now, cab-chassis utes with service bodies are used.

The equipment used by patrols has changed a lot, too. To inflate a tyre, patrols once used hand or foot pumps.

When I started, patrol vehicles carried high-pressure cylinders filled with carbon dioxide and, later, on-board 12-volt compressors.

Now, most patrols use cordless mobile tyre inflators that can be taken to the member's vehicle, regardless of location.

Wheel braces have also been replaced by air, and then battery-operated impact guns.

For diagnostic purposes, patrols had nothing more than a test light, test condenser, and test spark plug.

Then, as vehicles became equipped with electronic ignition and engine management systems, patrols were issued with Fluke digital multimeters.

Patrols now have an arsenal of diagnostic equipment, including battery testers and scan tools.

After viewing road service over a long period of time, it is very clear that the Club has adapted in all areas to meet the needs of its members as they change.

Every vehicle in the historic fleet, as different as each of them is, were what was needed to meet the needs of the member at that time.

Jim is the longest-serving employee currently working with RACQ.



HISTORIC MODELS ON SHOW

Photos Jake Ryan.

Learn about some of the former roadside patrol vehicles that are now part of RACQ's historic fleet.

To mark the occasion of 100 years of RACQ Roadside Assistance, *The Road Ahead* features five significant vehicles from our historic fleet on our cover.

The sixth vehicle, positioned at the back in the above photo taken in front of RACQ's Eight Mile Plains headquarters, is the current patrol, an Isuzu D-Max ute.

Organising the photograph was no easy task, as two vehicles – the Jeep and AJS motorcycle – had to be taken from the foyer of the Eight Mile Plains building where they were on display.

They were carefully removed early on the morning of the photo shoot and, like the other vehicles in the photo, had their 'hair and makeup' done by way of a thorough cleaning, to ensure they were in top shape for the photo shoot.



The result was a photo that captures some of the significant former roadside assistance models, representing the 14 patrol vehicles in the historic fleet.

Below is some background on the vehicles in the photo, with one of the original roadside patrols, a 1937 AJS motorcycle, leading the way.

1937 AJS MOTORCYCLE WITH SIDE BOX

This AJS (Arthur John Stevens) motorcycle-sidecar combination was used by the RACQ Road Service in the late 1930s. Only three of the British-made twin-cylinder, 1000cc machines were sold in Queensland – two to the Queensland police and the other to RACQ. The AJS was repurchased by RACQ in a semi-restored condition but missing its sidecar. A sidecar of the correct type, but in a very sorry state, was found in a secondhand shop outside Ipswich. It was restored and mounted to the AJS. The AJS was originally ridden by Wally Henderson (Patrol No. 3) in the late 1930s and '40s.



1944 FORD JEEP

RACQ operated a fleet of the ex-World War II, left-hand-drive Jeeps for roadside assistance in the late 1940s and early 1950s. This vehicle – a Ford GPW Jeep (manufactured 20 September 1944) – was purchased from the military after the war by the RACQ Service Depot in Cooroy. It was used for general breakdown assistance until well into the 1950s. The Jeep was then taken off-road 'temporarily' for a respray. Time passed and it remained on the blocks (neglected in a corner of the workshop) for 30 years. In 1988, RACQ purchased the dilapidated, yet original, vehicle from the Cooroy Depot. It took 12 months to complete the restoration with the final finishing touch being the long-awaited respray.



1938 ML CHEVROLET TOW TRUCK

This Chevrolet truck was located on a farm owned by Russell and Doreen Spies at Maclagan, near Oakey, in May 2014. It is an example of a similar vehicle owned and operated by RACQ in the late 1930s and 1940s fitted out as a tow truck. The hand mechanical winch and crane were located on a farm outside of Mitchell. The unit was original and used by the RACQ contractor from Charleville.



1964 EH HOLDEN PANEL VAN

Released in August 1963, the EH Holden is an Australian icon. The EH Panel van was quick to find a place among government service fleets and with several RACQ service contractors, and was a popular choice for tradies. A Trax Model of the EH Holden panel van was created to celebrate RACQ's Centenary Celebrations in 2005.

LEARN MORE

YOU CAN FIND out more about RACQ's celebration of 100 years of roadside assistance by visiting racq.com/roadside-100.



1965 MORRIS MINI PANEL VAN

The Morris Mini Panel Van was introduced into the RACQ fleet in 1965. Vehicles like this saw service in the 1974 Brisbane floods. They were discontinued from the fleet in 1975. This vehicle was discovered by RACQ in Allora in 2002 and purchased from a private owner. It was restored to its original condition, including identical paintwork from 1965.

OTHER FORMER PATROL MODELS IN THE HISTORIC FLEET

- 1954 FJ Holden panel van
- 1961 Land Rover Series IIA
- 1970 International AB130 tow truck
- 1976 Ford Escort
- 1976 Toyota FJ40 Landcruiser
- 1981 Daihatsu F20
- 1985 Daihatsu Rocky
- 1998 Toyota Hilux
- 2007 Toyota Hilux

HOW YOU CAN SEE THE VEHICLES

You can learn more about the historic fleet and see some of the vehicles at RACQ MotorFest 2025 on 15 June at the Brisbane Showgrounds.



YOUR TRUSTED ROADSIDE PARTNER FOR 100 YEARS

On 31 May 1905, 12 of Queensland's first motorists gathered at the Brisbane School of Arts to form the Automobile Club of Queensland (ACQ).

The majority of the Club's founding members were medical professionals who saw motor vehicles as a faster, more reliable way to visit patients, replacing horse-drawn buggies; 10 out of the 18 were doctors or dentists.

The club's first president was 43-year-old Dr George Herbert Hopkins, a highly respected surgeon who had moved from the United Kingdom to Queensland in 1896. He was also elected president of the Queensland branch of the British Medical Society.

Another notable founding member was Dr Lilian Cooper, who made history as Queensland's first registered female doctor in 1891 and the State's first recorded female motorist.

Initially, the ACQ members would gather for regular 'runs' around Brisbane streets, but it didn't take long before the club began advocating for better road conditions and other issues affecting motorists.

In 1921, the club became the Royal Automobile Club of Queensland (RACQ) after King George V granted it a royal charter, recognising the Club's patriotic efforts during World War I. RACQ supported the war effort by organising fundraising events and helping to transport returning wounded soldiers to hospitals.

Fast forward to 26 March 1925, and RACQ launched its roadside assistance service.

The Club appointed two mechanics, George Clark and Eddie Henderson, to patrol the north and south sides of Brisbane on motorcycles each Sunday, with the aim of helping stranded motorists.



The service quickly gained popularity and by September of that year, a third patrol officer was added. By November, support was limited to RACQ members due to demand, and five more officers joined the team the following year.

These early patrols carried basic tools, spare parts, fire extinguishers, and first-aid kits.

In late 1927, the service expanded beyond Brisbane after the Toowoomba branch suggested a Statewide, 24-hour roadside assistance program. The idea was approved and by 1929 RACQ had 180 listed garages across Queensland providing assistance to members.

In the 1930s, RACQ took a major step by buying its first motorcycles and sidecars, moving away from the earlier practice of patrol officers using their own motorcycles.

The fleet continued to grow throughout the 1930s, with one of these early motorcycles, a 1937 AJS, now part of RACQ's historic vehicle collection.

As demand for roadside assistance grew, RACQ extended its service hours. By 1932, roadside assistance was available from 8:30am to 11:30pm, with patrols working shifts every day of the week.

World War II brought its challenges, including a shortage of mechanics and fuel rationing.

Despite fewer vehicles on the roads, demand for roadside assistance remained high due to poor maintenance and a shortage of tyres and parts.

RACQ adapted to the challenge in 1944 and began accepting receipts from unlisted repairers when members couldn't access approved garages.

After the war, the roadside service continued to grow.

By 1946, uniformed patrols were introduced in Toowoomba and Rockhampton, and by 1947, they expanded to Ipswich and Townsville.

During the late 1940s, RACQ started replacing motorcycles with ex-military

Jeeps, which they used into the 1950s.

In 1955, a big leap forward was made with communication when two-way radios were installed in patrol vehicles, allowing officers to communicate directly with despatchers.

By this point, RACQ's roadside assistance had expanded across Queensland, including Cairns, Mackay, Bundaberg, Maryborough, Nambour, the Gold Coast, and Warwick.

Roadside service took another major step forward in efficiency in 1987 when a computer-aided despatch system was introduced for patrols. The next evolution occurred in 1998 when a 24-hour call centre was opened at Eight Mile Plains.

From those early days, RACQ's roadside assistance service has grown into a vital part of Queensland's motoring community, continuously developing to meet the needs of motorists.



This was seen most recently in 2023 when RACQ introduced an updated suite of roadside assistance products, catering for everything from e-scooters to large SUVs and caravans.

This was hailed as the biggest development in roadside assistance since George Clark and Eddie Henderson first started patrolling Brisbane's dusty streets in 1925.

As we look to the future, the legacy of RACQ's early pioneers continues to drive the evolution of roadside assistance, ensuring that no matter how the world of motoring changes, Queenslanders will always have a trusted partner on the road. *Photos from RACQ archives.*



KEY MILESTONES:

- **MAY 31, 1905:** 12 motorists, including five doctors, form the Automobile Club of Queensland (ACQ).
- **1921:** The club becomes the Royal Automobile Club of Queensland (RACQ) after receiving royal approval from King George V.
- **1925:** RACQ launches its first roadside patrols in Brisbane.
- **1929:** Roadside services extended across the State with 180 listed garages providing assistance.
- **1945:** RACQ appoints its first resident patrol in a provincial city, Toowoomba.
- **1955:** Two-way radios are introduced to patrol vehicles in Brisbane.
- **1969:** RACQ launches its approved repairer scheme.
- **1987:** A computer-aided despatch system is introduced for patrols.
- **1995:** Ultra Care, a premium roadside assistance product, is introduced.
- **1998:** A new 24-hour call centre opens at Eight Mile Plains.
- **2023:** RACQ introduces a range of new roadside assistance products, covering everything from e-scooters and e-bikes to larger vehicles like RVs, marking the biggest service change since 1925.

MAIN PHOTO A patrol officer works on a member's car in the 1950s. RACQ began buying Jeeps in 1950 to replace motorcycles.

OPPOSITE Patrol officer George Clark, pictured, and Eddie Henderson were the first patrol officers appointed by RACQ in 1925. **FROM TOP** A breakdown service motorcycle, ridden by patrol officer Les Jerred, which was converted to run on charcoal gas due to petrol rationing during World War II; RACQ patrol officers and a tow truck (c. 1946); RACQ's fleet of Jeeps (c. 1950).



URGENT ACTION NEEDED TO COMBAT RISING ROAD TOLL

BY LAUREN COONEY

RACQ calls for law reforms to reduce the number of fatalities on Queensland roads and reverse dangerous driving trends

Last year Queensland reached a devastating milestone – the State's road toll hit a 15-year high.

There were 303 people tragically killed on our roads, the vast majority of the deaths were avoidable.

The last time Queensland's road toll exceeded 300 was in 2009 and this year is tracking for an even worse total.

It's been a horrific start to 2025, with almost one fatality occurring every day.

It's clear that Queenslanders' attitudes toward road safety are worsening, with extreme driving and deliberate rule breaking on the rise.

The statistics show before COVID-19, road fatalities were trending down and if we remained on that same path, fatalities would be closer to 200 per year.

However, at the current rate, we're headed towards another unacceptably high road toll in 2025, potentially about 350 deaths.

This is why RACQ is calling for immediate action to urgently reverse the unacceptable number of deaths on our roads.

The Club is advocating for more police on the roads, significantly increasing random roadside tests, and expanding hooning laws as part of a suite of recommended reforms put forward to the State Government to address the worsening road toll.

RACQ's General Manager of Advocacy Joshua Cooney said the reforms had been developed to deliver an immediate cultural change towards road safety.

"Speeding, drink driving and drug driving are the main killers on our roads, and we need strong and urgent law reform to quickly curb these alarming trends and dramatically improve our road safety culture," Mr Cooney said.

"Increasing fines clearly has not worked, so we must rethink enforcement and deterrents for drivers breaking the rules.

"Motorists need to know that if they do

the wrong thing, they will be caught and will face significant consequences.

"There must be more focus on law and order on our roads."

The Club is calling on the State Government to increase police presence to enforce road rules and catch offenders.

RACQ also wants to see the introduction of compulsory roadside drug testing after crashes.

Additionally, the Club wants to see more point-to-point speed cameras in high crash zones.

RACQ is also advocating for the expansion of hooning laws to capture a greater range of blatant speeding and drink-and drug-driving offences, which would result in offenders' cars being impounded or immobilised for 30 or 90 days.

The Club will be advocating for these reforms with a commitment to working with the State Government to reverse Queensland's alarming road toll and make our roads safer.



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OUTBACK QUEENSLAND'S WILDEST RACES



Australia is famous for its love of sports, but a trip to outback Queensland will show just how far we will go to win a title.

Whether it's yabbies, chickens, camels or even dunnies, if it can move, chances are the competitive folk in Queensland's outback will have a way to race it.

A trip to outback Queensland is synonymous with breathtaking scenery, authentic bush pubs and colourful, character-filled townships.

And it's that combination of small-town spirit and classic larrikinism that will see the outback play host to some of Queensland's most wild and wacky events in 2025.

Whether you're a racing traditionalist or more interested in getting among the dirty and dusty action, these best-on-field events promise unforgettable outback racing for participants and spectators alike.

APRIL

BEN'S CHICKEN RACING (ROYAL CARRANGARRA HOTEL)

Where: Tambo
Decked out in vibrant racing colours and accompanied by witty commentary, Ben's chooks just love to run in this popular show. The chickens are auctioned in each race, with the winnings split 50/50 between the chook 'owner' and a local charity, with up to 10 chickens running in each race.
When: Every evening from April to October



JULIA CREEK DIRT N DUST ADVENTURE RUN

Where: Julia Creek
Dirt, dust and muddy obstacles await in Australia's dirtiest run, held as part of the annual Dirt n Dust Festival. With races for adults and kids of all ages, including the Dusty Kids Obstacle Challenge, get ready for fun memories and seriously dirty laundry to take home.
When: 11–13 April

AUGATHELLA BILLY CART RACES

Where: Augathella
Billed as the 'biggest revhead festival this side of the Warrego' these family-friendly races draw drivers and their customised wheels from far and wide, with thousands of dollars in prizemoney at stake.
When: 31 March–1 April

MAY

BARCALDINE GOAT RACES

Where: Barcaldine
Goat carts were once a common sight across Queensland, used for work, travel and racing. Held as part of the Tree of Knowledge Festival, the Barcaldine Goat Races are fast-paced and unpredictable, cementing the town's legacy as the goat racing capital of Australia.
When: 4 May

JUNE

MUTTABURRA SHEEP RACES AND DINO DASH

Where: Muttaborra
The annual Muttaborra Stock Show offers a packed program featuring everything from delicious local produce to sheepdog trials, shearing displays, competitions and even a shopping pavilion. Paying homage to the area's dinosaur and agricultural heritage, the show's hilarious Dino Dash features a crowd of dinosaur-costumed competitors.
When: 7 June

JULY

BOULIA CAMEL RACES

Where: Boulia
Known as the 'Melbourne Cup of Camel Racing,' this action-packed festival includes Australia's richest professional camel races, live music, fireworks and more. Watch the pros kick up the dust on the track, check out the yabby racing and cheer on future stars in their homemade camel costumes competing in the Boulia Kids' Camel Race.
When: 18–20 July

CAMEL CAPERS: Look out for the other camel racing events while in the region. The new Desert Champions Way: Outback Camel Trail starts in Jundah on 5 July, concluding in Winton on 26 July.

AUGUST

BLACKALL BILLY CART RACES

Where: Blackall
There's an event for everyone in Blackall's fun-filled billy cart street races, from aspiring under-five 'Mini Motor Heads' through to the competitive open event.
When: 14–17 August

LONGREACH YABBY RACING

Where: Longreach
It may only be a side event at the annual Longreach Yellowbelly Fishing Classic, but these yabby races are no less popular. Join the crowd barracking for their favourite to cross the line for the top honours.
When: 29–31 August

SEPTEMBER

INTERNATIONAL YABBY RACES

Where: Windorah
Held in front of the Windorah Pub leading into the Birdsville Races, this iconic event always draws a big crowd of locals and fun-seeking visitors on the Birdsville trail.
Date: 3 September

DUNNY DERBY WINTON OUTBACK FESTIVAL

Where: Winton
Possibly one of the pottiest events you'll find in Australia, the Dunny Derby features teams battling to get their decorated dunnies on wheels past obstacles to win the fastest dunny and best-decorated outhouse. The best losing teams also qualify to compete in the Constipation Stakes!
When: 26 September

NOVEMBER

NINDIGULLY PIG RACES

Where: Nindigully
The famous 'Piggies' are an annual tradition hosted by the Nindigully Pub to raise funds for the Royal Flying Doctor Service. Along with the racing, there's live music, family-friendly activities and free camping along the Moonie River next to the pub, making for the perfect long weekend stay.
When: 29 November



PLAN YOUR OUTBACK ADVENTURE

THE OUTBACK MAKES up more than 65% of Queensland's footprint and covers breathtaking and diverse landscapes from the red sands of the Simpson Desert to the gorges and waterways of the eastern regions. Spend your days exploring tiny towns, uncovering Indigenous history and learning more of Australia's pioneering past.

The region offers a diversity of accommodation experiences from camping and pub rooms to boutique farm stays, glamping and five-star wellness retreats.

To plan your visit, including itinerary suggestions and more information on these events, visit outbackqueensland.com.au.

Photos supplied by Tourism and Events Queensland and Outback Queensland Tourism Association.

MAIN PHOTO Boulia hosts the 'Melbourne Cup of camel racing'. **FROM LEFT:** The Julia Creek Dust n Dirt Adventure Run is muddy good fun; Winton's Dunny Derby is a highlight of the Outback Festival; The Barcaldine Goat Races are a nod to the town's past.

Save and win with RACQ and SEA LIFE Sunshine Coast



Buy discounted tickets for SEA LIFE Sunshine Coast through RACQ Member Benefits in March or April for your chance to win 1 of 5 prize packs valued at \$205 each*



*Visit racq.com/sealife for the conditions, limits, and exclusions for each offer. Competition terms and conditions apply. Visit racq.com/sealife for details. Competition opens 1 March 2025 and closes 30 April 2025.



RACQ

NEW PARTNERSHIP A SHOWSTOPPER



RACQ is now the Principal Hospitality Partner of the Brisbane Entertainment Centre, a relationship that will deliver exclusive benefits for its members.

Members can enjoy VIP experiences with access to premium spaces at the Brisbane Entertainment Centre, such as the RACQ Members Lounge, Deck and VIP Members Suite.

The Club will also give away more than 1,200 tickets in 2025 to some of the biggest concerts, sports and events.

Members can show their digital or physical membership card for exclusive access to the RACQ Members Lounge and can enter competitions via the RACQ website.

RACQ General Manager Marketing Membership and Digital Tim Cochrane said the new partnership reflected RACQ's commitment to providing members with unique and valuable benefits.

"We are thrilled to partner with the Brisbane Entertainment Centre to provide our members with exclusive access and giveaways to some of the most sought-after events in Queensland," Mr Cochrane said.

"We want our members to feel like the VIPs they are, and this partnership allows us to go beyond our usual benefits to offer experiences they'll treasure for years to come."

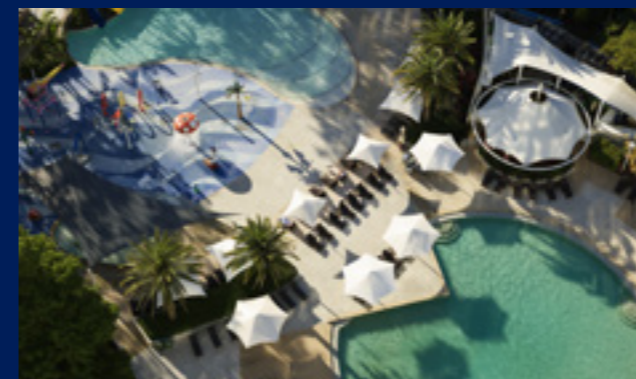
GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

Calling all Gold and Gold50 members! You have the exclusive chance to win a pair of tickets to a show at the Brisbane Entertainment Centre. There are 52 prizes up for grabs across six events.

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Visit racq.com/goldbec for more information and to enter.

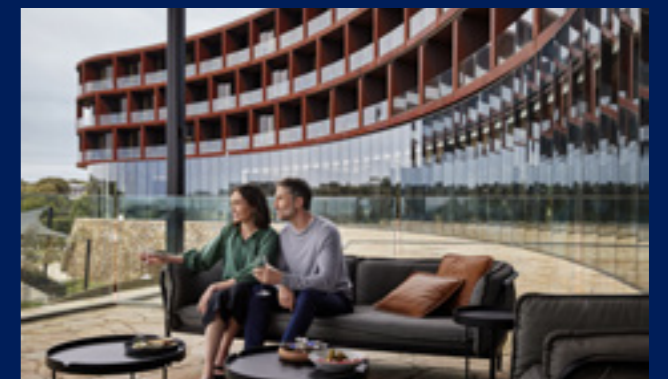
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RELENTLESS BATTLE TO SAVE OUR KOALAS

BY RAY ANDERSEN



MAIN PHOTO Deborah Tabart has been working to save koalas for 36 years.
BELOW Development and industry continue to threaten koalas and their habitat

Australia's koala population has a determined ally in the fight to protect the threatened species and its diminishing habitat.

Deborah Tabart's 36-year passion for protecting koalas and their habitat shows no signs of waning.

This is despite the constant struggle for action on the issues threatening the future of arguably Australia's most-loved animal – a challenge that would have worn down most people.

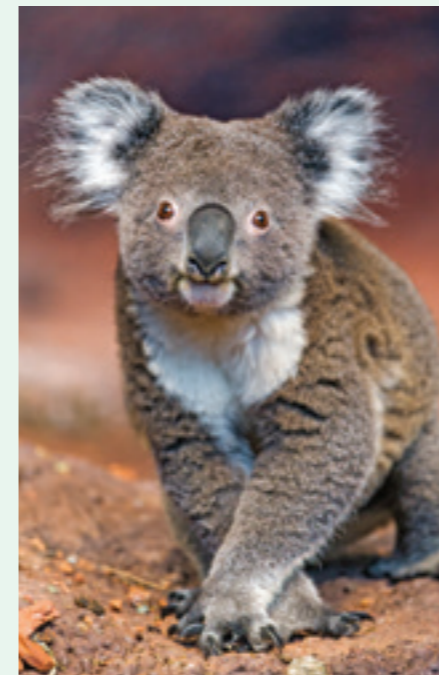


The Australian Koala Foundation (AKF) Chair admits there have been times when she could have given up because the challenge seemed insurmountable.

She began working for the AKF in February 1998, when her reputation as an effective fundraiser led to her becoming the organisation's first employee.

"When I got the job, I knew nothing about the plight of the koala," Ms Tabart OAM said.

"I was told to raise money for koalas and fund research. Because I had been a fundraiser my whole life, I just had to follow my instincts.



"It was pretty easy, in a way, to raise money for koalas because everyone loves them."

During her early years with the AKF, Ms Tabart became aware of the need to map the koala population and their habitats, which she initially thought would take "a couple of years".

"We got some computers and started mapping, but it took 23 years and about \$20 million to map the whole geographic range of the koala," she said.

Ms Tabart, an RACQ member for 35 years, loves being on the road, looking for evidence of koalas in native landscapes from Cairns to Adelaide.

"You couldn't do this job if you didn't love the bush, or didn't feel comfortable in the bush, and if you weren't committed not just to koalas, but to all creatures, great and small," she said.

"But there have been times in my career when I've thought it was too hard and I should walk away."

For now, her fight continues with a focus on getting the Federal Government to introduce legislation to protect koala habitats from further loss.

The AKF has prepared a Koala Protection Act that focuses on protecting trees. It believes existing state and federal legislation, that concentrates on the koala and fails to adequately protect its habitat, is not effective.

"I think that if there were a Koala Protection Act, with a decent law that says, 'This is primary habitat, and if you want to do anything here, you have to do all your environmental work before we give you the approvals,' it would make a difference," Ms Tabart said.

"The AKF has always wanted to work with industry to minimise impacts on habitat, and I think that is possible, but I don't see it happening at the moment."

Ms Tabart said the Federal Government listed koalas as endangered in Queensland, New South Wales, and the Australian Capital Territory in 2022 under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. Under the act, threatened species are classified as extinct, extinct in the wild, critically endangered, endangered, vulnerable, or conservation dependent.

She said South East Queensland – where she believes the koala is critically endangered and one step away from extinct in the wild – was an example of the devastating impacts of habitat loss.

"When I got my job in 1988, there were about 50,000 koalas in South East Queensland, and now there are likely to be fewer than a thousand," Ms Tabart said.

"In my whole career, I have not seen one piece of habitat saved. Development is incremental, and it's like death by a thousand cuts."

Ms Tabart said RACQ members who wanted to look for koalas when traveling could email the AKF for suggestions on where they might find them.

Members can then let the AKF know if they saw any.
Learn more at savethekoala.com.



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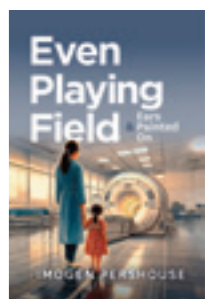
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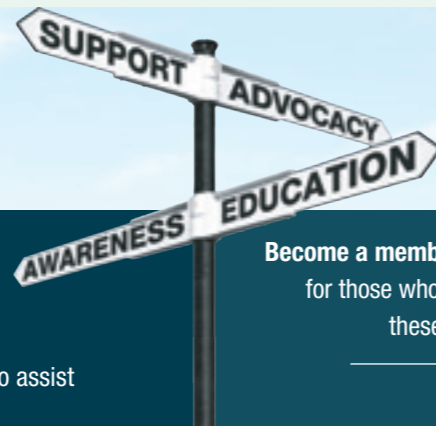
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HEADS-UP FOR CONCUSSION STUDY

BY RAY ANDERSEN

Researchers are recruiting volunteers for a project aimed at better understanding recovery from concussion symptoms.

In Australia, about 180,000 cases of mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI), commonly known as concussion, are reported each year. While many individuals recover in a month or less, some continue to experience symptoms long after the injury. Gemma Keeves, a Research Fellow at Curtin University and the Perren Institute, is part of a team of more than 100 researchers collaborating with 50 partner organisations on the Australian mTBI Study on concussion recovery.

"Persistent concussion symptoms can be significantly debilitating for individuals, their families, relationships, their work, and day-to-day living," Dr Keeves said.

Symptoms of concussion vary but commonly include headaches, sensitivity to light and noise, nausea, fatigue, and difficulty concentrating. "We're trying to better understand why some people develop persistent post-concussion symptoms," Dr Keeves said. "Most individuals with a concussion recover within a month, but about 30% continue to experience symptoms beyond

the typical four-to-six-week recovery period." The study aims to identify those at greater risk of prolonged symptoms and target early treatment to improve long-term outcomes. Anyone who has had a concussion within the previous 14 days can participate in the study by downloading the HeadCheck app and selecting 'Concussion Recovery'.



The app asks users to report their symptoms and provides them with access

to a personalised 28-day recovery program. "The app may suggest going for a gentle walk and ask if that worsens symptoms," Dr Keeves said. "If the symptoms don't worsen, the user progresses to a more challenging task the next day, gradually increasing the level of exertion to help them return to their previous activity level without experiencing symptoms."

Dr Keeves said much of the previous research into concussion had focused on injuries sustained during sports while this study was more focused on other causes. "The biggest causes of concussion in the community are falls and motor vehicle accidents," she said. "We're trying to better understand what those predictive factors look like across the wider community from all types of causes of concussion." The study is scheduled to run until mid-2026, and the HeadCheck app is available for free download from the App Store or GooglePlay.

The HeadCheck app is available for free download.

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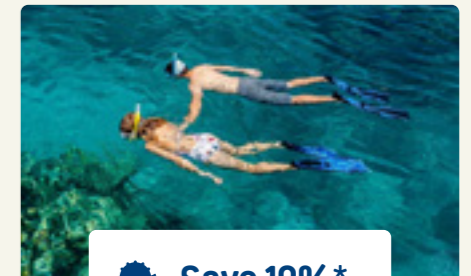
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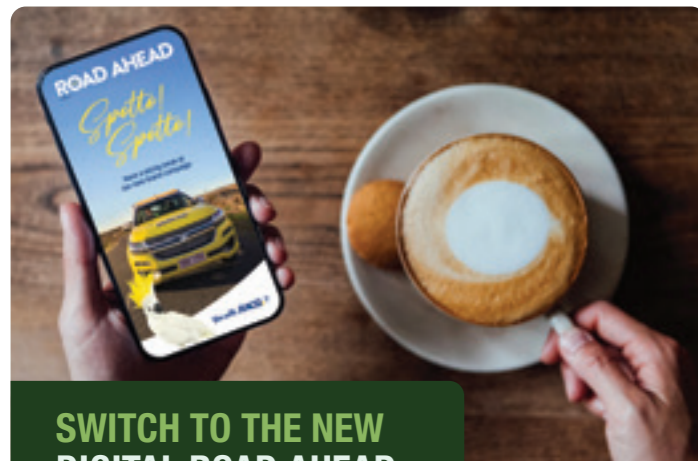
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ISLAND *dreaming*

Find out why the islands of French Polynesia make for the ultimate getaway destination.

MAIN PHOTO: Above and below the sea surface with Rai'atea and Taha'a islands on the horizon.
OPPOSITE: Polynesian handbags for sale at Papeete Market; One of Tahiti's many black sand beaches; Overwater bungalows at Mo'orea. Photos Getty Images.

BY EMILY MCAULIFFE

Mention the word 'Tahiti,' and it typically conjures images of cocktails by the pool and bungalows over turquoise water. But there's so much more to this autonomous territory of France – French Polynesia – which covers an area the size of Europe.

WHERE IS TAHITI EXACTLY?

When people say 'Tahiti' or 'the Islands of Tahiti', they are usually referring to French Polynesia, of which Tahiti makes up one of 118 islands spread across 5.3

million square kilometres in the middle of the South Pacific Ocean.

Bora Bora is arguably the most well-known of these islands, but with more than 100 to choose from, it's easy (and worthwhile) to get off the main tourist trail.

That said, Tahiti is the main hub, as it's home to the international airport, and Aussies can reach the capital, Papeete, from Brisbane, Sydney, and Melbourne via Auckland.

Tahiti is one of nine islands (including Bora Bora) that make up the Society Islands, and this archipelago offers the perfect introduction to French Polynesia.

START EXPLORING IN PAPEETE

After landing in Papeete, the busy (by island standards) capital, a fantastic way to get acquainted with the local culture and geography is to visit Te Fare Iamanaha.

This museum of the Islands of Tahiti has a permanent exhibition of 18,500 objects and specimens, artfully laid out in themes across a modern gallery space.

The displays educate visitors about Polynesian culture, the natural environment,

and the impacts of colonisation, and can be explored with an audio guide (most information is also in English).

You can then hire a car to explore the rest of the island (they drive on the right, like France), or, better still, join a half- or full-day tour with a local guide to discover waterfalls, grottoes, lush gardens, and black sand beaches dotted around the island's 114km peri-peri-meter.

Back in the capital, don't miss the vibrant Papeete Market, brimming with colourful tropical fruit and vegetables, and stalls selling local handicrafts, including Tahiti's famous black pearls.

Then take a stroll along the waterfront and browse boutique shops in the small city centre.



VENTURING OUT

If Papeete feels a little dusty and polluted for your liking, you'll be pleased to know that the real beauty of French Polynesia lies beyond the city. From downtown Papeete, you can catch a ferry to Tahiti's neighbouring island, Mo'orea, and arrive in just 30 minutes.

Alongside Bora Bora, Mo'orea is a popular island to visit – not least because of its easy access – and has French Polynesia's iconic overwater bungalows, which let you wake up to views of a perfect blue sea.

It would be a shame not to explore further than a resort, however, so book yourself another guided tour to see the greater island.

We opt for a private boat tour with Moorea Fishing Adventures, which lets us appreciate Mo'orea's rugged, jungle landscape between swims in the glistening aqua water, alongside stingrays, green turtles, and black-tip reef sharks.

On land, we join local guide Gerard from Moorea Albert Jeep Tours on a safari, bumping along in the back of an open-sided 4x4.

We stop to view a vast field of prickly pineapples – the island's signature fruit – and visit a juice and wine manufacturer



where the wine is made from pineapples, too. We then stop at a shady river and feed enormous freshwater eels; I wasn't game to touch them.

We finish with sorbet at a tropical garden perched high on a hill with 180-degree sea views and appreciate the warm sun and feeling of being on island time.

ISLAND CHILL

Most of French Polynesia operates on a relaxed island time (a common greeting is the shake of a thumb and pinky finger in a shaka sign, popular among surfers), and the further out you get, the more chilled life becomes.

After visiting Mo'orea, we take a 50-minute flight to Rai'atea, the second largest of the Society Islands.

Rai'atea feels far more rural than touristy Mo'orea, and here you'll find cute, boutique guesthouses and locals casually cruising along on bikes, dodging chickens that cluck and peck casually on the roadside.



The island was the first to be inhabited in the region and is home to the marae of Taputapuātea – a sacred, UNESCO World Heritage-listed site that was once the religious and political nexus of Polynesia, from Easter Island, to New Zealand, to Hawaii.

We wander the large outdoor area, past open plazas made of volcanic stone and coral dedicated to the god 'Oro.

Across the lagoon from Rai'atea is the flower-shaped island of Taha'a, which we reach in less than 15 minutes after being picked up in a small boat by our guesthouse.

Taha'a is known as French Polynesia's 'vanilla island' for its abundant vanilla plantations and has a pace that's even more laid-back than Rai'atea.

Joining another guided tour, we visit a cooperative to learn about the vanilla growing and harvesting process, a rum distillery, where the island's equally plentiful sugarcane is put to use, and then a pearl farm, to learn about the cultivation of Tahiti's prized black pearls, which are unique to the Islands of Tahiti because of their dark-rimmed oysters.

Not to miss French Polynesia's most prized asset, its crystal-clear turquoise water, the following day we head out on another boat tour to snorkel; first with giant, graceful manta rays, then schools of colourful, darting fish, and then black-tip reef sharks, which circle us as soon as our boat drops anchor on a sandbank.

Our tour ends at a small, private island called a motu, where we snack on fresh fruit and fish cooked in coconut milk, and laze beneath swaying palm trees.

It feels like a stereotypical Tahitian island experience, and isn't that what you visit for? Learn more at tahititourisme.com.

The writer travelled as a guest of Tahiti Tourism and Air Tahiti Nui.

NORTHERN highlight

BY LAUREN COONEY

FROM TOP: Ardo's balconies are a great place to relax; The hotel's stunning pool with ocean views.

Townsville boasts a five-star hotel that offers a luxurious experience, topped with stunning sea views.

Floating above the Coral Sea, with sprawling views to Magnetic Island, you must look closely to see where the infinity pool ends and where the ocean begins.

A new level of luxury arrived in Townsville with the opening in December 2023 of its first five-star hotel, Ardo.

Townsville is known for its sun-drenched days, and there is nowhere more perfect to spend them than on one of Ardo's poolside sun lounges.

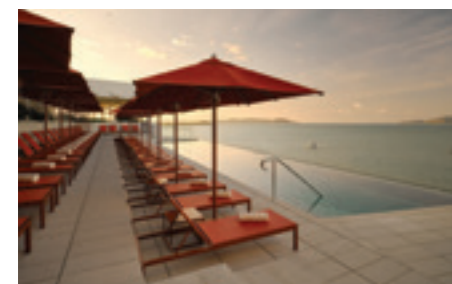
The hotel is the vision of Melbourne architect David Dubious and was inspired by its natural surroundings.

From the moment you breeze into the lobby, there's a relaxed but sophisticated feeling about the property.

The signature scent follows you everywhere you go, as do the ocean views, showcased in every aspect of the design.

Ardo is located right next door to its sister property, The Ville Resort-Casino, and just a 10-minute walk from The Strand.

The Ville Resort-Casino CEO, Tim Richardson, said no details had been overlooked with Ardo.



"From the foyer to the finishes in the dining areas, to the rooftop bar, and the rooms – it's all been executed to the highest standard and is complementary to the five-star offering," Mr Richardson said.

"Visitors are coming from everywhere; there's a real range of demographics, but the experience and feedback at the end have all been the same – they love it, and they want more.

"They are fascinated by the hotel and somewhat surprised it's in Townsville."

From the pool, you're so close to the ocean it feels like you could reach out and touch one of the boats bobbing below.

Adjacent to the pool is a beautiful rooftop bar. Beneath it are 132 rooms, two restaurants, and a day spa.

"We're really proud of the restaurants, Marmor and Terasu; both are brand new, the teams are really passionate, and the feedback again has been so good," Mr Richardson said.

"The rooms are stunning; you miss a lot of the details because the view consumes much of your sight."

The Ocean King Room was beautiful and spacious, with a huge wrap-around balcony and everything you could want for a high-end stay, and once again, the view stole the show. For anyone looking for a local getaway or a memorable escape, Ardo is undoubtedly a destination worth visiting.

FIVE THINGS TO DO IN TOWNSVILLE

1. Take the short ferry ride to Magnetic Island.
2. Dive the Museum of Underwater Art.
3. Take a leisurely stroll along The Strand.
4. Explore the Museum of Tropical Queensland.
5. Join the many locals who hike up Castle Hill and take in the views.

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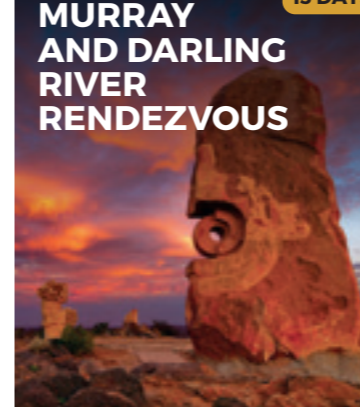
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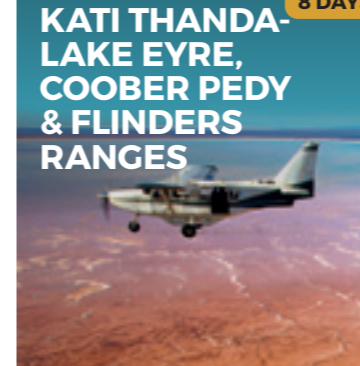
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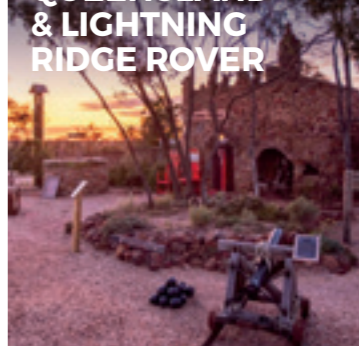
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DARWIN, KAKADU, KIMBERLEY & BROOME

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DEPARTS > 3RD PARTY COACH: 9, 23 JUN 2025
GOLD: 27 JUL 2025

13 DAYS

★ Flights to Darwin & from Broome ex Brisbane ★ Luxury ‘Gold Class’ or comfort plus third party 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 with Willie Creek Pearl Farm tour & camel ride ★ 35 meals

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One-way airfare from Cairns✈

DEPARTS > 1 JUL; 12 AUG 2025

13 DAYS

★ Luxury ‘Gold Class’ coach travel ★ 1 night Roma & Barcaldine ★ 2 nights Longreach ★ Qantas Founders Museum, Australian Stockman’s Hall of Fame ★ Australian Age of Dinosaurs at Winton ★ 2 nights Cloncurry ★ 2 nights Karumba with sunset dinner cruise ★ Iconic Gulflander 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 ★ 36 meals

Per person twin share

FROM \$7,975*

BEST OF THE WEST & WILDFLOWERS

Return airfares included✈

DEPARTS > 11 SEP; 9 OCT 2025

14 DAYS

★ Return flights to Perth ex Brisbane ★ 3 nights Perth ★ Rottnest Island day tour ★ 2 nights Geraldton ★ 1 night Dalwallinu ★ 2 nights Hyden; Wave Rock ★ 2 nights Albany ★ National Anzac Centre ★ Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk ★ 2 nights Pemberton ★ Donnelly River cruise ★ Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse ★ Margaret River Winery ★ 1 night Margaret River region ★ Ngilgi Cave ★ Busselton Jetty ★ 37 meals

Per person twin share

FROM \$8,600*

NEW ZEALAND NATURAL WONDERS

Return airfares included✈

DEPARTS > 11 OCT 2025

19 DAYS

★ Return flights to New Zealand ex Brisbane ★ 2 nights Auckland, Bay of Islands, Rotorua, Wellington, Queenstown & Dunedin ★ Traditional Maori Village experience and Hangi dinner ★ Lake Taupo ★ Coastal Pacific rail journey ★ 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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FLORIADE & THE FESTIVAL OF FLOWERS

DEPARTS > GOLD: 21 SEP 2025; DIAMOND: 13 SEP 2025

10 DAYS

★ Opulent ‘Diamond Class’ or luxury ‘Gold Class’ coach travel ★ Tropical Fruit World ★ 1 night Port Macquarie, Blue Mountains, Hunter Valley & Armidale ★ 2 nights Sutton Forrest ★ Fitzroy Falls ★ Tulip Top & Cockington Green Gardens ★ 3 nights Canberra ★ Floriade ★ Australian National Botanic Gardens ★ Australian War Memorial ★ National Arboretum ★ Cowra Japanese Gardens ★ Tamworth ★ 27 meals

Per person twin share

FROM \$5,575*

TREASURES OF TASMANIA GRAND TOUR

Return airfares included✈

DEPARTS > 19 SEP; 2, 13 OCT 2025

10 DAYS

★ Return flights from Brisbane to Hobart ★ Opulent ‘Diamond Class’ coach travel ★ 3 nights in Hobart with specialty seafood dinner ★ 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★ Scenic flight over Wineglass Bay ★ Guided tour of Port Arthur and harbour cruise ★ 26 meals

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DEPARTS > 30 AUG 2025

10 DAYS

★ Opulent ‘Diamond Class’ coach travel ★ 2 nights Roma ★ 1 night Charleville ★ Stargazing tour, Cosmos Centre ★ 2 nights Toogunna Plains Farmstay ★ 3 nights glamping Mitchell Grass Plains, Longreach ★ Australian Age of Dinosaurs ★ Waltzing Matilda Centre ★ Qantas Founders Museum ★ Australian Stockman’s Hall of Fame ★ Thomson River Sunset Cruise ★ Gemfields Mine Tour ★ 1 night Springsure ★ Carnarvon Gorge guided walk ★ 28 meals

Per person twin share

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ALICE SPRINGS, KINGS CANYON & ULURU ADVENTURE

Return airfares included✈

DEPARTS > 3 JUN; 15 JUL 2025

8 DAYS

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Per person twin share

FROM \$6,975*

NORFOLK ISLAND INDULGENCE

Return airfares included✈

DEPARTS > 6 SEP 2025

8 DAYS

★ Return flights from Brisbane to Norfolk Island ★ Fully escorted by an experienced Fun Over 50 Holidays tour host ★ 7 nights Norfolk Island ★ Convict Kingston Tour ★ Progressive dinner ★ Pitcairn Settlers Village ★ Sound and Light Show ★ Emily Bay Glass Bottom Boat cruise ★ Taste of Norfolk tour ★ Sunset Island Fish Fry dinner ★ Lavender Farm Tour ★ Bounty Folk Museum ★ Night as a Convict dinner ★ 21 meals

Per person twin share

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DEPARTS > 26 MAY 2025

6 DAYS

★ Opulent ‘Diamond Class’ coach travel ★ Dinner at SkyFeast with Vivid lights views ★ 3 nights in Sydney CBD ★ Blue Mountains ★ Scenic World Skyway ★ Guided walking tour of Sydney Opera House ★ Starlight Sydney Harbour dinner cruise to see the Vivid lights at night ★ Broken Bay Pearl Farm tour with boat cruise on Hawkesbury River ★ 1 night Port Macquarie & Coffs Harbour ★ Coffs Coast Wildlife Sanctuary ★ Tropical Fruit World ★ 15 meals

Per person twin share

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KANGAROO ISLAND, FLEURIEU PENINSULA & CRUISE ON THE MURRAY

Return airfares included✈

DEPARTS > 4 SEP 2025

10 DAYS

★ Return flights from Sydney to Melbourne ★ Hahndorf Village ★ 2 nights Adelaide ★ Fleurieu Peninsula ★ Birds of Prey Display ★ Australian sea lions ★ 3 nights Kangaroo Island ★ Flinders Chase National Park ★ Emu Bay Lavender Farm ★ Oyster Farm Shop ★ Clifford’s Honey Farm ★ Cape Willoughby Lighthouse tour ★ 4 night Outback Heritage Cruise on the PS Murray Princess in exterior cabins ★ Sunnydale Woolshed Show ★ 26 meals

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Return airfares included✈

DEPARTS > 24 OCT 2025

8 DAYS

★ 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 \$5,024*

SEASIDE ESCAPE TO Moreton Bay

Road trippers looking for an easy weekend getaway that doesn't require them to join the crawling traffic on South East Queensland's M1 have found a 'shore' thing.

MAIN PHOTO: A whale breaches on Moreton Bay.
FROM TOP: The inviting pool at Oaks Redcliffe Mon Komo Suites; The Komo restaurant at Oaks Mon Komo; Winding down and admiring the view at Sunny's rooftop bar. Photos Cath Johnsen, Tourism and Events Queensland.



BY CATH JOHNSEN

I am standing on the top deck of *Eye Spy*, Brisbane Whale Watching's high-speed catamaran, gazing at a mother humpback whale and her calf frolicking in the sparkling Coral Sea, against the backdrop of Moreton Island's sandy, palm-fringed beaches.

You know it's a good day for whale watching when the crew are taking photographs and videos alongside the guests, as they are today.

We collectively hold our breath as the mother whale breaches, while the younger one splashes and generally shows off.

Everyone exclaims in delight, and I wonder if they need another deckhand because, surely, this is the best job in South East Queensland.

But not every day would be this perfect, I remind myself, noting that seasickness tablets are on the boat's menu, just under the list of beverages – tea, coffee, soft drinks, beer or wine – to wash them down.

There is no need for anti-nausea tablets today – there's just calm blue waters set against a piercingly bright blue and cloudless sky.

A few hundred very happy day-trippers and I keep an eye out for not only whales but also the turtles, dolphins and dugongs that call these waters home.

Technically, we're straddling the border of Brisbane City and the City of Moreton Bay, but it's difficult to believe we're within any city limits.

Yet, with a current population larger than Hobart and predicted to grow even more populous than the whole state of Tasmania within the next 10 years, Moreton Bay has recently morphed from regional council to city council.

Still, there's not a skyscraper in sight.

Looking back at the foreshore from the ship, the tallest building within view is my waterfront hotel, The Oaks Redcliffe Mon Komo.

Earlier, I enjoyed breakfast at the hotel's restaurant – smashed avocado, grilled haloumi, chilli crisps and toasted almonds with a cappuccino.

It's a great foreshore location to watch the early-rising cyclists, joggers and



kayakers, listen to the lapping of the ocean and breathe in the salty sea air. This is my kind of metropolis.

But well before Moreton Bay was anything close to resembling a city, Redcliffe and its seaside neighbours were a popular holiday destination for Brisbane locals.

The former (albeit short-lived) convict colony became a popular beach resort from the late 1800s onwards.

In the early 1900s, steamer ships regularly carried holidaymakers to the Redcliffe Jetty.

Eventually, our catamaran, *Eye Spy*, comes back to dock at the very same jetty, and judging by the hive of activity that greets us, it seems that the holidaymakers never left Redcliffe.

Teenagers dare each other to jump off the edge and into the deep blue, while others sunbake around the fringes.

Families picnic on the beach and sit under the shade cast by towering pines and tropical pandanus trees while eating ice creams that are melting faster than they can slurp them up.

Alfresco cafes that make the most of their vantage point are bustling with winers and diners. As my kids would say, "it's a whole vibe."

Without having to travel too far, it's possible to have an old-school seaside getaway, but with all the modern luxuries.

One of those luxuries is The Oaks Mon Komo.

It boasts all the facilities you would expect – a gym, pool, restaurant, self-contained apartments and, the best part, generously sized balconies with expansive views, perfect for watching the sun rise over the ocean in all its golden glory.

Just a 15-minute walk from The Oaks along the promenade will bring you to The Sebel Hotel at Margate Beach, another excellent accommodation option.

Even if you're only visiting for the day, I recommend taking the lift to Sunny's bar on the Sebel's rooftop.

From there, you can sit with an Aperol spritz (or whatever takes your fancy at the bar) and order a bite from the menu.

In the distance, you can see the sand dunes of Moreton Island, the third-largest sand island in the world.

Closer to home, I watch seagulls and children getting their feet wet and sandy, while convertible drivers get their hair windswept.

On a hot day, there's even a rooftop pool to bob around in.

But the sum of the City of Moreton Bay is far more than its string of seaside suburb parts.

The region is the third largest local government area in Australia and takes in everything from the fish and chip shops of Bribie Island to the bustling Caboolture CBD, and west to the lush valley of Samford.



Celebrating the diversity the region offers is the Moreton Bay Food and Wine Festival, with local celebrity chefs (such as Alastair McLeod and Dominique Rizzo) showcasing the surprising amount of produce cultivated within cooee of the festival's location at Woody Point.

Held in late August each year, the festival enables foodies to sample a mind-boggling array of cuisine in one place, or you can do as I did and simply feast on fresh, local seafood, with a glass of bubbly by the water.

If you look carefully, you just might spot a whale too.

The writer travelled courtesy of Visit Moreton Bay.

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Road trip

IMMERSED IN NATURE

MAIN PHOTO: Visitors take a dip in the the turquoise waters of Boorangoora (Lake McKenzie) on K'gari. **OPPOSITE:** Lady Musgrave Island and the Reef Sanctuary Pontoon; Kingfisher Bay Resort's architecture; Driving through K'gari's majestic subtropical rainforest. Photos Tourism and Events Queensland.

Discover a road trip from Brisbane to the Southern Great Barrier Reef, with an island stopover.

BY NARELLE BOUVENG

Leaving Brisbane's urban crawl behind, my drive north skipped along the Pacific Coast Way's corridor of contrasts where pine forests give way to sprawling pineapple plantations, and pockets of rainforest merge with towering eucalypts. In just over three hours, I reached River Heads, the gateway to K'gari, just south of Hervey Bay. Swapping my car for a ferry and a 50-minute glide to K'gari felt like I was leaving the world behind. K'gari, meaning 'paradise' in the Butchulla language, is a world-renowned natural wonder and the largest sand island on Earth.

Spanning 123km, it's far more than just sand, with sweeping golden dunes, sapphire and emerald-hued perched lakes, and dense subtropical rainforests improbably rooted in sand. Testament to nature's ingenuity, the island earned UNESCO World Heritage status in 1992 for its beauty and ecological importance. I explored more of K'gari on the Beauty Spots Tour, departing daily from Kingfisher Bay Resort where I stayed. Led by local rangers, the tour offers an insider's perspective on the island's culture, history, and ecology.

Whether bumping along in a bus, or beside a ranger in a private 4WD, exploring sandy trails and wind-swept beaches is an exhilarating adventure. From spotting dingoes, dipping in the turquoise waters of Boorangoora (Lake McKenzie) and floating down crystalline Eli Creek, to wandering the island's majestic rainforests, each stop revealed a chapter of K'gari's story, told through its breathtaking landscapes. Later that evening, the island's narrative took on a dazzling new form at Illumina, Kingfisher Bay Resort's innovative light and sound experience and a first-of-its-kind in



Queensland. Set against the resort's natural amphitheatre, lasers, projections, and immersive soundscapes merge to depict K'gari's ever-shifting elements powered by nature. Beneath a starlit sky it was spectacular, even though a spontaneous symphony from cicadas and frogs almost stole the show. Dinner followed at Dune, the sophisticated new Asian fusion restaurant, which perfectly complements the resort's more casual dining options. Recently refreshed rooms, bathed in coastal hues, offer a peaceful retreat to return to after a day exploring or lounging by the lagoon-inspired pool.



Reluctant to leave K'gari, but eager to connect with more natural treasures in Queensland's backyard, I continued with the 1.5-hour drive north to Bundaberg. The undisputed star of the region is its sea turtles and Mon Repos Beach is Australia's turtle headquarters. Home to the largest concentration of nesting sea turtles on the eastern seaboard, it supports the South Pacific's most significant population of endangered loggerhead turtles, whose survival is critical to the species' future. A stay at the new Turtle Sands nature resort provided a unique proximity to this extraordinary lifecycle, with the beach serving as a nesting ground from October to February and a stage for hatchlings from January to April.

To safeguard these vital moments, the beach is closed to guests from 6pm to 6am, while nearby Mon Repos Turtle Centre offers guided night tours during turtle season. Watching a giant loggerhead lay her eggs is both awe-inspiring and humbling, underscored by the sobering reality that as few as one in 1,000 hatchlings will reach adulthood. Conservation is a shared commitment across the Southern Great Barrier Reef, and during a behind-the-scenes tour at Monsoon Aquatics, I witnessed thousands of baby corals thriving in tanks designed to mimic natural conditions.



This innovative approach aims to one day support reef restoration efforts, setting the perfect scene for my visit to the Great Barrier Reef the following day, where I would take on the role of a citizen scientist. Aboard Lady Musgrave Experience's 35m catamaran, Reef Empress, we set off on a 2.5-hour journey from Bundaberg to Lady Musgrave Island, a heart-shaped coral cay surrounded by 1,215ha of reef. As the second southernmost island in the Great Barrier Reef, it's home to a seasonal turtle rookery and seabird nesting sites, making it an aquatic paradise for snorkelers, divers, and nature enthusiasts. The Lady Musgrave Experience is celebrated for its advanced eco-certified program, now elevated by the addition of the Reef Sanctuary Pontoon.

This new wind- and solar-powered floating hub – joining their first pontoon, the luxurious Reef HQ – serves as a purpose-built base for marine scientists to conduct vital work, and in many cases, guests can opt to assist them. My session coincided with the resident marine biologist conducting a fish survey. Armed with a checklist of fish species and a designated reef patch to patrol, my job was to record as many fish as I spotted. I started off quite well, but as clouds of fish decided to embrace me as one of their own, I found it challenging to keep up. Needless to say, the reef appears to be thriving, and the data I gathered was later uploaded to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's Eye on the Reef app, contributing to the ongoing monitoring of reef and marine health. With upcoming initiatives like coral adoption and reef restoration on the horizon, visitors will have even more opportunities to actively participate in conservation. Founder of Lady Musgrave Experience Brett Lakey envisions these efforts becoming a key part of every guest's reef journey, fostering a deeper connection to the reef's future.

The writer was a guest of Tourism Events Queensland (TEQ).

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A WALK AMONG wildflowers

RACQ member Sandie Chandler and of some her friends shared a West Australian hike to remember.



MAIN PHOTO: Wild seas crash onto rocks near Gracetown.
OPPOSITE: The lighthouse at Cape Leeuwin; Following a path near Yallingup; Wildflowers along the coast of Cape Naturaliste; Author Sandie, left, with her fellow hikers; Sunrise after showers at Fremantle marina. Photos Sandie Chandler and Getty Images.

Last year I had the pleasure of joining a few friends on the beautiful multi-day Cape to Cape Walk (C2C) in Western Australia. Our goal was to experience the region during wildflower season, and boy, did the C2C deliver!

After traveling to Perth from interstate (most of us hail from Noosa, with one from Canberra), we piled into two rental cars and headed to Margaret River.

The journey was interrupted by a pit stop for a sunset dinner in Busselton.

It was overcast and windy on arrival, so we didn't walk to the end of the lovely, long jetty. However, we got lucky with a brief break in the clouds, giving us a moody sunset photo opportunity.

We started the walk in the north at Cape Naturaliste Lighthouse, hiking sections of the trail until we reached Cape Leeuwin in the south.



At Cape Naturaliste, we paused to watch whales from viewing platforms and were amazed by the number we spotted in such a short time.

The choppy seas had them frolicking and sky-hopping, much to our delight.

Our first day's walk to Yallingup took longer than we had anticipated.

It was amusing to see the plethora of photos shared in our group chat at the end of the day.

The group had to stipulate not to upload every photo of the flowers and seascapes we had taken.

As you can imagine, with so many of us snapping away, every available angle was covered.



The Cape to Cape Walk is predominantly along the coast, with a few inland trails, but no matter where we walked, the views were breathtaking.

The paths were lined with the region's wildflowers, including mesmerising bright daisies and vibrant wild orchids.

Bird lovers will also appreciate the variety of robins, whistlers and honeyeaters, providing an entertaining soundtrack of birdsong.

We also spotted several lizards, heath monitors, kangaroos, and a few snakes.

Having done prior bush walks, we came prepared with snake bandages and various first-aid items in our backpacks. Fortunately, we never had to use any of our emergency supplies.

Some stretches of the C2C were more challenging than others, so I wouldn't recommend this hike to anyone who isn't moderately fit or bush-savvy.



We scrambled over rocks and boulders, and climbed many stairs made of steel, stone, and rock.

The beach sand was also very soft, which wasn't ideal for those with Achilles injuries or sore knees.

However, the key was to take it slowly and enjoy each step along the way.

Nature has an amazing way of distracting you — just when you started feeling tired and wanted to stop, a new plant species would appear, or a new landscape would unfold over the next rise to draw you in.

Highlights for me included swimming with my friends after a long, hot beach walk in Gracetown, the stunning cliff walk at Hamelin Bay, and the crashing waves at Yallingup and Prevelly.

Finishing at the Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse was the perfect end to a fantastic experience.

Due to high tides and a couple of rainy days, the group didn't walk the full 135km of the C2C, and we all vowed to return to complete it in the future.

Our last two days were spent road tripping, caving, relaxing at local wineries, eating scrumptious food, visiting Fremantle and Rottnest Island (that's a whole chapter in itself), and enjoying the botanical gardens in Perth.



I can honestly say there was never a dull moment. My friends and I thoroughly enjoyed our time in Western Australia and left with full and happy hearts.



ROUGHER ROAD AHEAD
FOR CAR SALES

BY GED BULMER

Last year saw a record set for new vehicle sales in Australia, but the market faces stronger headwinds in 2025, according to vehicle services and market intelligence firm Cox Automotive Australia (CAA). Here’s a snapshot of what they’re forecasting:

New car sales growth is expected to slow in the year ahead while the trend toward electrified vehicles continues to surge.

1.18 MILLION

The number of new vehicles expected to be sold in 2025, a reduction of about 5% on 2024’s record tally of 1,237,288 vehicles.

236,000

The number of new vehicles Australians are expected to buy from Chinese manufacturers, including MG, GWM, BYD, LDV and Chery in 2025, representing 20% of sales. That’s up from 12%, or 142,000 vehicles in 2024.

70

The number of new EVs, PHEVs and hybrids expected to launch in 2025, including the BYD Shark and Ford Ranger PHEV utes, BYD Sealion 7, an updated Tesla Model Y, Kia EV4, and new Subaru Forester hybrid.

393,000

Approximate number of electrified vehicles (EVs, PHEVs and hybrids) expected to be sold in 2025. CAA is forecasting close to one-third of the market will be electrified in 2025, up from 24% in 2024. Toyota will remain the hybrid vehicle leader but will face more competition.

115,000

The number of pure EVs expected to be sold in 2025 across passenger, SUV and light commercial market segments, representing about 10% of the overall market, up from 7.7% or 91,292 sales in 2024. BYD and Tesla will be significant drivers of this growth, with Tesla recently launching a major update for the best-selling Model Y and BYD continuing to expand its range.

38

The number of different brands selling at least one battery electric EV (BEV) in 2024, up from 29 brands in 2023 and representing nearly 100 models. This number is expected to grow further in 2025.

15

The number of Chinese brands expected to be competing in the Australian market by the end of 2025, covering all segments and fuel types. Chinese model launches will include the BYD Shark and Sealion 7 EV; Chery Tiggo 9 SUV; Jaecoo J7 SUV; LDV eTerron 9 electric ute; MG ES5 EV and HS hybrid; GWM Haval H7; Geely EX5; Leapmotor C10; plus, growth from newcomers such as Zeekr, Deepal and JAC.

10

The ‘Big Picture Factors’ highlighted by CAA as potentially shaping the 2025 new car market:

- Oversupply of vehicles leading to excess inventory and more discounting.
- Matching sluggish BEV demand to steepening manufacturer targets and ongoing market fragmentation.
- The impending product avalanche from China-based car makers that see Australia as a lucrative market.
- Comparatively tepid private demand across the second half of 2024 continuing into 2025 due to cost-of-living increases and a reduction in household savings.
- The Reserve Bank’s decisions on cash rate cuts which will eventually liberate more household discretionary spending.
- The health of the Australian dollar will impact what happens to the exchange rate with other currencies including the USD, Japanese yen, and Thai baht.
- The introduction of the New Vehicle Efficiency Standard, although its impact is not expected to be felt fully until 2026 and beyond when targets ramp up.
- The Federal Election and the impact on government and corporate sales, as well as business and consumer sentiment.
- Fringe Benefits Tax exemptions for PHEVs ending in April, impacting novated lease uptake, offset by the rollout of more PHEV light commercial utes and vans.
- Steeper-than-average population growth post-COVID increasing the buyer pool. There are now more than 27 million people calling Australia home – an increase of one million people in less than two years.

*Information for this story was sourced from Cox Automotive Australia’s (CAA) 2025 Industry Outlook Report. CAA is a full subsidiary of Atlanta-based Cox Automotive Inc, the world’s largest end-to-end vehicle services company. In Australia the company owns Manheim auctions, which sells cars, heavy commercials and salvage on behalf of fleets, governments, business, OEMs, insurers, financiers and more.



Photo Jake Ryan.

BY MELISSA MCGRATH

LOOK BEFORE YOU LOCK

A simple habit that could save lives

Establishing a routine before leaving your vehicle could help avoid a potentially dangerous lock-in.

We've all experienced the intense heat upon opening a car door on a scorching Queensland day — a stark reminder of just how crucial it is to never leave children or animals unattended in a vehicle.

In 2024, RACQ responded to 1,748 lock-in emergencies, rescuing 818 children and 775 animals from cars.

RACQ General Manager Assistance and Automotive Mark Boswell said motorists must be aware of the danger.

"Our patrols rescue an average of two children and two animals locked in a vehicle every day," Mr Boswell said.

"Accidentally locking a child or pet in a car can be an extremely stressful experience, but it is important to remain calm and act quickly.

"If a person or animal is locked in a vehicle, call RACQ Roadside Assistance immediately on 13 11 11."

Mr Boswell warned temperatures in locked vehicles could quickly reach dangerous levels.

"In summer, cabin temperatures can exceed 40°C in around 30 minutes," he said.

"That is a dangerous temperature threshold for humans and animals, which could have deadly consequences.

"RACQ responds to vehicle lock-ins as the highest priority and provides this service to Queenslanders, regardless of whether they are a member."

The Queensland Government's 'Look Before You Lock' campaign highlights just how important a safety routine is for families to avoid unintentionally leaving a child in a car.

The initiative recognises the demands of busy parents and caregivers, encouraging them to take a few extra moments to double-check their vehicle before walking away.

Even a brief lapse in attention can lead to a life-threatening situation, making it essential to incorporate simple yet effective habits into everyday routines.



To protect your loved ones, adopt a 'Look Before You Lock' checking routine:

- Place an item you will need at your destination in the back seat of the car, such as your bag or wallet.
- Attach a mirror for rear-facing car seats so you can easily see your child.
- Create a mental checklist to run through every time you leave the car, such as 'baby, keys, bag'.
- Get in the habit of checking your back seat every time you get out of the car.
- Be extra alert if your routine changes.

Take these simple steps to safeguard your family and remember: Look Before You Lock.

Find out more at qld.gov.au/lookbeforeyoulock

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6 OF THE BEST NEW CHINESE MODELS

BY GED BULMER



JAECOO J7 PHEV

WHILE MUCH OF the Chinese new model action in 2025 will be EVs, at least one new brand, Jaecoo, is hanging its launch hat on a plug-in hybrid electric (PHEV) model. Due in early 2025, the Jaecoo J7 is a stylish-looking mid-sized SUV that will be offered with the choice of a turbocharged petrol four-cylinder engine or what Jaecoo calls its Super Hybrid System (SHS), otherwise known as a PHEV. The plug-in hybrid electric (PHEV) combines a 1.5-litre four-cylinder petrol engine with what Jaecoo calls a Stepless Electric Hybrid DHT System, and a high-performance hybrid battery. The J7 has an electric range of 90km (WLTP) and a claimed combined range of 1,200km. Among the J7’s generous list of standard features are power-adjustable front seats, a 14.8-inch vertically oriented touchscreen, an electric tailgate, 360-degree panoramic camera, wireless smartphone charging, 19-inch alloy wheels, LED headlamps, and eight airbags (including a driver’s knee airbag). The Jaecoo brand made its global debut in 2023 when it was launched as a sub-division of Chery International. Chery itself was re-established in Australia in 2023 after an initial unsuccessful foray here between 2011 and 2015, and last year sold 12,603 vehicles across its four model lines. The Jaecoo brand will give Chery a stronger presence in 2025.

PRICE: \$53,000 (estimate)
BATTERY: 18.3 kWh
POWERTRAIN: 1.5-litre four-cylinder petrol (115kW/220Nm), single electric motor (255kW/525Nm combined)
RANGE: 90km (WLTP, electric), 1,200km (combined); fuel 4.0L/100km (estimate)
WARRANTY: Seven years, unlimited km



ZEEKR X

CHINESE LUXURY EV brand Zeekr made landfall in Australia late last year but 2025 will be its first full year in operation here. Headlining the brand’s offering is the Zeekr X, a compact electric SUV midway between the size of a Toyota RAV4 and Hyundai Kona. That makes it slightly smaller than the Tesla Model Y which it competes against, along with rival Chinese EVs and offerings from Audi, BMW, and Mercedes-Benz. Founded in 2021 and owned by Geely Automobile Holdings, Zeekr boasts a strong European flavour in its design, even referencing its state-of-the-art design centre in Gothenburg, Sweden. That’s a clear pointer to Geely-owned Volvo, with the Zeekr X reportedly based on the same platform as the Swedish brand’s EX30. The attractive exterior design features modern strip-style LED headlights and tail lights, recessed door handles and a floating black roof. Inside, occupants are treated to a tastefully designed minimalist interior with a 14.6-inch central touchscreen, and 8.8-inch digital driver display. The Zeekr X comes in Long Range Rear-Wheel Drive or Privilege AWD variants, with the former costing \$56,900, and delivering outputs of 200kW/343Nm with 446km of range, and the latter costing \$64,900 and punching out 315kW/543Nm, with a driving range of 425km.

PRICE: \$56,900 (MRLP)
BATTERY: 69 kWh
MOTOR: Single motor, 200kW/343Nm, RWD
RANGE: 446km (WLTP)
ANCAP SAFETY RATING: Five stars (2024)
WARRANTY: Five years, unlimited km (vehicle); eight years, 160,000km (battery)



JAC T9

COMMERCIAL VEHICLE SPECIALIST JAC is another Chinese brand that established a foothold here last year and which has plans to expand in 2025. Already known in the bus and electric truck market, JAC opened the order books for its T9 dual-cab 4x4 ute in August last year, with the first customer deliveries in December. Boasting typical slab-sided, high-riding looks, with 18-inch alloy wheels and side steps complemented by wheel arch flares and bold J-A-C lettering on the tailgate, the T9 is powered by a conventional 2.0-litre four-cylinder turbodiesel engine producing 125kW/410Nm and driving through an eight-speed automatic transmission, and a part-time dual-range 4x4 system. Under the skin is a ladder-frame chassis and front suspension featuring double wishbones with coil springs, while at the rear is a live axle with leaf springs. The JAC’s pricing is anything but conventional, with the entry-level Oasis starting at a highly competitive \$42,662, rising to \$45,630 for the top-of-the-line Haven. JAC local distributor LTS Auto is reported to have committed more than \$40 million to set up the Australian team and aftersales support, with sales and servicing through a 50-strong dealership network. The budget-friendly ute has a five-star ANCAP safety rating and a seven-year, unlimited-kilometre warranty.

PRICE: \$45,630 (MRLP)
ENGINE: 2.0-litre four-cylinder turbodiesel (125kW/410Nm)
TRANSMISSION: Eight-speed automatic
FUEL CONSUMPTION (COMBINED CYCLE): 7.6L/100km
ANCAP SAFETY RATING: Five stars (2024)
WARRANTY: Seven years, unlimited km

This year will see an unprecedented wave of new Chinese brands launching or establishing themselves on the Australian market. Here’s our pick of some of the more significant new models headed our way.



DEEPAL S07

IF YOU’VE NEVER heard of Deepal, you’re likely in good company as it’s still largely unknown here but the electric vehicle brand is part of Changan Automobile, one of the four major Chinese automobile groups. Changan recently appointed leading automotive distributor Inchcape as its Australian partner for Deepal, which launches with a single variant of its all-electric S07. An SUV that’s similar in size to the Tesla Model Y, the S07 features rakish exterior styling and generous interior accommodation for up to five adults, including a large boot and a front trunk. It also comes fully loaded with standard kit including a 15.6-inch central infotainment screen, head-up display, 360-degree camera, wireless phone charger, heated steering wheel, panoramic sunroof, and a 14-speaker Sony sound system. Safety is top-shelf too, with a recently awarded five-star ANCAP safety rating. Powered by a rear-mounted electric motor with outputs of 160kW/320Nm, the S07’s 0–100km/h acceleration time of 7.9 seconds won’t frighten a Tesla driver but is still decently quick by ICE standards. Right now, there’s just a handful of Deepal dealerships operating in Sydney and Melbourne but that’s expected to grow as the brand expands and adds new models.

PRICE: \$53,900 (MRLP)
BATTERY: 79.97 kWh NMC
MOTOR: Single motor, 160kW/320Nm, RWD
RANGE: 475km (WLTP)
ANCAP SAFETY RATING: Five stars (2024)
WARRANTY: Seven years, 160,000km (vehicle); eight years, 240,000km (battery)



LEAPMOTOR C10

ANOTHER FRESHLY ARRIVED challenger for the EV market-leading Tesla Model Y is this mid-size electric SUV that’s hailed as manufacturer Leapmotor’s first global product. A relative newcomer to even the Chinese automotive market, Leapmotor was only founded in 2015 and launched its first vehicle in 2019. Among the company’s claim to fame is its high level of vertical integration which sees more than 70% of the value of its vehicles produced in-house, including EV batteries and its own integrated vehicle architecture. Last year, Leapmotor signed a deal with global automotive conglomerate Stellantis, granting it the exclusive right to sell and manufacture Leapmotor products outside China. In Australia, Stellantis is best known as the importer and distributor of brands including Abarth, Alfa Romeo, Fiat, and Jeep. Leapmotor’s first Australian vehicle, the C10, is available in two well-equipped variants, the Style (\$45,888) and Design (\$49,888), both featuring the same 69.9kWh battery and single-electric motor with outputs of 160kW/320Nm. Both models feature a 14.6-inch high-definition central display and a 10.25-inch driver instrument display, with a roomy interior and generous 581 litres of cargo space. Leapmotor launches with 12 sales, service and parts dealerships in mainland Australia, including two in South East Queensland.

PRICE: \$45,888 (MRLP)
BATTERY: 69.9 kWh lithium ferro-phosphate (LFP)
MOTOR: Single motor, 160kW/320Nm, RWD
RANGE: 420km (WLTP)
ANCAP SAFETY RATING: Five stars (2024)
WARRANTY: Seven years, 160,000km (vehicle); eight years, 160,000km (battery)



XPENG G6

ESTABLISHED IN ITS home market around a decade ago, XPeng is another Chinese brand looking to spread its wings and influence. The first fruit of its export ambitions for this country is the G6, a medium SUV that targets the Tesla Model Y. It’s offered here in two variants, the Standard Range with a 66kWh battery which costs \$54,800 (MRLP) and the Long Range which gets a larger 87.5 kWh battery and dual electric motors for \$59,800. Featuring an attractive fastback-style body with full-length glass roof and flush-fit door hands, the XPeng G6 offers an impressively spacious and contemporary interior, complete with the obligatory 15-inch central screen and a 10.2-inch digital dash. Elsewhere, the interior of the top-grade model features heated synthetic-leather seats and an impressive 18-speaker sound system with headrest-mounted speakers. Rear-seat accommodation is impressively roomy in both variants and it’s backed by a generous 571-litre boot. Additional models in the pipeline from XPeng include the larger G9 SUV and the X9 people mover. XPeng has launched without traditional bricks-and-mortar dealerships but has ‘Experience Centres’ in Sydney, Wollongong and Melbourne, with sites in Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast listed as ‘coming soon’. Servicing is via Ultratune outlets Australia-wide.

PRICE: \$54,800 (MRLP)
BATTERY: 66 kWh
MOTOR: Single motor, 190kW/440Nm, RWD
RANGE: 435km (WLTP)
ANCAP SAFETY RATING: Five stars (2024)
WARRANTY: Five years, 120,000km (vehicle); eight years, 160,000km (battery)



MEMBER GETS ACTION ON SCHOOL SPEED ZONES

Brisbane City Council has acted on feedback from an RACQ member to help keep road users safe in school zones.

Kim Laurie, of Chapel Hill, wrote to *The Road Ahead* in response to a letter in the summer edition from another member who was fined for speeding through a ‘split campus’ school zone on Water St, Spring Hill.

That member’s infringement was for travelling at 50km/h at 12.40pm in a 40km/h zone. She was unaware the ‘split campus’ zone meant the 40km/h speed limit applied from 7am–4pm.

“This particular school zone is an ‘enhanced school zone’ identified by the Queensland Government in 2015 as part of their Safer Schools initiative,” Mr Laurie said.

“These zones were to be provided with ‘enhanced school zone’ signs with flashing lights and speed limits, developed after extensive trial measures. The Government specifies that these signs are to be placed at the start of the school zone to give motorists better early warning.”

In this particular zone, Brisbane City Council extended the school zone in 2022, however the ‘enhanced sign’, which is

provided by the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR), stayed in its original position, which was 160m into the 400m school zone.

Mr Laurie also raised concerns about several other Brisbane school zones, supplying photos and detailed explanations, which were passed on to RACQ’s Public Policy team.

After reviewing and investigating Mr Laurie’s suggestions, five of his proposed improvements to school zones were passed on to Council by the Public Policy team.

Council agreed to install a new 60km/h speed sign and reinstate two missing 60km/h signs at the end of the 40km/h school zone speed limit at three school zones:

- Robinson Rd West, Aspley (approaching Murphy Road)
- Oxley Road, Chelmer/Graceville
- Leopard Street, Woolloongabba.

A fourth school zone, involving the wrongly positioned enhanced speed zone sign on Water St, is owned by TMR and the request for its repositioning was forwarded to the department.

A fifth request asked for the amendment of an incorrect school zone sign shown in a Council Standard Drawing, which Council also accommodated.

Council has a range of initiatives in place to improve safety for all road users around schools, including 100 strategically placed Speed Awareness Monitors (SAM) in school zones, reminding drivers to slow down and rewarding safe speeds with a smiling emoji.

Council is also rolling out a Safer Schools Precincts program across four Brisbane suburbs experiencing high volumes of school traffic, to reduce congestion and keep kids safe.

RACQ Traffic and Safety Engineering Manager Greg Miskowycz thanked Mr Laurie for raising his concerns and Council for quickly recognising the need for the changes and acting on them.

“Mr Laurie put a lot of time and effort into presenting his suggestions to improve safety around these schools, and it’s great to get a positive outcome which will clarify driving conditions for motorists and improve safety,” Mr Miskowycz said.

“This case highlights the impact that concerned members can have on improving road safety in their communities and continues RACQ’s 120-year history of advocating for its members and road safety for all Queenslanders.”



BY GED BULMER

TOYOTA LANDCRUISER PRADO GXL MY25

SINCE ITS LAUNCH in 1996, the Toyota LandCruiser Prado has established itself as one of Australia’s most popular 4x4 wagons, blending go-anywhere capability, with family-oriented amenities and passenger comfort.

The all-new fifth-generation 250 Series Prado arrived last November, some 15 years after the previous generation 150 Series Prado debuted.

Clearly, Toyota has had plenty of time to improve on its winning formula and has done so by basing the new 250 Series on LandCruiser 300 Series underpinnings.

The new Prado comes in a five-variant model line-up priced from \$72,500 (MRLP) to \$99,990 (MRLP). The range comprises familiar grade names GX, GXL, VX and Kakadu, but adds a new off-road focused Altitude variant.

The GX and Altitude are five-seat only, with about 50% of buyers expected to opt for the seven-seat GXL, which is priced at \$79,990 (MRLP).

Based as it is on the same chassis and underpinnings as the 300 Series, the new Prado is longer, wider, and taller than its predecessor, and sits on a longer wheelbase. That amounts to a roomier interior with front seats that are nicely sculpted and supportive.

Toyota claims the Prado’s new platform is 50% more rigid than the previous generation, while overall vehicle rigidity is increased by 30%, which aids ride, handling and crash performance.

Under the bonnet is Toyota’s familiar 1GD-FTV 2.8-litre turbodiesel four-cylinder engine, albeit with a range of technical changes.

The engine is equipped with 48-volt mild hybrid technology and produces an identical 150kW/500Nm to the old Prado, although the 250 Series is smoother, quieter and more responsive.

Drive is channelled to all four wheels via a new eight-speed automatic which, along with the mild-hybrid tech and electric power steering, helps improve combined cycle fuel consumption slightly to a claimed 7.6L/100km.

Out on the highway the smoothness and quietness of the updated diesel is immediately notable, as is the quality of the gearbox.

All models ride on independent double wishbones up front and a four-link rigid rear axle at the rear, the GXL showcasing impressively plush ride quality, with enough absorbent travel to smooth over most bumps without becoming roly-poly in bends.

Off-road performance is also excellent, Toyota having set its engineers the development goal of ensuring the 250 Series matches the 300 Series off-road.

The GXL benefits from a claimed 10% better wheel articulation than its predecessor and a shorter front overhang, while retaining its Torsen lockable centre differential, high- and low-range gearing, and downhill assist control.

The new drivetrain plus the extra strength of the new platform has allowed Toyota to boost the braked tow rating from 3,000kg to 3,500kg, with a new tow-haul system providing better engine response when towing and better engine braking when descending.



KEY STATS

PRICE (MRLP): \$79,990 (MRLP)

WARRANTY: Five years/unlimited km; capped-price servicing for the first five years/100,000km (whichever comes first), with six-month/10,000km service intervals.

POWERTRAIN: 2.8-litre four-cylinder turbodiesel, with 48-volt mild hybrid, eight-speed automatic, full-time four-wheel drive (150kW/500Nm)

ANCAP CRASH RATING: Five stars (2024)

FUEL CONSUMPTION: (combined cycle): 7.6L/100km (200g/km, CO2)

FOR: Smooth and refined on-road, excellent performance off-road, increased towing capacity, good ride and handling balance, well-appointed.

AGAINST: Price increases across the range, compromised luggage bay, fussy switchgear, smaller 100-litre fuel tank, requires AdBlue diesel exhaust additive.

BY GED BULMER

MAZDA CX-80 G40e GT

MAZDA'S CX-60 RECEIVED a muted response from some sections of the motoring media when it launched here in mid-2023.

As the first model in the Japanese car maker's latest generation of SUVs, it introduced a raft of new technologies, including a new modular platform, new rear-biased all-wheel drive system, two new mild-hybrid six-cylinder engines, an in-house developed eight-speed automatic transmission, and the company's first plug-in hybrid (PHEV) powertrain.

Despite Mazda's efforts in introducing so much new technology in one hit, or perhaps because of it, the CX-60 stumbled at first, drawing criticism for its stiff-legged ride quality and occasionally indecisive PHEV drivetrain.

Mazda quickly fine-tuned the CX-60 to address some criticisms while continuing its new model rollout with the launch of the larger seven-seat CX-90, based on an expanded long-wheelbase version of the platform that underpins the CX-60.

Late last year Mazda added two additional models to the mix in the form of the CX-80 seven-seat SUV and the CX-70 five-seat SUV.

All four of these new Mazdas share engines, drivetrains and a scalable rear-biased AWD architecture, designed to be stretched and widened according to the style of vehicle required.

Hence, the CX-80 can be thought of as essentially a longer and narrower CX-60 with a third row of seats added, while the CX-70 is essentially a CX-90 that's had its third row removed.

Like the rest of Mazda's newly expanded SUV line-up, the CX-80 comes with the choice of two turbocharged inline six-cylinder engines, one petrol the other diesel, both with mild-hybrid technology, and a 2.5-litre in-line four-cylinder plug-in hybrid (PHEV).

Prices start at \$54,950 for the 3.3-litre inline six-cylinder petrol G40e Pure, and rise through four petrol, three diesel and three PHEV variants to top out with the P50e 2.5-litre Azami PHEV at \$87,200 (or \$92,444 with optional SP kit).

Only the petrol six-cylinder range gets the entry-level Pure variant, along with the Touring, GT and Azami trims that are common across the 10-variant lineup.

Mazda's new family wagon has now been on sale since November and a clear pattern has emerged with about 50% of private buyers preferring the petrol six-cylinder models, most of which are being sold in the GT trim we're focused on here. Priced at \$68,950 the CX-80 G40e GT sits below only the \$74,150 Azami in the six-cylinder petrol line-up. It's powered by Mazda's impressively smooth and powerful 3.3-litre turbocharged petrol six, which comes equipped with fuel-saving 48V mild-hybrid technology and musters an impressive 206kW/450Nm.

The engine drives through an eight-speed automatic transmission with multi-plate clutch in lieu of the usual torque converter, with four selectable driving modes. The transmission is smooth and decisive for the most part, helping the CX-80 G40e to respectable combined cycle fuel consumption of 8.4L/100k.

That's not bad for a 2,267kg vehicle but if its efficiency you're after than best look to the diesel which returns a thrifter 5.2L/100km, or the PHEV which claims 2.7L/100km and up to 65km of electric driving range.

Riding as it does on 20-inch alloy wheels clad with 235/50R20 tyres the CX-80 offers more disciplined ride and handling than is typical for the large SUV category, but the trade-off is some loss of ride quality. However, with its accurate and well-weighted steering, an engine that deliver impressively smooth and muscular performance, and a gearbox that shifts crisply and decisively, it's an SUV that delivers pleasingly engaging driving dynamics.

Overlay this with quality build and finishes, attractive styling and a versatile three-row interior, and you have the makings of a highly capable and desirable family SUV that will suit those buyers who need seven seats but don't require the extra cost and heft of the plus-sized CX-90.



KEY STATS

PRICE (MRLP): \$68,950 (MRLP)

WARRANTY: Five years, unlimited kilometres

POWERTRAIN: 3.3-litre inline six-cylinder turbo petrol with 48V MHEV system (206kW/450Nm), eight-speed automatic transmission with multi-plate clutch, all-wheel drive

ANCAP CRASH RATING: Five stars (2024)

FUEL CONSUMPTION (CO2): 8.4L/100 km (197g per km)

FOR: Smooth, powerful and responsive engine, nicely styled and finished, generously equipped, roomy seven-seat interior, disciplined and engaging handling.

AGAINST: Expensive versus rivals, dual clutch transmission can be jerky at low speeds, firm ride on 20-inch wheels, no spare tyre (repair kit).

BY GED BULMER

KIA EV5 AIR 2WD LONG RANGE

LIKE ITS STABLEMATE and platform partner, Hyundai, Kia has been among the more aggressive established automotive brands with regard to its electric vehicle (EV) push.

Until recently, the Korean car maker's EV range encompassed the Niro compact SUV, EV6 large SUV, and EV9 seven-seat SUV, but what the brand really needed was a mid-sized rival for Tesla's Model Y.

Enter the EV5, a smartly designed and reasonably priced SUV that's the first model to be exported from Kia's plant in China.

Prices start at \$56,770 (MRLP) for the EV5 Air 2WD Standard Range, moving up to the EV5 Air 2WD Long Range at \$61,170 (MRLP), the EV5 Earth AWD at \$64,770 (MRLP), and topping out with the EV5 GT-Line AWD at \$71,770 (MRLP).

The EV5 Air 2WD Standard Range is the only model to get the smaller 64.2 kWh battery, while the other models get a larger 88.1 kWh battery. The smaller battery can accommodate AC charging at up to 7kW, whereas the larger unit can charge at up to 11W AC (3 Phase). All EV5 variants can accommodate DC charging up to 350kW, with the larger battery taking an estimated 72 minutes for a 10-80% charge on a 50kW DC charger, or 38 minutes for the same charge on a 350kW charger.

Dimensionally, the EV5 is about the same length as Toyota's RAV4 but is slightly taller and wider, and rides on a 60mm longer wheelbase. The tale of the tape is largely reversed when compared with the larger Tesla Model Y, however.

Inside, there are dual 12.3-inch screen displays, which create an impressive-looking integrated panoramic display, while the long wheelbase and wide body translate into a pleasingly roomy interior with good space for front and rear seat passengers.

Materials improve noticeably as you move up the grades, with Air variants feeling

a bit fleet-spec compared with the better-appointed GT-Line. Despite this, the Air is well-equipped, with heated front seats, power driver seat with lumbar adjustment and massage function, power windows, and an artificial leather four-spoke steering wheel.

The 2WD EV5s are front-wheel drive, which is a key point of difference with the 2WD Tesla Model Y, which drives its rear-wheels. Give the EV5 Air too much accelerator out of a corner and the effects of sending V8-like torque through the front wheels is felt through the steering.

Ride and handling err more toward comfort than sports, resulting in a generally well-balanced and predictable vehicle, but one that doesn't particularly like rapid directional changes with the suspension under load.

Like most EVs, the Kia is impressively quiet at road speeds and delivers its power in a smooth and linear fashion that makes for pleasurable open-road performance. The single-motor Air variants boast outputs of 160kW/310Nm, while the dual-motor variants offer a more muscular 230kW/480Nm.

The driving range of the entry-level variant at 400km is about the minimum that's acceptable in this country, but the Air 2WD Long Range pushes this out to a more manageable 555km for a not much higher price.

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KEY STATS

PRICE : \$61,170 (MRLP) / \$63,990 (driveaway)

WARRANTY: Seven years unlimited km (vehicle); seven years or 150,000km (high-voltage battery)

POWERTRAIN: 88.1 kWh Lithium Iron Phosphate (LFP) battery, single electric motor, front-wheel drive (160kW/310Nm)

ANCAP CRASH RATING: Five stars (Oct 2024)

ENERGY CONSUMPTION (WLTP): 18 kWh/100km

RANGE (WLTP): 555km

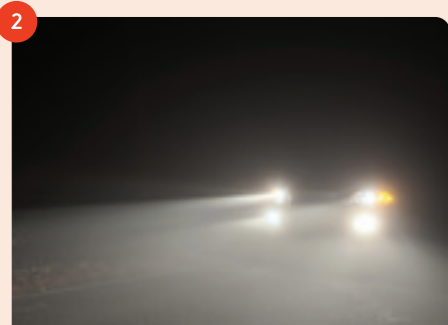
FOR: Right sized for smaller families, reasonably priced, attractively styled, practical interior, decent range and performance, strong safety package.

AGAINST: No spare wheel (tyre repair kit), weight of the battery tests the suspension on challenging roads, less powerful and more expensive than its key rival.

VEHICLE LIGHTS



YOU MUST HAVE your headlights, tail lights, and rear number plate lights on when you drive at night or in bad weather that causes reduced visibility, such as heavy rain.



IF YOU ARE driving during the day in fog or other bad weather with reduced visibility, you may drive with your front fog lights on, with or without your headlights.

Similarly, if you are driving in fog or in other bad weather with reduced visibility, you may drive with your rear fog light/s on. You can only use front or rear fog lights if it is difficult to see other vehicles or objects due to poor weather conditions, such as heavy rain or fog. You must not use fog lights in clear weather conditions, whether it is day or night.



HIGH BEAM MUST not be used if another vehicle is closer than 200m to you; this includes when you are following someone and when they are driving towards you.

You may flash your headlights briefly before overtaking another vehicle, but make sure they do not dazzle other road users. You may be fined for incorrectly using your high-beam lights.



IN ADDITION TO the vehicle's standard mandatory headlights, a maximum of four driving lamps may be fitted as an optional accessory to a light vehicle. Driving lamps are a type of high-beam light and should only be used in situations where normal high-beam lights would be allowed. An LED light bar is considered to be one lamp if all the LEDs in the bar operate together.



Driving lamps must not be in the driver's line of vision

With winter on the way and the evenings getting dark earlier, it is important that drivers use their vehicles' lighting correctly – to see and be seen.

For more information, please visit the Department of Transport and Main Roads webpage at [tmr.qld.gov.au](https://www.tmr.qld.gov.au) or call 13 2380.

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