

ROAD AHEAD

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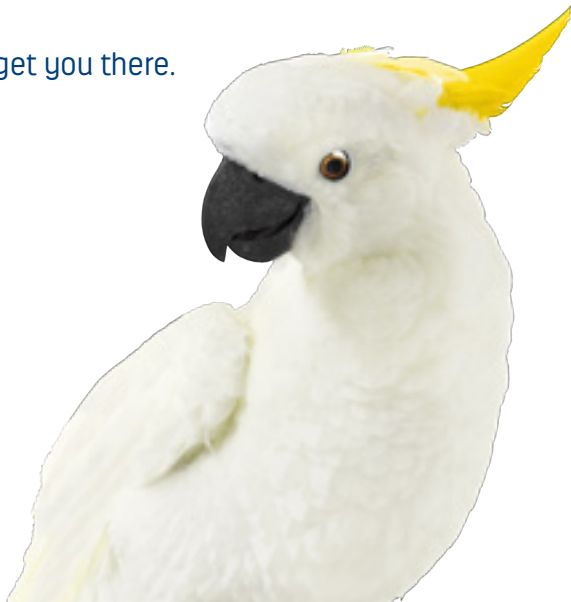
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ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE: 13 1111.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

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



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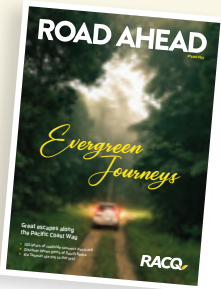
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COVER PHOTO:
The vivid greens of Eungella National
Park – a recommended stop on the
Pacific Coast Way. Story page 20.
Photo Tourism and Events Queensland.





RACQ'S VOLUNTEER ARMY WELCOMED BACK TO YARRABAH

RACQ Foundation volunteers have returned to the First Nations community of Yarrabah in Far North Queensland to support resilience-building projects and deepen cultural connections.

RACQ General Manager Advocacy Joshua Cooney said July's return visit was deeply meaningful, following their initial 2022 visit.

"We made wonderful connections in Yarrabah last time, so being able to contribute to resilience building while also learning more about their culture has been fantastic," Mr Cooney said.

"We come here to make an impact in the community, but we also come here for the community to have an impact on us."

Yarrabah Men's Shed member Brian Connolly said the Yarrabah community had established strong connections while working alongside volunteers during the week.

"I didn't know these volunteers from RACQ Foundation at the start of this week, but I feel like I'm now saying goodbye to

RACQ Foundation volunteers Joanna Cenidoza, Tash Ferre, Frances Richmond and Liam Carroll
Photo: Jake Ryan.

family members," Mr Connolly said.

During their latest visit, volunteers spent time at Yarrabah Elders Hub, working on returfing and revegetation to help absorb potential stormwater run-off and established a new tucker garden at the Yarrabah Men's Shed which will support food resilience in the wake of a natural disaster.

Volunteers also helped beautify Bishop Malcolm Park, working with the community on a large cultural mural on the stage platform.

Since 2011, the RACQ Foundation has been helping communities recover from natural disasters and has more recently increased its focus on building disaster resilience.

RAY'S NOTE

WELCOME TO THE Spring edition of *The Road Ahead*.

In this edition, we feature the reopening of Boodjamulla National Park in Queensland's north-west – an inspiring story of resilience following the devastating floods of 2023.

The catastrophic event left the park in ruins, wiping out infrastructure, cutting off access, and deeply affecting nearby communities.

But after more than two years of tireless work by the Boodjamulla

Cooperative Management Council (BCMC), park rangers, and restoration teams, this outback oasis is once again welcoming visitors as part of a staged reopening.

Boodjamulla is managed by the BCMC – a partnership between Traditional Owners, the Waanyi People, and the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service.

The recovery has been monumental – rebuilding facilities, restoring access, and reviving the park's natural beauty.

It's a testament to collaboration, care, and the enduring spirit of

the Waanyi People who have a connection to the area going back 30,000 years.

The Waanyi know the area as Bujimala (Rainbow Serpent) country. They believe the Rainbow Serpent formed Lawn Hill Gorge and the land's other features.

Read more about Boodjamulla's recovery on pages 30–31.

Enjoy the magazine!

RAY ANDERSEN
MANAGING EDITOR



Viewpoint



THE PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

It's been an exciting year for your Club, and the changes we're making are all about driving a positive future for all Queenslanders.

Our new 25-year partnership with leading national insurer IAG means we will continue to provide you with RACQ insurance, bringing new opportunities for our members and our people.

It allows us to accelerate our focus on bolstering the products and services we deliver for our members and the work we do for Queenslanders (see page 11 for details).

As we evolve the way we support members with their insurance needs, we're also improving our services with cost-effective offerings like our new Everyday Lite product because everyone deserves peace of mind on our roads.

Our Auto stores have fast become one-stop shops for car servicing and battery solutions, with our fifth store opening in late 2025, making our locations even more convenient.

We will continue to invest in what matters most in the areas of mobility, home, advocacy and in our communities.

Every family should make it home safely.

It's this mantra that drives our important work for road safety.

Unfortunately, it's not always the case.

With this in mind, my thoughts turn to the Payne family from north of Brisbane.

The family lost 18-year-old Harrison tragically in an off-road 4WD crash.

On the back of this tragedy, they started the Harrison Payne Initiative to educate motorists on beach and off-road driving safety.

Harrison's story, shared on page 49, reminds us why we must continue this important fight for change and makes our commitment to road safety advocacy personal and urgent.

On a different note, we had the opportunity to reflect on a century of our roadside assistance business at MotorFest in June with an historic display that showcased this milestone.

It was a terrific day, and I loved meeting so many of you – hearing your stories, seeing three generations of families who've trusted RACQ, and celebrating 100 years of being there when you need us most.

You can see stories and photos captured from the event on pages 50-51.

I would like to thank our members who shared their roadside stories as part of our '100 stories for 100 years' competition. You can view some of the heartwarming stories on page nine or visit racq.com/roadside100.

As we look ahead, we're preparing for Queensland's next chapter – electric vehicles, new technology, and the changing ways families live and move around.

Our members remain at the heart of everything we do at RACQ, and I look forward to writing the next chapter in our Club's history with you.

Stay safe everyone.

Leona

LEONA MURPHY
RACQ PRESIDENT



Leona snapped with an 'RACQ patrol officer' for a vintage-style picture postcard at MotorFest 2025.

YOUR SAY: GIVING MEMBERS A VOICE



RE-TESTING SUGGESTION

Despite increased fines, double demerit points, speed and mobile phone cameras, and numerous other road safety programs, the road toll seems to be ever increasing – showing that the current programs are having little, if any, effect on road accident and death statistics. The solution could lie in better and ongoing education by refreshing road rules, with examples of accident scenarios as part of the vehicle licence renewal process.

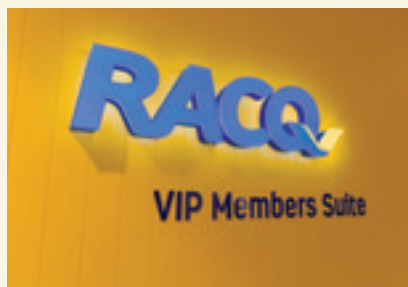
Many people on the roads have not had a road rule refresher since they attained their licences – often many years ago – with many changes to road rules since.

With so much training now available in online formats, and many workplaces utilising online technology to instruct employees, why not introduce up-to-date licence testing with video scenarios to show the dangers of distraction, speeding, and other major factors in road accidents and deaths?

This would reiterate the challenges of driving safely on our roads. As a tradesman, I have been required to refresh my skills every five years with my licence renewal.

Why not introduce the same system for vehicle licence renewal?

JOE JURISEVIC, LAKE CATHIE, NSW



NIGHT TO REMEMBER

Having never won a major prize before, I was excited to win a wonderful package from RACQ for two people to see *Torvill and Dean's Last Dance* from the RACQ VIP Members Suite at the Brisbane Entertainment Centre on 14 June.

The show was magnificent! I saw Torvill and Dean's 1986 show at the opening of the Brisbane Entertainment Centre, so it was fitting that I was there to witness their 'last dance' 39 years later. We were so grateful and appreciative of the whole experience, and for the care and thoughtfulness shown to us by Vicci from RACQ and the lovely BEC staff.

We truly did feel like VIPs! It was an occasion we will treasure for years to come.

JENNY KINNEAR, GREENMOUNT

TIME TO STOP

Several years ago, my elderly neighbour was being tested to renew her licence. She failed for not stopping long enough at the 'stop' sign.

The examiner said she should have stopped, counted to five, and then proceeded.

When relating this to people, they laugh and say, "That is ridiculous." If I stop that long, I get tooted from the car behind. I still do it.

BEV McDONALD, KOOLEWONG

OUR SAY

IN QUEENSLAND, THERE is no specific time you are required to stop at a 'stop' sign. The law simply requires that drivers come to a complete stop before the stop line and give way to all other traffic before proceeding.

MOBILE PHONE QUERY

When driving I always have my phone in my trouser pocket. Recently my son jumped into the passenger seat and put his mobile phone on the centre console right next to my leg. In the event of being photographed by a mobile detection camera, do I have to prove that it wasn't my phone or is the onus on the police?

**DEREK BROWNING,
GLASSHOUSE MOUNTAINS**

OUR SAY

IN QUEENSLAND, IT is illegal to hold a mobile phone or have it resting on any part of your body, such as your lap, when driving. This applies even if you are stopped in traffic. Storing your phone in a fixed location, such as the centre console, will not attract a penalty.



BIKE LANE PARKING RISK

The Queensland Transport website states: "You can stop or park in a marked bike lane if you are allowed to drive in it and there are no signs or road markings prohibiting it."

Councils only consider a vehicle to be illegally parked in a bike lane if there are clear restrictions such as a yellow line or 'no stopping' signage.

Bike lane parking is illegal in New South Wales, South Australia, and the Australian Capital Territory unless there is signage allowing it.

Given the number of electric bikes and scooters, particularly with many being ridden by children and teens, Queensland's bike lane parking policy is dicing with death, as riders have to veer into a traffic lane to pass parked cars.

Legislators must urgently address this safety issue before a tragedy occurs.

IAN TIMMINS, MERMAID BEACH



RIDERS IGNORING RULES

I am writing regarding e-bike rules in Bundaberg Central. Most people I have seen riding e-bikes have no regard for rules.

Walking around town, I have seen young teenagers riding in the middle of the road and then going onto the footpath.

They do not ring their bell to tell you they are coming – they don't seem to care.

Something needs to be done; if they can't follow the rules, they shouldn't be on the road.

LISA LEWIS, NORTH BUNDABERG

E-BIKE DOUBLE STANDARD

I ride my lovely old 350cc Royal Enfield motorcycle now and then on the Sunshine Coast where I live. It is a treat and a joy to cruise around the back roads in the area – something I do about five or six times a year. Unfortunately, this little treat costs me \$556.35 a year in registration, not including insurance. My beautiful old bike does 0-80km/h in about 20 minutes, so it's no speed machine.

The other day, while on one of my short rides, I was travelling at the speed limit of 60km/h when, on my inside, I was passed by two young fellows on an e-bike doing well over the speed limit.

They did not wear helmets, and the pillion had a surfboard tucked under his arm. They kindly gave me the thumbs-up in recognition of my old bike. I was chuffed – really chuffed.

I was initially a bit startled and annoyed at being overtaken on the inside, but also by the thought: Why am I paying the Department of Transport

\$556.35 a year for my motorcycle, when others can ride around on an e-bike illegally with no fees, no registration number for identification, and certainly no road sense or courtesy? Am I the only one who thinks this way?

GEORGE ANDERSON, SUNSHINE COAST



LEGACY IN MOTION

I was just reading about the 100-year anniversary of Ford Australia (Winter edition) and thought I might share a bit about my father, Bert Keanalley (1891–1965). He was involved in the motor industry back before 1920, as reflected in the *Maryborough Chronicle* dated 25 February 1922: "Tarrant's Garage. Mr Tarrant has secured the services of Mr Keanalley, one of the best motor mechanics in Queensland ..."

In 1922–24, he and Thomas Gaydon were granted a patent for a clutch for the Model T Ford. The *Richmond River Herald* ran an article on 11 April 1922: "Mr Keanalley will demonstrate an easy method of starting Ford cars in Childers on Saturday." This would have been before electric starter motors, and I assume that cranking the Model T Ford required turning the engine and transmission to start, as it had a version of pre-selected gears.

My father's invention was a dog

clutch to disengage the transmission, which made cranking the engine to start easier. I have no idea if the invention took off or when starter motors became standard.

ATHOL KEANALLEY, ZILZIE

SEVEN-DECADE MEMBER

Congratulations to Graham Cumming on 67 years of membership (Spring edition); but I think my husband Bob can beat you. He has 70 years up – or almost. He turned 17 in March 1955, bought his first car (an Austin) soon after that, and joined RACQ.

WENDY TAYLOR, TOOWOOMBA



TURNING INTO TROUBLE

Exploitation of suburban 'left turn only' lanes is growing increasingly dangerous. Signs and road arrows are regularly ignored in my suburb.

Signage indicates that the car driver must turn left, e.g. into another road or shopping centre. However, nasty situations have been created.

I frequently see drivers pull out of the main queue, accelerate to the head of the left-turn lane, then turn right into the main flow of traffic – causing other drivers to brake suddenly to let them enter. The same goes for drivers who misuse the white-lined slip lanes.

Perhaps a firmer reinforcement of Queensland road rules is needed?

GRETCHEN WARD, KENMORE

RACQ CLUBHOUSE

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



Clubhouse

Clubhouse



100 YEARS, 100 STORIES



Performance Capability Lead Alex ready to change a car's battery. Photo: Dave Pattinson.

ARTWORKS CELEBRATE 100-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

BY RAY ANDERSEN

This edition of *The Road Ahead* includes a commemorative postcard celebrating RACQ's 100th anniversary of roadside assistance.

The postcard features original artwork by Brisbane artist Christine Moody, showcasing a series of intricate hand-drawn and coloured illustrations that combine to visually narrate the history of RACQ Roadside Assistance.

It is one of two commissioned pieces, with the second being a larger A4-sized artwork that expands on the themes presented in the postcard.

"The postcard highlights key moments from 1925 and 2025, while the full-size drawing captures the entire journey from 1925 to 2025," Christine explained.

Her goal was to encapsulate a century of roadside service while weaving in elements of Brisbane and Queensland's social history.

"It's about celebrating the era and the backdrop of what was happening locally during that time," Christine said.

Christine's creative process relies solely on her eye for detail and a steady hand for drawing and colouring – no digital tools are used or shortcuts taken.

"I draw directly onto paper without tracing or digital enhancement," she said.

"It's not an architectural or catalogue drawing; it's about capturing the essence of people, vehicles, buildings, and moments."

The project took about four months, from initial concept and research to the final brush and watercolour work.

The drawing phase alone spanned about six weeks.

"I usually spend around six hours a day on these pieces," Christine said.

"It's important to pause, reflect, and return with fresh eyes."

The larger A4 artwork will be enlarged and displayed at RACQ's Eight Mile Plains headquarters.

"I love the detail – that's what makes the difference. It's like *Where's Wally?*" she said. "In one piece of artwork, you have your history."

Limited copies of the commemorative postcard will also be available to collect at RACQ stores.

You can see the full A4 version of Christine's work at racq.com/roadside100.



Above: The full version of Christine's artwork in progress and, top, a section of the finished piece. **Below:** Christine at her work desk.



A CENTURY OF ROADSIDE RESCUES AS TOLD BY MEMBERS

To celebrate 100 years of service, we asked our members to share memorable roadside moments. Here are a few of our favourites:

WRONG CAR, BUT THE RIGHT HELP

PARKED AT ROBINA Town Centre. Came out, car wouldn't start. Tried everything – buttons, prayers, yelling. Called RACQ. He checks the battery, the fob, the wiring – then pauses.

"Is this even your car?" he asks.

We both look up. I was standing next to a very similar car, but mine was two bays over. Unlocked and fine. I blamed the escalators.

ANGELA

FLAT TYRE, FULL HEART

MY TYRE WAS flat in the Brisbane Airport of all places. The guy who came out was

wonderful. He fixed my tyre up for me after calming me down. I'm a single mum of 10 kids and was away working.

I couldn't believe he took the time to care enough to sit there and make sure I was OK. He made sure I got home to my kids OK.

I will never change from RACQ ever. I can't thank him enough.

KRISTAL

AN RACQ LOVE STORY

THANKS TO RACQ I met my boyfriend! And now we're engaged and getting married in four months!

My car wouldn't start after picking up my date and RACQ came to the rescue to tow my car home while I continued our first date in Brisbane city on the ferris wheel, eating ice cream. It was so beautiful! RACQ made it so easy!

JUSTIN

LAST-MINUTE ARRIVAL

I WAS FLYING to Townsville from Wellcamp, near Toowoomba, when I stopped briefly at a shopping centre in

Toowoomba. I came back and the car wouldn't start, so I rang RACQ, and they sent a guy to help.

I rang back to ask how long he'd be as I had an hour to catch the plane including a half-hour drive to Wellcamp. He arrived, replaced the battery – excellent service – and I made the flight with 10 minutes to spare!

PHIL

GAME ON

I WAS GOING to take my son to his final AFL game of the season, but our car wouldn't start. Luckily, we had RACQ membership and got roadside assistance to quickly replace our dead battery. We then got to the game in time for a great end to the season!

Thanks RACQ!

SIMON

Read more roadside rescue stories at racq.com/roadside100



BY RAY ANDERSEN



ON THE ROAD TO TRUE LOVE

Original patrol officer George Clark found more than broken-down cars on Brisbane roads – he found love while launching RACQ's 100-year roadside assistance legacy.

In the early days of patrolling Brisbane roads on his motorcycle and sidecar, original RACQ patrol officer George Clark discovered more than stranded motorists – he also found the love of his life.

George (pictured) and fellow mechanic Eddie Henderson were appointed by RACQ on 26 March 1925 to conduct Sunday patrols on Brisbane's north and south sides, marking the beginning of the roadside assistance service celebrating its 100th anniversary.

George's daughter-in-law, Bev Clark, said he operated his business, Geo Clark & Co., at North Quay during the week and worked for RACQ on weekends.

"He used to patrol from Petrie to Redcliffe – that was his run," Bev said.

Before joining RACQ, George had served his country during World War I.

He was an aircraft mechanic with the Australian Flying Corps' No.4 Squadron in France – a role that likely shaped his mechanical expertise and dedication to service.

During one of his RACQ patrols, George's life took an unexpected turn – not because of a mechanical breakdown,

but a romantic breakthrough.

"He used to call in at the Redcliffe police station to find out if anybody needed help, and that's where he met his future wife," Bev said.

"Would you believe it, she was Annie Clarke with an 'e'. She just dropped the 'e' off when they got married."

Annie was friends with the daughter of the Redcliffe police sergeant and holidaying from her home in Blackbutt when she met George.

They married in 1934 and had two children – a daughter and a son, also named George, who was born in 1937.

Bev married George Jr in 1960, seven years after George Sr died in tragic circumstances at the age of 63.

"He used to repair hydraulic jacks, and one flew out of a vice and hit him in the chest," Bev said.

"After recovering in hospital, they rang his wife to say he was coming home. He got up to go to the toilet, and apparently a blood clot moved to his heart, and he died."

A former teacher, Bev turns 87 on 21 September. She lives on Bribie Island and has been an RACQ member since 1976. Her husband George Jr passed away 10 years ago.



IAG's Julie Batch, CEO Retail Insurance Australia, and RACQ Managing Director and Group CEO David Carter.

A NEW ERA IN SUPPORTING QUEENSLANDERS

In November last year, RACQ proudly announced an exciting new chapter – a landmark 25-year strategic partnership with IAG, one of Australia's leading general insurers.

The partnership marks the beginning of a new era where our combined strengths and deep commitment to Queenslanders will redefine how we deliver insurance and give peace of mind to members across the State for generations to come.

The regulatory process, which included reviews by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and Australian Prudential Regulation Authority, is now complete and finalisation of the transaction is imminent.

Under the new partnership, RACQ will continue to support insurance policy holders through our locally based stores and contact centres, and our employees transitioning to IAG will remain at our Eight Mile Plains head office. IAG will manage claims, products and pricing.

In working together, we will build on RACQ's successful 50-year insurance history and leverage the benefits which come from IAG's scale, innovation, and diversification, as well as their experience working with other motoring clubs over many years.

Our priority is to offer quality products, expert claims handling, and leading digital capabilities to Queenslanders.

The increasing severity and frequency of severe weather events also reinforces the importance of bringing together two organisations deeply aligned to building more resilient and safer communities and supporting accessible insurance for all.

This partnership will strengthen RACQ's ability to advocate for, and assist members across the State, while scaling the work we do within our communities.

It also allows us to accelerate our 2032 strategy which focuses on developing new products and services to help members with their home and mobility needs.

RACQ Insurance policy holders can again be assured their existing policies remain unchanged, and claims will continue to be managed with care.

Policy holders will receive direct communication in relation to changes to our Privacy Policy to explain the way in which we now handle your personal information.

If you have any questions, we encourage you to visit our dedicated partnerships page at racq.com/partnership or speak to one of our team members in our stores or via our contact centre on 131 905.

Sponsored

YOUR HOME LOAN QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Thinking about buying a home but feeling a bit overwhelmed by all the jargon and numbers? You're not alone. Whether you're just starting to explore your options or already deep into house-hunting mode, understanding how home loans work can make a big difference. From deposits to stamp duty, we've simplified the key questions to help you feel confident in the process.

How much can I borrow, and what will it cost me each month?

YOUR BORROWING CAPACITY depends on several factors, including (but not limited to) your income, expenses, existing debts, and credit score. Lenders use this information to assess your financial situation and determine how much you can borrow. Your monthly repayments will be based on the loan amount, the interest rate, and the loan term. To get a clearer picture, use a mortgage calculator to explore different scenarios. It's also a good idea to speak with a lender early in your home-buying journey so you're well-informed from the start.

Check out RACQ's mortgage calculators at racq.com/calculators

How much deposit do I need for a home loan?

THE MINIMUM DEPOSIT required varies, but some buyers may be eligible with as little as 5%. However, deposits under 20% usually require Lenders Mortgage Insurance (LMI). Your deposit size affects your loan-to-value ratio (LVR). For example, a 5% deposit on a \$600,000 home is \$30,000 – this would mean a loan of \$570,000 and an LVR of 95%. If you borrowed \$480,000, on that same \$600,000 home, your LVR is 80%. A larger deposit typically means a lower LVR, which can lead to better interest rates and lower repayments.

How do I get pre-approval for a home loan?

PRE-APPROVAL, ALSO KNOWN as conditional approval, is an estimate from a lender of how much you can borrow. To apply, choose a lender and submit your financial details, including income, expenses, and savings. If approved, you'll receive a pre-approval letter, usually valid for around 90 days (this can vary by lender). It's not a guarantee as final approval will depend on property valuation and updated financial information, but it helps you house-hunt within your budget.

How much will transfer duty and government costs be?

TRANSFER DUTY, ALSO known as stamp duty, is a state tax based on the property's value and location, and it varies across states. Other costs may include legal fees, transfer fees, bank charges, and mortgage registration. First home owner grants and other schemes are available to some borrowers and should be explored with your lender. Grants can be explored on the State Government website as well.

Got more questions? Chat with a lender at RACQ Bank. Visit racq.com/homeloans to get started.

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Clubhouse

SCREENTIME SCAMS PUT KIDS AT RISK

BY MELISSA MCGRATH

As digital devices increasingly become part of childhood, new RACQ Bank findings reveal a concerning gap in online safety awareness among Queensland families.

While screens are now central to how children learn, play and connect, many parents are unknowingly leaving their kids exposed to the growing threat of online scams.

RACQ Bank research* has revealed that 45% of parents have not discussed scams with their children under 12, despite more than half (57%) allowing unsupervised screentime.

The consequences of this lack of education are already being felt. Almost 30% of parents reported intercepting a scam while their child was online, and 6% admitted falling victim to one during their child's screentime.

SCAMMERS TARGETING THE YOUNG

RACQ BANK HEAD of Operations and Financial Crimes Sarah Richardson said the findings highlighted an urgent need for parents and guardians to play a more active role in educating children about scams.

"We live in a digital world where children rely on online tools for learning and socialising," Ms Richardson said.

"Unfortunately, this also makes them vulnerable to scams, and the research shows scammers are targeting younger Australians today more than ever."

According to ScamWatch, under-18s in Australia had already lost over \$154,000 to scams in 2025, with 694 reported incidents.

Online shopping, phishing, and fake job offers are the top scam types, with social media, text messages, and emails being the most common contact methods.

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

RACQ BANK IS urging families to take proactive steps to protect their children. This includes:

- **Starting conversations early:** Talk to kids about what scams look like and how to spot suspicious messages.
- **Using parental controls:** These tools are easier to use than many people think and can provide a vital layer of protection.
- **Keeping informed:** Regularly check trusted sources for the latest scam advice and what steps to take if your child encounters something suspicious online.

"We know parents are doing their best, but concerningly scammers are becoming more frequent and increasingly sophisticated," Ms Richardson said.

"Stay engaged by asking your kids what they're doing online, who they're talking to and what apps they're using.

"Make sure you're also keeping up with the latest scam tactics and what to do if something goes wrong by using resources like ScamWatch (scamwatch.gov.au)."

For more information on how to protect your family from scams, visit racq.com/scams.

*Survey findings from RACQ Quarterly Consumer Omnibus – FY26 Q1.

Sponsored

WHY IT'S TIME TO ADD A HOME BATTERY STORAGE SOLUTION

Battery storage booming in 2025

Australia's energy landscape is undergoing a transformation, driven by surging interest in home battery storage.

With more than four million households already equipped with rooftop solar, the next logical step is storing that energy for use after sunset.

The Federal Government's Cheaper Home Batteries Program is accelerating this shift, offering discounts of up to 30% off the upfront cost of battery systems between 5kWh and 100kWh (with the first 50kWh being eligible for the rebate).

The Government program would reduce the cost of a 20kWh battery, which on average costs \$20,000, by about \$7,000. A smaller 10kWh battery will often cost about half as much and will now be discounted by about \$3,500 under the scheme.

Is there a catch to the Cheaper Home Batteries Program and is it worthwhile?

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS MUST be met, and the discount is tied to the battery's usable capacity and the number of Small-scale Technology Certificates it qualifies for.

While the subsidy will gradually decrease until 2030, the current savings – up to 30% off a typical battery – make it a compelling offer.

Unlike solar panels, you can only claim the rebate once – so it's important to think about what your future energy needs may be when you're considering the size of your battery storage requirements.

The Clean Energy Regulator (CER) is delivering the program through the Small-scale Renewable Energy Scheme, ensuring safety and consumer protection.

Can a home battery really save you thousands?

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT says households with existing solar can save up to \$1,100 annually, while those installing both solar and battery systems could save up to \$2,300 a year – potentially slashing up to 90% off a typical electricity bill.

Why it makes even more sense in Queensland

QUEENSLAND'S ABUNDANT SUNSHINE makes it ideal for solar generation.

With high solar uptake and rising energy costs, battery storage allows Queenslanders to maximise their solar investment, reduce grid reliance, and enjoy long-term bill savings – making the Cheaper Home Batteries Program especially valuable in the Sunshine State.

For full details on eligibility visit:
dcceew.gov.au/energy/programs/cheaper-home-batteries

Don't put it off until it's too late, act now and lock in the 2025 rebates. Visit racq.com/solar to book your installation.

Clubhouse

DRIVING CHANGE: RACQ ADVOCACY IN ACTION

RACQ members are behind the Club's advocacy for safer roads, smarter transport options, and fairer fuel prices.

RACQ advocacy efforts continue to deliver tangible outcomes for Queensland communities, with recent successes highlighting the power of member-driven campaigning.

In a major step forward, the Queensland Government has committed \$1 million in the 2025 State Budget to begin a comprehensive design study for Mount Mee Road – ranked third in RACQ's 2024 Unroadworthy Roads survey.

Member for Glass House Andrew Powell acknowledged the road's long-standing safety issues when announcing the funding.

"Mount Mee Road, ranked third in RACQ's Unroadworthy Roads Survey 2024, has long posed a danger to locals and tourists," Mr Powell said.

RACQ General Manager Advocacy Joshua Cooney said the Unroadworthy Roads survey gave Queenslanders the opportunity to highlight safety concerns with their local roads.

"This outcome reflects RACQ's persistent efforts to spotlight dangerous roads and push for meaningful investment in regional safety," Mr Cooney said.

Earlier this year, RACQ's Fix the Bruce campaign to improve the Bruce Highway saw the Federal Government commit \$7.2 billion to make the highway safer, and a return to an 80-20 funding split with the Queensland Government.

In RACQ polling last year, members nominated fixing the Bruce Highway as their top election priority for both levels of government.

"By influencing infrastructure funding at both state and federal levels, RACQ is not only advocating for safer roads and better public transport but also ensuring member voices are heard and acted upon," Mr Cooney said.

He said concern over the high cost of fuel also regularly ranked highly in RACQ member surveys.

"RACQ conducts member surveys on fuel purchasing and sentiment to support advocacy for fuel price regulation," Mr Cooney said.

"We're advocating for regulation that ensures Queenslanders are paying no more than motorists in other states.

"One possible form of regulation proposed by RACQ is the introduction of a 5c per litre daily price cap to stop fuel companies from hiking their prices by exorbitant amounts overnight.

"The Queensland Government has confirmed it is considering RACQ's proposals."

Surveys conducted regularly by RACQ to gauge member sentiment include:

- Unroadworthy Roads
- Red Spot Congestion
- New Vehicle Satisfaction
- Public Transport
- Road Safety
- Used Vehicle Satisfaction
- Young Drivers
- Safer Pathways

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Average battery costs based on typical pre-rebate industry pricing in Queensland (July 2025). Actual pricing may vary depending on individual needs. Estimated upfront savings are based on installing via the Cheaper Home Batteries Program in 2025.

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RIDING TO THE OCCASION

BY TORI MAYNE

As the self-proclaimed proudest Queenslander, there's nothing that drives Korey Boddington more than representing our great state every time he enters the velodrome.



From riding to university every day to standing on the podium in Paris, Korey Boddington's rapid rise to the top of Para-cycling has been inspirational.

Like many Queenslanders, playing sport was a major part of Korey's upbringing on the Sunshine Coast.

It was also what kept him motivated following two separate serious accidents.

"When I was nine, I was hit by a car and had multiple compound fractures in my arms and legs," Korey said.

"Fast forward to when I was about 15, I had a motorcross crash and was in a coma for three weeks with a brain injury.

"I remember when I was recovering from both accidents all I wanted to do was get back to playing sport with my mates. That's what drove me during those tough times."

After graduating from high school, Korey began studying accounting at the University of the Sunshine Coast and was looking for ways to save money when he bought his first bike.

"I had an idea that buying a bike to ride to university would help me save on fuel," he said.

"Before long I was timing each of my trips trying to improve my time each day.

"It wasn't until I moved to Brisbane for work, when I discovered track Para-cycling and thought I'd give it a go.

"Three months later I attended my first nationals competition, finishing second, and the rest is history."

It was thanks to the support of the Queensland Academy of Sport (QAS) that Korey's passion for sport became more than just a hobby.

"When I won in Paris last year, I

realised how important it was to have the people that back you, like QAS," Korey said.

"They saw potential in me and without the help from their coaches it wouldn't have been possible."

As he continues his Para-cycling journey Korey is using his position as a QAS YouFor2032 Ambassador to encourage the next generation of stars to pursue their sporting dreams.

"I would say to any kids out there, give the YouFor2032 app a go because you've got nothing to lose," he said.

"Without sport I wouldn't have got through my injuries, and it puts into perspective how great sport really is."

Young Queenslanders who dream of competing on the world stage can test their skills through the Queensland Academy of Sport YouFor2032 Talent



Opposite page: Korey Boddington turned his cycling hobby into a gold medal.

Above: Korey with fellow QAS Ambassadors Mac Rogers (rowing) and Natalya Diehm (BMX).

Search app, driven by RACQ.

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

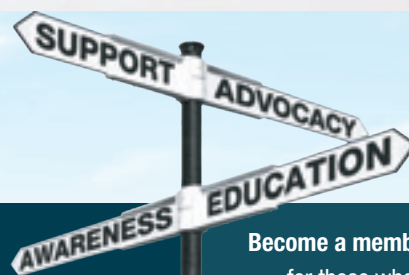
If they measure up, athletes will be matched to their best-suited high-performance sport and connected with elite coaches, expert insights and the support they need to pursue greatness.

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

The summer edition of The Road Ahead will feature a profile on Natalya Diehm (BMX).



Asbestos Disease Support Society



Silicosis
Support Network

The **Asbestos Disease Support Society** was founded in 1992 and continues to provide information and much needed support to those diagnosed with an asbestos related disease.

PLUS we have now launched **The Silicosis Support Network** to assist workers who have been diagnosed with silicosis.

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Become a member today to show support for those who have been diagnosed with these debilitating lung diseases.

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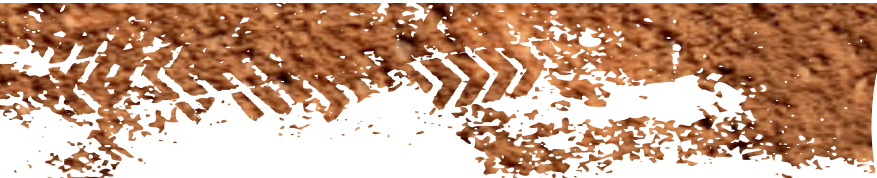


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As the original dust suppression system designed for caravans, Carafan delivers trusted performance, expert service, and sleek design. Wherever your road trip takes you, Carafan ensures the outdoors stays outside—so you can focus on the adventure.

The excitement of exploring Australia's stunning landscapes is just a visit away. So pack your bags, hit the open road, and let Carafan be your trusted partner in adventure. With the right gear and the right mindset, the great outdoors is yours to explore, and Carafan is ready to help you *keep the great outdoors, outdoors.*



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LUNG CANCER STUDY HELPS SMOKERS QUIT

Lung cancer remains the leading cause of cancer-related deaths in Australia, yet it is highly treatable when detected early.

A GROUNDBREAKING INITIATIVE, the Max Up Study, is being led by researchers from The University of Queensland Thoracic Research Centre at the Prince Charles Hospital in Brisbane.

The study offers eligible Queenslanders aged 50 to 80 free CT scans to detect lung cancer early, alongside support to quit smoking.

Associate Professor Henry Marshall (Lung Specialist), one of the study's leads, emphasised that smoking was the primary risk factor for lung cancer.



Dr Marshall.

"Quitting smoking is crucial, and early detection through a simple scan can identify cancer before symptoms arise," Dr Marshall said. "These two steps together can save lives."

Lung cancer survivor Terri Byrne has contributed her lived experience to help shape the study and encourages participation.

"This is a great chance to check your

lungs and quit smoking," Ms Byrne said. "If you're aged 50 to 80 and live in Queensland, this study could save your life."

The Max Up Study represents a vital opportunity for early intervention and prevention, aiming to reduce the toll of lung cancer across the State.

Are you ready to take part? Call Quitline today (13 7848) or scan the QR code below to read more.


IT'S EASY TO PARTICIPATE

1. Contact Quitline where you will get free help to quit smoking. This includes nicotine patches, gum or lozenges, and telephone support.
2. Quitline will send you an SMS link to the study webpage to check if you're eligible for the study.
3. If eligible, you'll choose to have your free CT scan at one of 44 locations across Queensland. The scan only takes a few minutes and doesn't need an injection.
4. We'll ask you to complete four online research surveys over a 12-month period.



Max Up Research study





1. Do you want to check your lung health?

2. Are you looking to quit smoking?

If you live in Queensland and are 50 – 80 years old, you may be eligible for our study.

INTERESTED?

Call Quitline on 13 7848 (13 QUIT) or visit [Request a Quitline call | Quit HQ \(initiatives.qld.gov.au\)](https://www.quitline.qld.gov.au) to arrange a call-back.

Find out more about the Max Up research study, scan the QR Code, for **[Max Up research study | The Prince Charles Hospital](https://www.maxupresearchstudy.com.au)**



Sweet escapes

ALONG THE PACIFIC COAST WAY

Embark on a road trip from Bundaberg to Mackay, exploring Queensland's sugar cane heritage, stunning beaches, agri-tourism gems, and the Southern Great Barrier Reef.

Bundaberg and Mackay share a sweet connection with strong historic and economic ties to the sugar cane farming industry that continue to this day.

This 623km road trip is flanked by sublime beaches, delectable agricultural roots and acts as a gateway to the Southern Great Barrier Reef, with plenty of idyllic island-hopping opportunities across various jump-off points.

BUNDABERG

From the rich, red dirt of its cane fields in the south to its idyllic beaches to the east, the Bundaberg region is home to the Great Barrier Reef, totally wild natural encounters and rich agri-tourism experiences championing fresh local food as Bundy's food bowl

reputation continues to grow.

STAY: Perfect for families, both Turtle Sands (opened in September 2024) and working cattle property Splitters Farm, offer a range of accommodation options including camping and glamping.

Alternatively, spend a night on top of the Great Barrier Reef glamping on the Lady Musgrave HQ pontoon.

PLAY: Bundaberg is home to not one but two iconic Aussie beverage producers – Bundaberg Rum and Bundaberg Brewed Drinks – both of which have a deep and passionate connection to the town's sugar cane industry.

It also doesn't get sweeter than a visit to Tinaberries, a strawberry farm where you can pick your own or grab a fresh punnet from the farm during strawberry season (June to October).

For a once-in-a-lifetime wildlife encounter, experience turtles nesting

and hatchlings emerging at Mon Repos between November and March – home to the largest loggerhead turtle rookery in the Southern Hemisphere.

DINE: A trip to Bundaberg isn't complete without a mouthwatering feast at Water St Kitchen with its sumptuous seasonal menu shining a spotlight on local produce.

NEXT STOP – GLADSTONE

Travel time between Bundaberg and Gladstone is about two hours so there's ample time to swing in and spend some time in the seaside townships of 1770 and Agnes Water.

Agnes Beach is Queensland's most northerly surf beach and popular among surfers – or paddle out to watch the sun set over the ocean with 1770 Liquid Adventures. Hop aboard LARC! Tours' bright pink amphibious vehicle for a quirky exploration of the surrounding waterways.



GLADSTONE

Gladstone is one of the best jump-off points for some of the most incredible diving and snorkelling spots along the Great Barrier Reef.

Secluded paradise islands Heron and Wilson overlook fringing reefs and lure snorkellers and divers with pristine azure waters and marine life.

STAY: Relax in style at Peppers Gladstone, which opened in February 2025. It is the first newly built hotel in the region for more than a decade and its first five-star hotel. Or, head offshore to Heron Island or Wilson Island to soak up the laid-back vibes.

PLAY: The world's most famous undersea explorer Jacques Cousteau listed Heron Bommie – an ancient coral mountain at Heron Island – as one of his favourite dive sites in the world. From turtles to bird watching, coral reefs and dive sites, there's an unmatched connection to nature on Heron Island.

DINE: Back on the mainland, Rocksalt Bar & Restaurant, within the Gladstone Central Hotel, features modern Australian dining for those feeling peckish.

NEXT STOP – ROCKHAMPTON

The drive from Gladstone to Rockhampton will take about an hour. Adventure-seekers will revel in the four-wheel driving, fishing and camping opportunities on offer across these regions.

Head east along the rugged coastline to jump over to Curtis Island, home to the third largest flatback turtle rookery in Queensland and the rare Capricorn yellow chat – it is thought only 200-300 of the birds remain in the wild. The island is accessible by a regular ferry service departing Gladstone Harbour.

ROCKHAMPTON

Rocky is the beef capital of Australia – a title the region more than lives up to thanks to its proud cattle industry – but it's stunning heritage architecture and gob-smacking natural landscapes serve up something unexpected.

STAY: Built in 1886, Denison Boutique Hotel is one of Rockhampton's most extraordinary historic buildings offering 18 luxury suites right in the centre of town.

Closer to the coast, the chic Yeppoon Surfside Motel is an Insta-worthy renovated boutique hotel right opposite the waterfront.



PLAY: A 30-minute drive north from Rockhampton lies the Capricorn Caves – an awe-inspiring natural spectacle where visitors explore towering ancient geological formations alongside expert guides who weave historic tales of how the caves were formed while showcasing the wildlife and endangered species that call the caves home.

DINE: The beef capital of Australia serves up some hearty dining options including Headricks Lane's meaty menu from a 250g eye fillet to a 1.2kg tomahawk, paying homage to the town's local produce. The restaurant has vegetarians covered too, serving up tasty plant-based plates such as honey-baked brie and dukkah roast pumpkin.

NEXT STOP – MACKAY

The final leg of this road trip traverses the Pacific Coast way from Rockhampton to Mackay – taking around four hours to drive.

Before starting the journey, take the opportunity to head back out to the Great Barrier Reef with an overnight stay on Great Keppel Island at Great Keppel Island Hideaway.

MACKAY

Sprawling national parks, golden beaches and the Great Barrier Reef – it's time to round out this road trip with one final pit stop in Mackay.

Take a walk on the wild side through unspoiled Eungella National Park, which rises 800m above sea level or be enthralled by Cape Hillsborough's dramatic landscape formed by its volcanic past.

STAY: A haven nestled in the forest and within Cape Hillsborough National Park is Cape Hillsborough Nature Tourist Park where holidaymakers wake up to

Above: Exploring Capricorn Caves, north of Rockhampton. **Previous page:** LARC! Tours' amphibious vehicle offers a unique way to explore the waterways around the town of 1770. Photos: Tourism and Events Queensland.

witness one of the State's most incredible natural encounters – watching the sun rise over the beach as the national park's resident kangaroos and wallabies hop on down to the sand for 'breakfast', feeding on mangrove seed pods and seaweed.

PLAY: West of Mackay is Eungella National Park, one of Queensland's most ecologically diverse parks. It is home to one of the most reliable spots in Australia – Broken River – to catch a glimpse of the elusive platypus in the wild.

Get moving with a hike to Finch Hatton Gorge, the volcanic boulder formations that surround it making this a unique spot to explore alongside the gorge's waterfalls and serene rock pools; an ideal place for a dip after a long trek.

DINE: Just a block back from the Pioneer River in Mackay's CBD sits local favourite Fusion 128, where modern Australian dishes are infused with native bush herbs and culinary influences from Asian and French cuisines.

Start planning a Queensland road trip today at [Queensland.com](https://www.queensland.com).

The Road Ahead and Tourism and Events Queensland have partnered to promote the Pacific Coast Way and its many attractions. You can read about the final leg of the journey, Mackay to Cairns, in the next edition.

Got to racq.com/benefits to find out how members can save on a range of experiences, dining options and accommodation along the Pacific Coast Way

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EARLY BIRD DEAL!
SAVE UP TO \$300pp*
May date: Book by 31 Dec

✂ Return airfares included**

DEPARTS > 13 MAY; 17 JUN; 3, 21 JUL 2026

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

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O'REILLY'S RAINFOREST RETREAT, KINGSCLIFF & BYRON BAY

DEPARTS > 24 NOV 2025
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Per person twin share

FROM \$2,675*

TREASURES OF TASMANIA GRAND TOUR

✂ Return airfares included**

DEPARTS > 15 JAN; 16 FEB; 9 MAR 2026

★ Return flights from Brisbane to Hobart ★ Opulent 'Diamond Class' coach travel ★ 3 nights in Hobart with specialty seafood dinner ★ Guided tour of Port Arthur and harbour cruise ★ Wall in the Wilderness ★ 3 nights in Strahan Village with Gordon River cruise & West Coast Wilderness Railway ★ Tasmanian Devil feeding tour ★ 2 nights Devonport ★ Chairlift ride at Cataract Gorge, Launceston ★ 1 night St Helens ★ Scenic flight over Wineglass Bay ★ 26 meals

Per person twin share

FROM \$7,675*

OUTBACK QUEENSLAND, GULF & SAVANNAH SAFARI

EARLY BIRD DEAL!
SAVE UP TO \$200pp*
May date: Book by 31 Dec

✂ One-way airfare from Cairns**

DEPARTS > GOLD: 6 MAY 2026; DIAMOND: 17 JUN; 15 JUL 2026

★ Opulent 'Diamond Class' or 'Gold Class' coach travel ★ 1 night Roma & Blackall ★ 2 nights Longreach ★ Qantas Founders Museum, Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame ★ Australian Age of Dinosaurs at Winton ★ 1 night 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 ★ 33 meals

Per person twin share

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GOLD CLASS

NEW ZEALAND NATURAL WONDERS

✂ Return airfares included**

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★ Return flights from Brisbane to New Zealand ★ 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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FROM **\$4,620***



TURTLE HATCHING ON HERON ISLAND

6 DAYS

★ Luxury 'Gold Class' coach travel ★ 1 night Gladstone ★ 2 nights Heron Island Resort to witness the lifecycle of the turtles and their hatchlings ★ Join Marine Biologists to learn about the Great Barrier Reef ecosystem ★ Private guided island tour Research station visit ★ 2 nights Town of 1770 ★ Full day LARC eco tour to Bustard Bay Lighthouse and Middle Island ★ Historic Childers ★ Gympie ★ 13 meals

DEPARTS > 1 MAR 2026

Per person twin share

FROM **\$3,205***



GREAT OCEAN ROAD & KANGAROO ISLAND

✂️ Return airfares included™

8 DAYS

★ Return flights from Brisbane to Melbourne & from Adelaide to Brisbane ★ Opulent 'Diamond Class' coach travel ★ 1 night Melbourne, Lorne, Warrnambool, Naracoorte & Glenelg ★ Werribee Open Range Zoo ★ Scenic helicopter flight over the Twelve Apostles ★ Naracoorte Caves National Park ★ Seal Bay Conservation Park ★ Raptor Domain Birds of Prey Show ★ 2 nights Kangaroo Island ★ Emu Ridge Eucalyptus Oil Distillery guided tour & lunch ★ 20 meals

DEPARTS > 13 MAR 2026

Per person twin share

FROM **\$5,775***



CARNARVON GORGE & HERON ISLAND

Credit: Tourism Australia

9 DAYS

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

DEPARTS > 25 MAY; 13 AUG 2026

Per person twin share

FROM **\$5,225***



ICONS OF OUTBACK QUEENSLAND

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

8 DAYS

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

DEPARTS > GOLD: 6 JUN; 25 JUL 2026; DIAMOND: 9 MAY; 13 JUN 2026

Per person twin share

FROM **\$4,525****
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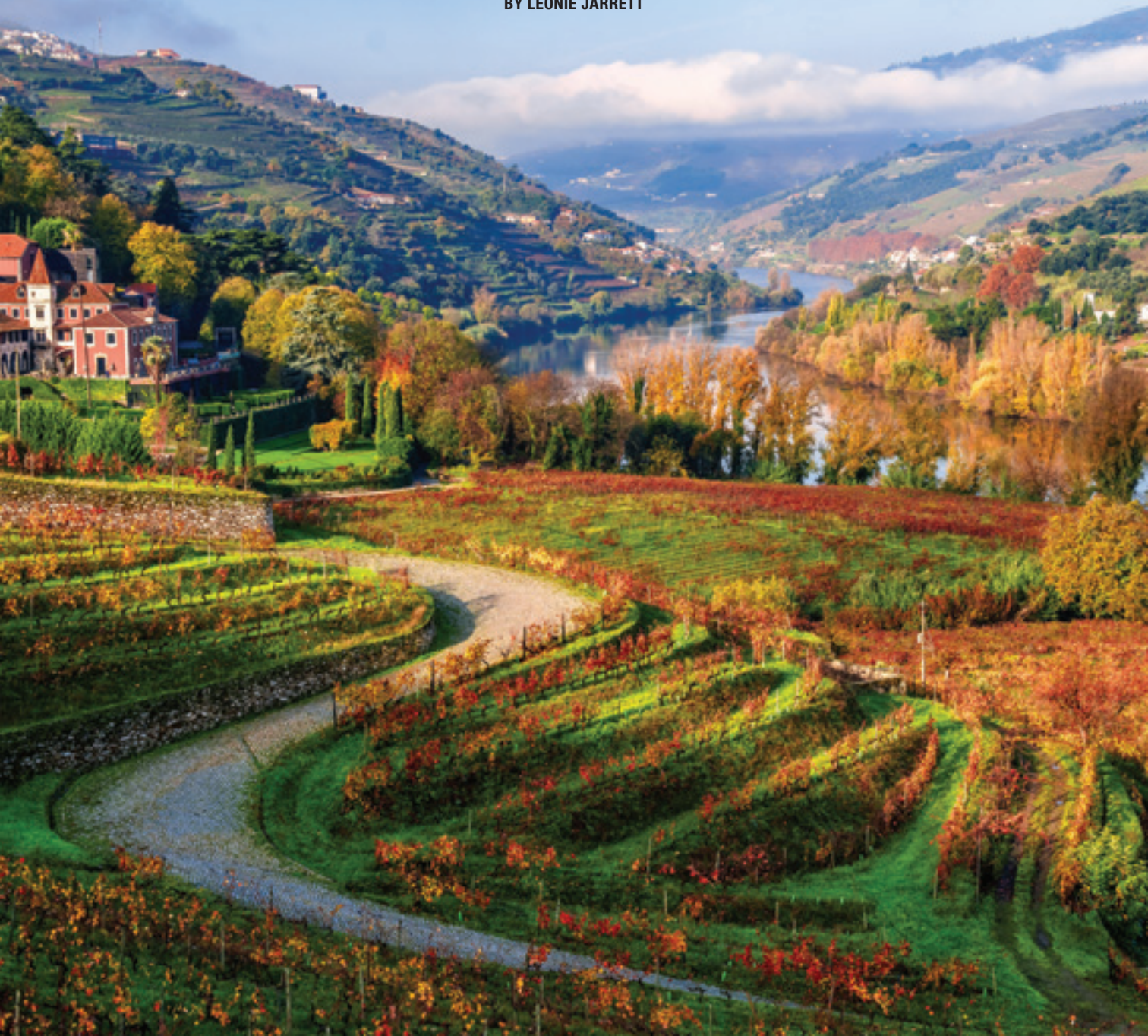
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CRUISING PORTUGAL'S *river of riches*

Glide through Portugal's Douro River where history, food, and scenery create an unforgettable escape.

BY LEONIE JARRETT



I am lying on a lounge on the Sun Deck gliding along the Douro River in Portugal.

The sun is shining, the scenery is green on green on green, and the only noise is the gentle flapping of the flags on the *Viking Torgil*. Ahh, the serenity...

The Viking embrace

THE CRUISE'S ITINERARY starts when Viking representatives first greet you and wrap their arms around you.

In our case, this was at Lisbon Airport. "Don't touch the luggage," my husband and I were told by the Viking driver. Our job, he told us, was to relax and Viking would take care of everything else.

And they did – right to escorting us to Porto airport when the cruise finished and waiting until we passed through security.

Where did we go?

I HAD NEVER been to Portugal, so I was wide-eyed with expectation.

The itinerary did not disappoint – there is something here for lovers of nature, wine, food, history and culture.

The 10-day 'Portugal's River of Gold' itinerary starts in Lisbon (with two nights at the five-star Corinthia Lisbon).

A full day in Lisbon was a great start to our adventure and the beginning of our taste-testing of the Pastel de Nata.

Often referred to (outside of Portugal) as Portuguese tarts, these are mouthfuls of creamy egg custard encased in crispy puff pastry.

They are best eaten warm with cinnamon sprinkled on top. Absolutely lip-smacking!

From Lisbon, Viking transported us to Porto, about 300km away, where we boarded our home away from home, the *Viking Torgil*.

En route to Porto, we stopped in Coimbra and explored part of the 16th-



century university, visiting one of the most beautiful libraries we have ever seen.

What followed was a busy six days of excursions, food and wine.

We learnt about the production of Port wine and the history of Portugal including the 40 years of dictatorship in the 20th century.

Viking expertly transported us all in very comfortable, branded coaches complete with seatbelts, individual climate control, WiFi, USB ports and a toilet.

We had a bonus day in Spain at the golden sandstone city of Salamanca – another historic university town.

This university is the fourth oldest in the world and dates from the 13th century.

The Salamanca cathedrals adjoin each other and date from the 12th and 16th centuries.

The age of these still functioning buildings is hard to comprehend.

After cruising from Porto to the Spanish border, the *Torgil* turned around and cruised back to Porto.

All ships dock on the Vila Nova de Gaia side of the Douro River looking across and up at Porto and the glorious, double-decker, arch-shaped Dom Luis I metal bridge.



The star of the itinerary for us was the winding Douro River. Green and glassy, it provided a serene sailing experience. We never tired of the vertiginous terraces of thick, stone walls planted out with grapes mostly but also olives and almonds – a patchwork in all shades of green.

Onboard activities

THE VIKING TORGIL offers a spacious bar and lounge, an outdoor sitting area – the Aquavit Terrace – a restaurant, and a vast sun deck with pool.

The lounge and restaurant span the width of the ship with panoramic windows on both sides, letting in light and views.

Apart from the usual, informative port talks, I attended a fun Portuguese cooking lesson.

I also joined a Portuguese language lesson although I didn't progress far beyond 'obrigada' (thank you).

There is a piano player in the lounge and an organised activity after dinner. Some evening highlights were a music quiz, and flamenco and folk music performances.



Time to say goodbye

WITH ONLY 98 passengers, it was easy to make friends on this trip.

We exchanged numbers and lamented the end of this lovely journey. But, as the hotel director said at the cocktail party on our last night aboard, "Do not be sad that the trip is over. Be glad that it happened."

I am very glad.
The writer sailed 'Portugal's River of Gold' itinerary as a guest of Viking Cruises.

See page 29 for details on Portugal's River of Gold cruises for 2026 and 2027 from Viking.

Opposite page: Vineyards in Portugal's Douro Valley glow with autumn colours.
Clockwise from left: The Douro River at sunset in Porto; the ornate altar of the Old Cathedral in Salamanca; the lounge aboard the *Viking Torgil*. Photos: Getty Images; Viking Cruises; Leonie Jarrett.



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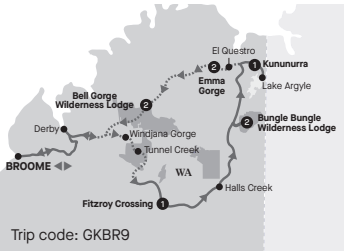
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OUTBACK OASIS *reborn*

Visitors have started returning to Boodjamulla National Park after it was impacted by severe flooding.

BY RAY ANDERSEN

After more than two years of recovery, Boodjamulla National Park in north-west Queensland is reopening to visitors following devastating floods in March 2023.

The staged reopening of Boodjamulla and its facilities began on 4 July. It marked the culmination of extensive work overseen by the Boodjamulla Cooperative Management Council (CMC), comprising the Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI) and the Waanyi Native Title Aboriginal Corporation.

Devastating impact on community

WAANYI NATIVE TITLE Aboriginal Corporation CEO Mick Miller said the record flood levels badly damaged the park and its facilities.

“We had 15-20m of water through the place – it was pretty devastating,” Mr Miller said.

The floodwaters wiped out all infrastructure within the park, including the visitor centre, ranger accommodation, campgrounds, water tanks, pathways, and access to the gorge.

The destruction not only halted park visitation but also deeply affected surrounding communities.

“With Boodjamulla, it’s a destination – you don’t just go there for half a day because it takes so long to get there,” Mr Miller said.

“You have a lot of grey nomads and tour buses that would normally travel through these smaller towns, but they haven’t been coming.

“So, the impact has not just been on the park but also on the wider community too.”

Natural beauty back on show

THANKS TO AN almost \$13 million investment from the State Government and the tireless efforts of rangers and restoration teams, the park is again offering visitors a chance to reconnect with its stunning landscapes and cultural heritage.

“We’ve had a lot of personnel on the ground doing a lot of work, so it is good to be able to welcome visitors again,” Mr Miller said.

“If you walk around the campground, you can see some of the damage, such as trees down, which is a reminder of what came through. But if you go up into the gorge itself, it looks pristine – it has fully bounced back.”

What is special about Boodjamulla?

BOODJAMULLA NATIONAL PARK, which encompasses Lawn Hill Gorge and the World Heritage-listed Riversleigh fossil site, is a stunning outback oasis, where emerald-green waters and lush vegetation attract diverse wildlife and offer breathtaking scenery.

Visitors can enjoy scenic walks, canoeing, cultural heritage sites, and explore the Riversleigh fossil site.

In June 2023, the national park was returned to Traditional Owners, the Waanyi People. Now dedicated as Boodjamulla National Park (Aboriginal Land), it is the first of its tenure class in Queensland.

What sections of the park are open?

SINCE 4 JULY, the following access has been available for visitors to the Lawn Hill Gorge section of Boodjamulla National Park:

- Constance Range walking track.
- Lawn Hill Creek – for swimming and watercraft (one way in/one way out).
- Camp site at Lawn Hill Gorge (with toilet facilities) – available only to authorised commercial tour operators initially.

The southern sections of Boodjamulla National Park – Riversleigh D Site and Miyumba camping area – are fully open for visitors.

Additional sections will reopen from October 2025 as part of the staged plan.

Visit boodjamullanationalpark.com.au and parks.desi.qld.gov.au/parks/boodjamulla for more information and updates.

How do I get to Boodjamulla?

BOODJAMULLA NATIONAL PARK is situated on the ancient sandstone formations of the Constance Range, nestled between the Barkly Tablelands to the south-west and the black soil plains of the Gulf Savanna to the east.

The Lawn Hill Gorge area of the park is located about 340km north-west of Mount Isa, while the Riversleigh World Heritage Area lies about 285km north-west of Mount Isa.

Access to the park is possible from several directions:

- From the south via Mount Isa or Camooweal;
- From the east through Gregory Downs;
- From the north via Hell’s Gate or Doomadgee.

The road from Mount Isa is only partially sealed and not suitable for standard vehicles or caravans. All northern access routes consist of rough, unsealed roads and are recommended for 4WD vehicles only.

The Gregory Downs route may be suitable for off-road caravans, depending on road conditions. Always check local road updates before travelling, especially during the wet season (October–April), when roads can become impassable with little warning.

Opposite page: An aerial view of Lawn Hill Gorge in Boodjamulla National Park, which is recovering well after a major flood in 2023.

Below: A kayaker paddles through Lawn Hill Gorge, dwarfed by towering sandstone cliffs. Boodjamulla is currently undergoing a staged reopening following the flood. Photos: Tourism and Events Queensland



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Seven gems OF KOREA

BY YUNHYE JEONG

Discover seven unforgettable destinations in South Korea – from royal palaces to coastal temples – plus tips for a smooth and scenic journey.

Beyond South Korea's usual tourist showcases, resident Yunhye Jeong recommends seven must-visit destinations.

1. STEP INTO HISTORY TRADITIONAL PALACES IN SEOUL

SEOUL'S MOST ICONIC tourist attractions are its traditional palaces. Experience life as a prince or princess of the Joseon Dynasty by visiting Gyeongbokgung Palace, the first palace established during the Joseon era.

Don't miss Changdeokgung Palace, known for its stunning gardens that harmonise beautifully with nature, and Changgyeonggung Palace, where the Joseon royal family resided.

For a memorable experience, consider renting traditional hanbok costumes from nearby rental shops and capturing breathtaking photos during your visit.

GETTING THERE: Gyeongbokgung Palace is just a five-minute walk from Gyeongbokgung Station on Line 3, while Changdeokgung Palace is a 10-minute walk from Anguk Station on Line 3, and Changgyeonggung Palace can be reached in 10 minutes on foot from Hyehwa Station on Line 4.



2. CULTURAL CHARM MEETS MODERN ART IN INSADONG

INSADONG IS A vibrant area where traditional Korean culture beautifully merges with modern architecture.

The cultural and artistic elements are harmoniously integrated into the buildings, featuring boutique galleries like the Tea Museum and the Sabina Gallery.

Insadong is one of the best places to purchase souvenirs, especially if you're looking for items with a Korean touch.

GETTING THERE: You can easily reach Insadong within a 10-minute walk from Jonggak Station on Line 1, Anguk Station on Line 3, and Jongno 3-ga Station on Line 5.

3. BUKCHON HANOK VILLAGE WHERE TIME STANDS STILL

BUKCHON HANOK VILLAGE is a must-visit area in Seoul. It features a traditional Korean village with about 900 historic houses, known as hanoks.

You can admire the unique wooden architecture and elegantly curved roofs of these homes.

Additionally, you can enjoy the cafes and restaurants that are also housed in hanoks.

GETTING THERE: The village is conveniently located just a five-minute walk from Anguk Station on Subway Line 3.

4. K-BEAUTY AND BITES ON MYEONGDONG SHOPPING STREET

ARE YOU INTERESTED in K-beauty? Would you like to try some delicious Korean street food? Myeongdong Shopping Street is the perfect place to experience both.

Here you can shop for face masks and a variety of cosmetics from both affordable and high-quality Korean brands.

Don't worry if you don't speak Korean; the stores in Myeongdong have multilingual staff who can assist you in English, Japanese, and Chinese.

If you get hungry while shopping for cosmetics, treat yourself to an array of affordable and mouth-watering street food, including skewers, waffles, Tanghulu, and more.

GETTING THERE: Myeongdong Station on Line 4.

Opposite page: Two women dressed in traditional hanbok stroll through the historic streets of Bukchon Hanok Village.

Left: Cherry blossoms bloom in front of Namsan Tower, Seoul.

Above: The serene Haedong Yonggungsa Temple, perched on the coast in Busan.



5. SOAR ABOVE SEOUL AT NAMSAN PARK AND TOWER

NAMSAN TOWER IS a famous landmark in Seoul, located within Namsan Park. Standing at 480m above sea level, it offers stunning panoramic views of the city.

If you visit during the cherry blossom season, from late March to early April, you'll be able to see the beautiful blossoms in full bloom.

Alternatively, if you visit during the autumn leaves season, from late October to early November, the mountain roads will be adorned with vibrant red foliage.

GETTING THERE: To get to Namsan Park, take the cable car from the Namsan Cable Car Stop, which is a 10-minute walk from Myeongdong Station on Line 4. You can also reach the park by getting off at Chungmuro Station or Dongguk University Station on Line 3, then taking bus 01A or 01B and disembarking at the Namsan Seoul Tower stop.

6. GAMCHEON CULTURE VILLAGE BUSAN'S ARTISTIC HILLSIDE

IF YOUR SCHEDULE allows, consider adding Busan, South Korea's second-largest city, to your itinerary.

You can take the KTX train to Busan Station and visit Gamcheon Culture Village, where colourful rooftops are clustered together along the ridge.

Often referred to as Korea's Machu Picchu or Santorini, this area offers picturesque scenery perfect for taking photos, including adorable fish murals and a mural of popular Korean boy band Bangtan Sonyeondan (BTS).

GETTING THERE: To reach Gamcheon Culture Village, get off at Toseong Station on Busan Subway Line 1. Then, take village bus Saha 1-1, Seo-gu 2, or Seo-gu 2-2 from the Busan National University Hospital bus stop, and disembark at Gamcheon Culture Village.



7. HAEDONG YONGGUNGSA TEMPLE SCENERY BY THE SEA

HAEDONG YONGGUNGSA TEMPLE is the most famous Buddhist temple in Busan. It is situated along the coastal cliffs and is renowned for its picturesque scenery.

Visitors can admire the traditional architecture of a Korean temple against the breathtaking backdrop of the blue sea.

The temple is particularly beautiful in spring when cherry blossoms bloom and in autumn when colourful foliage fills the landscape.

GETTING THERE: To reach Haedong Yonggungsa Temple, take Busan Subway Line 1 to Haeundae Station, then transfer to bus 181 and get off at the Yonggungsa Temple stop.



Above: Traditional Korean masks, known as tal, hang on display in a shop in Insadong—renowned as one of the best places to buy souvenirs.

Below left: An aerial view of the colourful Gamcheon Culture Village in Busan at dusk. This hillside village offers picturesque scenery and unforgettable experiences for visitors.

TIPS FOR PLANNING YOUR KOREAN ADVENTURE

When is the best time to visit Korea?

IN MY OPINION, the best times to visit Korea are during the spring and autumn. Korea experiences four distinct seasons, and both spring and autumn have relatively mild weather, making them ideal for travelling in light clothing.

In particular, the cherry blossoms in April are stunning, while the mountains and trees display beautiful, colourful foliage in autumn around October.

Will the language barrier be a problem?

SUBWAY STATIONS, INFORMATION signs, and bus stations in Korea feature both Korean and English.

Don't worry, many restaurants and shops often have staff who can communicate in basic English as well.

However, learning a few simple Korean greetings can enhance your travel experience.

- Annyeong-haseyo (Hello)
- Kamsahamnida (Thank you)
- (Product name) hana juseyo (Please give me one [product name])
- Eolmayeyo? (How much is this?)

- (Place name) eodieyo? (Where is [place name]?)

Is the accommodation and food expensive?

WHEN TRAVELLING IN Korea, a two- to three-star hotel typically costs about \$150 to \$250 per night. These hotels are well-equipped and offer good amenities.

If you want to save money, consider staying at a motel or an Airbnb, which can range from \$50 to \$150 per night. This option not only allows you to experience the local vibe but helps reduce expenses.

Food prices in Korea are comparable to those in Australia or slightly lower, with a delicious meal at a restaurant costing about \$15 to \$20.

How do I get a visa?

TO TRAVEL TO South Korea, you will need a K-ETA visa. You must apply at least 72 hours before departure via the official K-ETA website or mobile app. Once approved, you can enter Korea without submitting an arrival card.

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DAY 5: CUNNAMULLA TO THARGOMINDAH

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DAY 6: THARGOMINDAH TO QUILPIE

TRY OPAL FOSSICKING, visit local museums, and enjoy sunset views at Toogunna Plains with a station tour.

DAY 7: TOOGUNNA PLAINS TO EROMANGA

DISCOVER 'COOPER' THE titanosaur at the Eromanga Natural History Museum and explore the fossil lab.

DAY 8: EROMANGA TO WINDORAH

DRIVE THROUGH WILDFLOWER plains and red sandy hills. In September, catch the iconic Windorah Yabby Races.

DAY 9: WINDORAH TO LONGREACH

STOP AT JUNDAH and Stonehenge. Sign your name in stone at the Rockside gallery and enjoy sweeping views.

DAY 10: LONGREACH

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Red Centre rising

A PILGRIMAGE TO ULURU AND BEYOND

While it's impossible to outshine the natural highlights of the Red Centre, there's a bright new focus on the heart of Australia.

BY CAROLYNE JASINSKI

It is bitterly cold before the sun rises over the Red Centre of Australia with Uluru looming on the horizon.

The massive monolith is not yet visible but there's a 'presence' you can't avoid.

We've come to watch the desert become a canvas for Sunrise Journeys – an indigenous art experience that tells a story of connection to the land.

Message with meaning

THE DESERT AIR is freezing but there's a warmth in the story telling and music by the Anangu, the Traditional Custodians of this Country, that's even better than the rugs cocooning us and mugs of hot tea.

The message is that by coming together we are one.

This new experience is one of many shining a light on the physical and spiritual heart of Australia.

Its inspiration comes from a painting by Anangu artists Selina Kulitja, Denise Brady and Valerie Brumby.

"Our hearts burn with passion to share our country and knowledge with the world," says Denise.

But they are stories that can only be told and heard while you are here.

Mother Nature soon takes over, turning on her own spotlight. The sun peaks over the horizon lighting up the entire landscape from Uluru to Kata Tjuta, 50km away.

At the same time, on another sand dune, guests on a Desert Awakenings tour, learn about the vegetation, wildlife and people who call this land home.

The great Aussie pilgrimage

GETTING TO ULURU is an adventure in itself.

For road trippers, this is the great Aussie pilgrimage.

It's a 445km drive south from Alice Springs along the Red Centre Way.

There's lots of 'nothing' in between stops like Stuart's Well, Erldunda, where we turn right and head west, and Curtin Springs with its Wayside Inn and campground.

We pass Mt Conner, dubbed 'Fooluru' because it looks like Uluru; until you see the real thing.

But don't mistake the vast landscape for a boring trip.

Wide open spaces, big blue skies and a patchwork of red soil and unusually green Aussie scrub are your tickets to a real escape.

Wonders of Uluru and Kata Tjuta

JUST SEEING ULURU and Kata Tjuta is magical. But you need to get up close for the full impact.

There are many options at Uluru – from short self-guided Kuniya and Mala walks to the 10.6km base hike. You can also hire bikes or segways.

To learn about the Anangu culture and the park's natural environment, take a free ranger-guided walk and visit the Cultural Centre.

At Kata Tjuta, the Valley of the Winds and Walpa Gorge hikes are the best way to experience this land of 'many heads'.

Settle in at Yulara

YULARA IS THE tourist hub for Uluru.

Ayers Rock Resort has accommodation for all budgets, from a campground to Sails in the Desert.

Grab a coffee at Kulata Academy Cafe, take the free shuttle bus around the village and join in free activities like a Gallery of Central Australia tour, Bush Yarns, didgeridoo and painting workshops and movies at Arkani Theatre.

Try the Indigenous-inspired Australian Native High Tea with finger lime almond tarts, lemon myrtle scones and quandong green tea.

Shining after dark

SUNSET OFFERS A new perspective of Uluru and more experiences that light a path to this rock star.

Wintjiri Wiru brilliantly combines modern art and technology with ancient storylines. After-sunset drinks, canapes, and a picnic hamper, (weather permitting) the sky fills with a 1,000-drone light show that tells the history of the Anangu.

At Field of Light, 50,000 light 'flowers' illuminate seven football fields of desert. A Field of Light Star Pass includes drinks and canapes and a wander through the fields or go for gold with the Sounds of Silence dinner.

Kings Canyon adventures

KINGS CANYON IN Watarrka National Park is another geological wonder that can be seen on a side trip from Uluru or on the Red Centre Way drive back to Alice Springs.

There's lots to do while staying at Discovery Kings Canyon; the 6km Canyon Rim Walk across 100m-high sandstone walls, helicopter flights and the 69 Light Towers that fill the outback air with a kaleidoscope of colour and music.

There's also a five-course, fire-side dinner called Under the Desert Moon with outback touches like wattleseed seasoning, quandong brandy granita, roast lamb with chocolate pepper berry jus, and matching Australian wines.

Offroad on the Mereenie Loop

IF YOU'RE STILL feeling adventurous, follow the Red Centre Way back to Alice Springs via the 4WD-only Mereenie Loop.

Beware of wandering cattle, camels and wild horses running free, often straight in front of you.

After rain, you might also face boggy patches and corrugations where traffic has chewed up the track.

Once you reach bitumen again, the return loop goes via the West MacDonnell Ranges (Tjoritja).

From Glen Helen Gorge at the western tip to Ormiston Gorge, the Ochre Pits, Serpentine Gorge, Ellery Creek Big Hole and Standley Chasm there are hikes, swimming holes, bike trails and quiet spots to watch wildlife.

Some stops have kiosks and campgrounds, others even have bars and motel rooms.

The last stop is Simpsons Gap where a permanent water hole provides the perfect place to sit and reflect on how relaxed you are.

After all, it's the Red Centre Way. *The writer was a guest of Voyages Indigenous Tourism.*



Previous page: Uluru is an imposing sight, rising 348m above the central Australian desert floor.

Above: The tranquil beauty of the waterhole at Simpsons Gap.

Below left: The stunning Wintjiri Wiru drone show lights up the night sky.

Photos: Getty Images for Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia; Carolyne Jasinski.

GETTING THERE

IF YOU DON'T have the time to drive from Alice Springs to Uluru, there are direct flights from Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Cairns to the heart of Australia. Hire cars and shuttle buses are available at the airport.

Don't forget

- Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park pass: parksaustralia.gov.au/uluru
- Mereenie Loop permit (\$6.50) from Discovery Kings Canyon.
- West MacDonnell and Watarrka National Park passes: nt.gov.au/parks
- Fuel is available at Alice Springs, Stuart's Well, Erldunda, Curtin Springs, Yulara, Discovery Kings Canyon and Glen Helen Gorge.

- **More information visit** northernterritory.com voyages.com.au

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BY GED BULMER

TASMAN BRINGS SWAGGER AND SURPRISES

After its long marketing blitz, we test the Kia Tasman ute's performance, features, and off-road capability to see if it lives up to the hype.

Few vehicles in recent memory have had the sustained marketing build-up that Kia has heaped upon its new ute, the Tasman.

Television advertisements featuring a who's-who of sporting legends ranging from footballer Allan Langer to tennis star Ash Barty and Melbourne Cup-winning jockey Damien Oliver have been on high rotation in prime-time slots for some 18 months.

But now that the brand awareness work has been done, the Tasman's rubber finally gets to hit the road and we get to answer the question, "Is it any good?"

Fortunately for Kia, its new ute is indeed very good.

Good enough, according to Kia Australia CEO Damien Meredith to carve out a 20,000 unit per annum slice of the Australian dual-cab ute market, and to become a top-four player in the segment that includes established models like the Toyota HiLux, Ford Ranger, Isuzu D-Max, and Mitsubishi Triton, plus a throng of new Chinese rivals.

Unsurprisingly, the Tasman puts its best foot forward in top-spec X-Pro trim, but we also sampled other grades including a cloth-trimmed cab-chassis

variant fitted with Kia's optional heavy-duty aluminium tray, one of around 100 accessories available for the new ute.

No matter the trim grade or the accessories fitted, the elephant in the room is the Tasman's challenging appearance.

With its bluff front end and blistered wheelarch protrusions, the Korean ute takes a decidedly different approach to its more conservatively styled rivals, one that may be enough to deter some buyers from the get-go.

But for those prepared to get behind the wheel there is plenty to like, including in the top-grade X-Pro 4x4 sampled here a cabin that is particularly well appointed and roomy.

The interior looks and feels more like that of a high-grade SUV than a workhorse ute, with a panoramic digital display stretching halfway across the dash.

The dash design and trim quality are a cut above what is found even in top-grade variants in this segment, with well-proportioned front seats clad in stylish artificial leather with seat heating and ventilation, plus 10-way power adjustment.

The long list of standard features includes must-haves like wireless Apple CarPlay, Android Auto, and dual wireless smartphone charging pads, plus nice-to-haves like a tilt-and-slide sunroof and eight-speaker Harman Kardon audio system.

The cabin is impressively roomy too, with Kia making much of the fact its ute offers more head, leg and shoulder room than HiLux and Ranger.

Rear-seat passengers are treated to rear privacy glass, a seatback recline function that avoids the uncomfortable straight-backed position of many rivals, outboard seat heating and 45 litres of storage under the seat base.

Conversation between front and rear occupants is easy thanks to outstanding isolation of noise, vibration and harshness (NVH), the cabin proving impressively quiet over a variety of different road surfaces.

Pre-launch questions about the ability of Kia's 2.2-litre turbodiesel four-cylinder to mix it with larger capacity rivals appear to be largely unfounded, with the engine delivering its 154kW/440Nm effortlessly to ensure relaxed highway performance and brisk off-the-mark acceleration.

Fuel consumption is a competitive 8.1L/100km.

The calibration of the eight-speed automatic is spot on, too, the gearbox reacting swiftly to accelerator inputs or

incline changes, slurring up and down the ratios to keep the engine in its optimal torque band.

The combination did have to work harder during the towing exercise but that would be true of most utes tasked with hauling 2,200kg.

Towing performance is aided by an integrated trailer brake controller, trailer stability assist system, and a tow mode that optimises transmission shift characteristics according to trailer weight.

The Tasman's tub will accommodate a full-size Australian or Euro pallet with Kia claiming about 100 litres more cargo volume than key rivals.

There are tie-down hooks on all models with the X-Line and X-Pro gaining an adjustable rail system plus handy features like a 240V outlet (SX+ and above), stepping points integrated into the rear bumper, and a lidded storage box above the passenger side rear wheel guard.

Off-road ability is particularly impressive, with 800mm maximum wading depth, competitive approach and departure angles, plus selectable high- and low-range gearing.

Unique to the X-Pro are more aggressive 17-inch All-Terrain tyres, an electronically actuated rear differential lock, and an additional Rock Terrain mode on top of the Auto, Snow, Mud, Sand modes of other variants.

The X-Pro also gets X-Trek, a low-speed cruise control system for difficult terrain, and a Ground View monitor that uses cameras to project a virtual view of the terrain ahead.

Of course, not all Tasman's are as generously equipped as the \$74,990 (MRLP) X-Pro, with more humble fare in

other variants including the entry-level Tasman S 4x2 single cab-chassis which costs \$38,010.

The range covers 11 variants across five trimlines, comprising S, SX, SX+, X-Line, and X-Pro, with the most affordable dual-cab 4x4 variant being the S 4x4 priced at \$49,990 (MRLP).

On the all-important safety front, all Tasman's come with a very comprehensive package of active and safety equipment including the latest ADAS (Advanced Driver Assistance Systems), but only the S, SX and SX+ dual cab 4x4 variants have a five-star ANCAP rating.

Arriving late as it has to the fiercely competitive Aussie ute party, Kia needed to over-deliver with the Tasman and first impressions are that it has done just that.



PRICE: \$74,990 (MRLP)

WARRANTY: Seven years/unlimited kilometres

POWERTRAIN: 2.2-litre turbocharged four-cylinder diesel, eight-speed automatic, 2WD or AWD, dual-range 4x4 (154kW/440Nm)

ANCAP CRASH RATING: Not rated

FUEL CONSUMPTION (CO2): 8.1L/100km (215g/km CO2)

FOR: Nicely finished and generously equipped; smooth, quiet and impressively comfortable; excellent rear seat accommodation; competitive towing and off-road capability; long warranty.

AGAINST: Styling not everyone's cup of tea; full suite of off-road features only available on top-of-the-line model; no ANCAP rating for top-grade variants; front suspension feels a little soft at road speeds.





BY ANDREW KIRK

PLUG-IN POWER MEETS OFF-ROAD ADVENTURE

The BYD Shark 6 PHEV blends petrol-electric efficiency with rugged capability, with the bonus of having access to onboard power.

There's something special about heading to the beach early in the morning – gear packed and the promise of sun, surf, and salt air ahead.

But this time, the journey has a twist; I'm driving the BYD Shark 6, one of Australia's first plug-in hybrid electric utes.

With the arrival of models like the Shark 6, GWM Cannon Alpha, and Ford Ranger PHEV, plug-in hybrids are entering the light commercial and off-road space, offering a compelling mix of electric efficiency and rugged capability.

Unlike conventional hybrids, PHEVs can be charged from the grid and

typically offer 60–100km of electric-only range – enough for most daily commutes.

When the weekend rolls around, you have the backup of the petrol engine, if required, to take you wherever your adventure leads.

On a sunny Queensland morning, we head to Noosa North Shore to see how the Shark 6 PHEV ute handles the sand.

After the trip from Brisbane, about 60% of the 30kWh battery had been

used, so the BYD switched seamlessly to parallel hybrid mode, where the petrol engine and electric motors work together.

The combined output of two electric motors and a 1.5-litre turbocharged petrol four-cylinder engine is a hefty 321kW of power and 650Nm of torque.

To put that in perspective, the Ford Ranger V6 diesel, a favourite among off-roaders, produces 184kW and 600Nm.

The extra grunt of the Shark 6's PHEV powertrain makes a real difference.

With Sand mode engaged and tyre pressures dropped to 18psi, we cruise onto the beach north of Noosa.

There's none of your old-school locking hubs or fiddling with a transfer case to engage low range – you just point the Chinese ute at the track and away you go.

After decades of driving petrol and diesel utes across beaches and bush tracks, I can honestly say this was one of the easiest and most capable vehicles I've driven in soft conditions.

The vehicle floated across the soft sand effortlessly, never once feeling like it might bog down. Later, having found the perfect spot for an overnight campsite,



we pull up, eager to experience another benefit of PHEVs – their ability to power appliances.

With the Shark 6's vehicle-to-load (V2L) functionality, we had access to two standard 240V power outlets in the tray, capable of delivering up to 6kW.

That's more than enough to run a fridge, coffee machine, induction cooktop, lights, and chargers – all without the need for a generator.

In our case, with the battery back up to 50%, having opted to store rather than use energy from the generator for driving, and a modest 300W draw from our camping setup, we could have powered everything for about 50 hours.

Add a portable solar panel, and you're practically off-grid.

For tradespeople, this setup can also run tools on-site, and it's a very

Left and above: The BYD Shark 6 PHEV tackles soft sand with ease, blending electric efficiency and off-road power. The plug-in hybrid also comes with two onboard 240V outlets, ideal for campers and tradies. Photos: Dave Pattinson.

handy backup for anyone dealing with a power outage at home. Off-road adventurers have long been able to add a 12V system to a petrol or diesel four-wheel drive, or carry fuel and a generator – but that adds cost and complexity.

Having 240V power built into your vehicle from the factory represents a potential saving of thousands of dollars, and it's ready to go whenever you are.

If you're in the market for a new four-wheel drive – whether for work, play, or both – it's worth considering a PHEV.

Read our review of the Ford Ranger PHEV, page 57

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ADVERTORIAL

THE BUSH TAUGHT ME TO LISTEN.

Bluetooth Helped Me Hear What I'd Been Missing.

I grew up spending weekends and holidays with my father, exploring farms just outside of Albury, on the southern New South Wales border with Victoria – beautiful country where the Murray runs like a lifeline through dry land, bringing vineyards, orchards and grain farms to life.

My father was a quiet man, but he had a sharp ear. He'd walk the paddocks, pausing now and then to cock his head at the slightest noise. "Listen, Jimmy," he'd say, "it's the Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater," or just as likely, "Hear that pinging sound? That tractor engine is about to bite the dust." To him, sound was a tool – just as important as a spanner or pliers. The creak of a gate, the rhythm of the irrigation pump, the whine of a bolt starting to loosen. These weren't background noise. They were signals, stories, and warnings. He taught me to listen, really listen, to the bush. Once you step out of the city, that's what you're left with: the language of the land. That's why it hits so hard now, knowing how many of our farmers – the same men and women who live by sound – are losing their

*hearing, and with it, a critical piece of their toolkit. These days, I live in the city. It's a different kind of noisy. But the lesson's the same- you've got to know what to listen for. For me now, hearing loss isn't about missing the rattle of an irrigation line or the strain of a tractor—it's about struggling to catch a conversation in a café, missing half a joke on a phone call, or constantly turning the TV up until everyone else complains. That was my world. Until everything changed. I got Bluetooth in my next pair of hearing aids. Right away, everything around me sounded clearer. Conversations in noisy places, voices at a distance— suddenly I was hearing things I hadn't even noticed I was missing. And then came the bonus: Bluetooth. Now I can take FaceTime audio calls with my grandkids— and I actually hear them. The difference is staggering. Streaming audio straight to my ears cuts through the noise. It's not just calls either. Watching TV in private has been transformed. I can stream the audio from my Bluetooth TV straight to my ears, and the clarity is **astounding**.*



This story reflects the real experiences of one person living with hearing loss and the benefits of Bluetooth. Name and image have been changed to protect their privacy.

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“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, all achieved by phone and internet. Brilliant!” – Trevor, NSW

“Thankyou. I use the Bluetooth for video calls with the family and the clarity is supreme. In all other areas, they operate better than my last set of hearing aids that cost \$6500.” – Jen, QLD

“So much better than name brands more expensive ones.” – Anthony, WA

“Very easy to use and effective. Proof that you don't have to be fleeced of your \$\$\$ by the big hearing retailers.” – Tony, QLD

“My 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

“For two years I've been trying to get clarity in my previous hearing aids with no success. The Jaspa 3 with its clarity button has solved the problem straight away. Very happy. Thank you so much.” – George, QLD

“I am happy so far and I shall not be looking any further for hearing aids. I have been using hearing aids now for 30 years - Many brands with their expensive price tags and limited life spans.” – David, NSW

“I was quoted \$8000 from a major hearing provider for expensive hearing aids with Bluetooth as the main feature. When I saw that these new Bluetooth devices were about to be released by PocketAid, but for a quarter of the price, it was a no brainer.” – Johan, NSW

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Spot Mini 6

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Mobility

BY RAY ANDERSEN

FAMILY DRIVEN BY BEACH TRAGEDY

The Harrison Payne Initiative honours a young life lost by promoting road and off-road safety, supporting grieving families, and driving change through education.

A Burpengary East couple is using the tragic loss of their son as a powerful tool to raise road safety awareness.

In 2021, Harrison ‘Harry’ Payne, 18, was a passenger in a dual-cab ute being driven recklessly by a friend on Woorim Beach, Bribie Island.

The vehicle rolled, throwing Harry from the cabin and killing him instantly.

The driver was charged and pleaded guilty to dangerous operation of a motor vehicle causing death. In 2022, a Queensland District Court sentenced him to three years in prison, suspended after nine months, and disqualified him from driving for three years.

Determined to make a difference, Harry's parents, Kylie and Kent, launched the Harrison Payne Initiative to promote road and off-road safety and support families affected by tragedies.

They share Harry's story in schools, online, and at community events to encourage responsible driving and passenger advocacy.

Kylie said sharing stories like Harry's made the message of road safety more personal and memorable.

“We're just a mum and dad from the suburbs who tragically lost our youngest son but we want more people to hear Harry's story and tell their kids about him and what happened,” Kylie said.

“We aim to fill gaps in formal driver education, especially around beach and 4WD safety. If we can save one life, then

we're happy.”

Kylie said many drivers wrongly viewed beaches as recreational zones and not regulated roads, despite rules still applying.



“Research and anecdotal evidence show that drivers often relax too much on beaches or off-road, which can lead to serious consequences,” she said.

“Crashes and injuries are becoming more common, especially with the rise in four-wheel drive usage.

“Fatalities have occurred due to rollovers, collisions, and vehicles hitting sunbathers or campers – often because drivers were too relaxed or unaware.

“It's a classic case of ‘out of sight, out of mind’ –but the risks are very real.”

The initiative raises funds through merchandise sales and events like Deadlift for Harry, which blends Harry's love of fitness with community engagement and fundraising.

Merchandise is branded with Harry's number plate HKP03 and is meant to start conversations about safety.

“Every dollar raised goes directly to supporting families and expanding safety education programs,” Kylie said.

“These gatherings aren't just fundraisers – they're moments of remembrance, solidarity, and hope.”

The Harrison Payne Initiative also offers practical support, emotional care, and community connection to those affected by road tragedies. This

Woorim Beach, where Harry Payne (pictured below) tragically lost his life when the ute he was a passenger in rolled.

includes financial assistance for funeral costs, mental health services, and living expenses – helping families focus on healing without being overwhelmed by immediate financial pressures.

“We also connect families with counselling services and peer support networks, creating safe spaces for people to share their stories and find strength in community,” Kylie said.

The initiative promotes four key safety messages:

1. Drive responsibly – everywhere

- Whether you're on the road or the beach, your choices behind the wheel matter.
- Understand the terrain, adjust your speed, and never treat off-road driving like a thrill ride.

2. Speak up as a passenger

- If something feels unsafe, say something.
- Passengers – especially young ones – should feel empowered to advocate for their own safety.

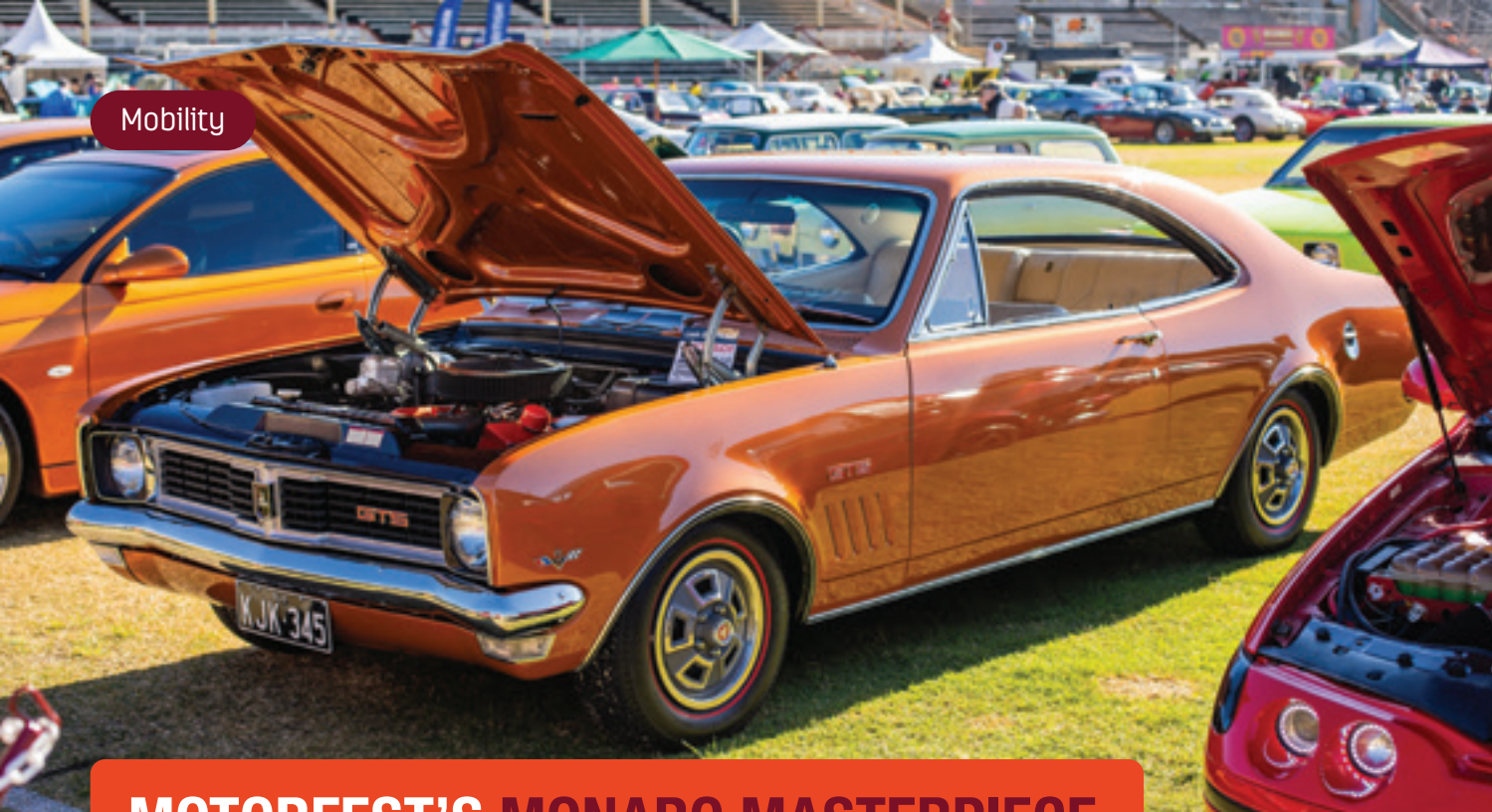
3. Think before you drive

- Consider the people inside and outside your vehicle.
- One reckless moment can change lives forever.

4. Respect the rules

- Road rules exist for a reason – follow them, even in places where enforcement feels lax.

Visit theharrisonpayneinitiative.com.au to learn more.



MOTORFEST'S MONARO MASTERPIECE

RACQ MOTORFEST 2025 once again delivered a dazzling display of automotive excellence, with nearly 180 entries across nine vehicle categories.

But one car stood out from the crowd – a flawless 1969 Holden Monaro HT GTS that claimed the coveted Judges' Choice award.

Widely regarded as one of the most iconic Australian cars ever built, the HT Monaro has long held a special place in the hearts of enthusiasts.

This year, Jamie Kunst's meticulously preserved example wowed judges with its authenticity and presence.

Despite fierce competition, Jamie's Monaro – also the winner of the Australian category – stole the spotlight with its classic coupe silhouette, whitewall radial tyres, and original five-slot wheels. Bold twin bonnet vents,



sporty side gills, and signature GT stripes completed the look, capturing the essence of Aussie performance heritage.

Judges said Jamie's Monaro was one of the finest examples they had seen, praising the vehicle's pristine condition and faithful restoration.

MotorFest 2025 was held at the Brisbane Showgrounds in June and raised \$13,000 for the RACQ Foundation.



Top: Jamie Kunst's 1969 Holden Monaro HT GTS was the pick of the bunch at MotorFest 2025, winning the Judges' Choice award. **Left and above:** Some of the wide variety of vehicles that presented a stunning display at MotorFest. Photos: Dave Pattinson.

MOTORFEST 2025 WINNERS

JUDGES' CHOICE AND AUSTRALIAN 1969 Holden Monaro HT GTS (Jamie Kunst)

AMERICAN 1968 Ford Mustang Fastback (Neil Hallows)

ASIAN 2002 Nissan Silvia S15 (Jordan Hill)

BRITISH 1939 Jaguar SS 100 (David Fryer)

EUROPEAN 1972 BMW 3.0 CS Alpina B2 (Rod Campbell)

MODIFIED 1940 Ford Cabriolet (Graeme Urquhart)

MOTORCYCLE 1974 Ducati 750 GT (Gaven Dall'Osto)

VETERAN 1916 Ford Model T (Don Hill)

VINTAGE Falcon Knight Model 10 Roadster (Allan Twomey)



BY GED BULMER

RENEE ROCKS VINTAGE STYLE

RACQ holds a special place in the heart of this Holden-driving, rockabilly-loving Brisbane girl.

IT'S NOT EASY standing out among the throng of people and cars at RACQ MotorFest but Renee Johnston does just that, dressed like an extra from *Grease* and cruising confidently into the packed arena at the wheel of her classic 1962 EK Holden.

Renee, her father Des, and the well-preserved EK are regular attendees at MotorFest, with Renee primed for the Best Dressed competition in vintage '50s attire, her curls pinned up in the 'Victory Rolls' style popularised by post-World War II starlets and pin-up girls.

A fan of rockabilly culture, Renee loves the fashion, fun and dancing that is a cornerstone of the scene and has attended car shows, rock 'n' roll dances and pin-up competitions throughout South East Queensland.

She has also managed to connect with a group of like-minded female classic car owners.

"I'm part of the Old Girls on the Road community group and we regularly go on 'Girly Runs' which involves getting together and cruising somewhere for a lunch or picnic in our pride-and-joys," Renee said.

There's no power steering, so Renee's EK requires sturdy arms



when parking, but with its 186 'Red' motor breathing through a Stromberg carburettor and its handling improved by later-model HR Holden front suspension, Renee reckons it "goes like a rocket".

But despite all the care and attention Renee clearly bestows on her beloved Aussie classic, the old Holden occasionally lets her down.

"My EK Holden has been on a few RACQ tilt-tray trucks over the years," she said.

"I'm so grateful that the boys came and helped me out and got us home safely."

Renee's connection to RACQ runs deeper than roadside assistance callouts and MotorFest, as two of her grandparents met while working for the Club and later married.

"My grandfather Roy Johnston was

an RACQ roadside mechanic and was with RACQ for 23 years between 1932 and 1955," she said.

"He met his wife Annetta Williams, my grandmother, at RACQ where she worked as a driver training instructor."

The memories Renee cherishes

include old black and white photos of her grandmother in front of an Austin A40 Devon driver training car, and others of her grandfather with different RACQ Roadside Assistance vehicles, including a World War II Jeep and a Harley-Davidson motorcycle with sidecar.

Above: Renee Johnston and her prized 1962 EK Holden are regulars at MotorFest. **Below:** Renee's grandfather, former RACQ patrol Roy Johnston. Photos: Dave Pattinson.



SIX OF THE BEST NEW LOW-EMISSION VEHICLES

BY GED BULMER



SUBARU FORESTER AWD HYBRID

SUBARU'S FORESTER HAS been a favourite of families and adventurers for almost two decades, with the recently launched sixth-generation model introducing a Toyota-derived hybrid drivetrain that promises more power and efficiency. The improved hybrid drivetrain features on three of the seven variants and combines the company's familiar 2.5-litre flat four-cylinder engine with an 88kW electric motor and a 1.1kWh battery system. The new hybrid drivetrain is around 0.5L/100km more fuel efficient than the previous Forester hybrid, returning combined cycle fuel consumption of 6.7L/100km versus 7.9L/100km for the non-hybrid variants. Hybrid models also boast a meaningful increase in power and torque, with maximum power of 145kW versus 136kW for the non-hybrid, and the electric motor contributing an additional 276Nm to the combustion engine's 212Nm, where the non-hybrid offers 247Nm all up. Pricing for the new hybrid lineup starts at \$46,490 for the Forester AWD Hybrid and tops out at \$55,990 for the Forester AWD Hybrid Touring.

PRICE: \$46,490 (MRLP)
POWERTRAIN: 2.5L horizontally opposed four-cylinder petrol, 88kW electric motor, 1.1kWh battery, eight-speed CVT, all-wheel drive (145kW/212Nm+276Nm combined)
FUEL CONSUMPTION: 6.7L/100km (combined cycle)
RANGE: 1,000km (estimated)
ANCAP SAFETY RATING: Five stars (2024)
WARRANTY: Five years/unlimited km



MG HS ESSENCE SUPER HYBRID

DESPITE THE HEROIC 'Super Hybrid' nomenclature the MG HS is a conventional plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV) that combines a 1.5-litre turbocharged petrol four-cylinder engine with a 24.7kWh battery and a front-mounted electric motor. Combined outputs are a healthy 220kW/350Nm with the battery-electric combination good for up to 135km (NEDC) of electric driving, or up to 1,000km of range with a fully charged battery and a brimmed 55-litre fuel tank. MG's adoption of the Super Hybrid moniker stems from the fact it is tuned to drive more like a conventional hybrid with a long-range battery, as opposed to PHEVs which tend to prioritise EV mode. You can choose to use the EV-only mode until the battery is depleted, after which the MG HS simply switches to a conventional (plug-less) hybrid mode, when it sips a still frugal 4.5L/100km. The MG HS comes in Excite and Essence trim variants with a \$3,000 price difference between the two. The MG impressed with its smoothness and its roomy, well-finished interior.

PRICE: \$55,990 (driveaway)
POWERTRAIN: 1.5L turbocharged petrol four-cylinder, front-mounted electric motor, 24.7kWh battery (220kW/350Nm combined)
FUEL CONSUMPTION: 0.7L/100km (with full charge), 4.5L/100km (in hybrid mode)
RANGE: 135km (EV-only, NEDC) / 1,000km combined (estimated)
ANCAP SAFETY RATING: Five stars (2024)
WARRANTY: 10 years/250,000km (vehicle and battery)



LEAPMOTOR C10 DESIGN REEV ULTRA HYBRID

CHINESE CARMAKER LEAPMOTOR has followed up its first Australian model, the battery-electric C10, with a petrol-electric version featuring range-extender technology. Leapmotor calls its new model the C10 REEV, or Range Extender Electric Vehicle. The C10 REEV is smooth, quiet and responsive with its 28.4kWh battery able to deliver an electric driving range of 170km (NEDC). The car can be plugged in to recharge but when the battery charge gets low the C10 uses its 1.5-litre petrol four-cylinder engine as a generator, charging the battery and delivering a combined cycle driving range of up to 1,150km (NEDC). Unlike a regular or plug-in hybrid, the combustion engine in the C10 REEV never directly drives the wheels and only generates electricity to charge the battery. The result is a similarly smooth driving experience to an EV, with the C10's 158kW electric motor driving the rear wheels, and the combination delivering impressively frugal combined cycle fuel consumption of just 0.9L/100km.

PRICE: \$49,990 (driveaway)
POWERTRAIN: 1.5L petrol four-cylinder (generator only), single rear-mounted electric motor, rear-wheel drive (158kW/320Nm)
FUEL CONSUMPTION: 0.9L/100km (official), 6.5L/100km (real-world estimate)
RANGE: 170km (EV-only, NEDC) / up to 1,150km combined (NEDC)
ANCAP SAFETY RATING: Not yet rated
WARRANTY: Six years/150,000km (vehicle), eight years/160,000km (battery)

Whether hybrids, plug-in hybrids or extended-range electric vehicles, Australians have never had more choice when it comes to fuel-efficient SUVs. Here's six thrifty models worth considering.



CHERY TIGGO 7 SUPER HYBRID ULTIMATE

ALONG WITH MG, Chery is another Chinese carmaker to embrace the 'Super Hybrid' monicker for its recently launched and sharply priced Tiggo 7 medium SUV. Boasting driveaway pricing for the entry-level Urban model under \$40,000, a seriously packed features list in the more expensive Ultimate grade, and a bold 1,200km range claim, it has certainly got the on-paper goods to turn some heads. Under the bonnet is a 1.5-litre turbocharged four-cylinder petrol engine which puts out 105kW/215Nm and is mated to a 150kW electric motor, with drive channelled to the front wheels via a single speed dedicated hybrid transmission. An 18.3kWh battery provides a claimed electric only range of 93km (NEDC), with the Tiggo 7 able to run on electric or petrol power, or a mix of both. There is no ANCAP rating yet but the Super Hybrid shares the same platform and safety technology as the conventionally powered Tiggo 7 Pro, which has a five-star rating. Safety kit includes eight airbags and a full ADAS suite.

PRICE: \$43,990 (driveaway)
POWERTRAIN: 1.5L turbo petrol four-cylinder (105kW/215Nm), front-mounted electric motor (150kW/310Nm), 18.3kWh battery
FUEL CONSUMPTION: 1.4L/100km (with full charge), 5.5L/100km (in hybrid mode)
RANGE: 93km (EV-only, NEDC) / up to 1,200km combined (NEDC)
ANCAP SAFETY RATING: Not yet rated
WARRANTY: Seven years/unlimited km (vehicle), eight years/unlimited km (battery)



NISSAN QASHQAI E-POWER TI

IF YOU'RE WILLING to try low-emissions vehicle technology but prefer to opt for a brand that's better known than the new Chinese models, Nissan has a quality offering, the Qashqai e-Power. The Qashqai is smaller than the other models mentioned here but if size is a deal breaker the same e-Power drivetrain technology can be had in the larger X-Trail. The name e-Power is basically Nissan's trademarked description for its series hybrid technology, which is similar to extended-range EV technology. What this means in practice is that the Qashqai's 1.5-litre petrol engine is connected in series, and the engine only acts as a generator and never actually drives the wheels. The generator supplies charge to a front-mounted electric motor that delivers a spritely 140kW/330Nm. You can't plug the Qashqai in to recharge so the engine regularly recharges the small battery while driving, with the battery able to provide power for a few kilometres of electric-only driving but mainly supporting the electric motor during acceleration and regenerative braking.

PRICE: \$47,165 (MRLP)
POWERTRAIN: 1.5L three-cylinder turbocharged petrol, front-mounted electric motor (140kW/330Nm), 2.1kWh lithium-ion battery
FUEL CONSUMPTION: 4.8L/100km
RANGE: 1,000km (estimated)
ANCAP SAFETY RATING: Five stars (2021)
WARRANTY: 10 years/300,000km (when servicing with Nissan)



BYD SEALION 6 PREMIUM AWD

BYD HAS BEEN battling fellow Chinese brand Chery for the title of Australia's fastest growing car brand, but its sales easily eclipse Chery which has a smaller range and no rival for the strong-selling BYD Shark 6 PHEV ute. In the popular medium SUV segment, BYD is particularly well represented, offering the Atto 3 EV, Sealion 6 PHEV and Sealion 7 EV. As at June this year the Sealion 6 rated as Australia's second most popular PHEV, trailing the Shark 6. The Sealion 6 is available in Essential grade with a single electric motor and a \$42,990 sticker price, while the Premium adds a healthy \$10k to that but brings one extra electric motor for all-wheel drive capability and additional kit. The drivetrain comprises a 1.5-litre turbocharged petrol engine, dual electric motors, and an 18.3kWh battery that can be charged via the petrol engine or external charging. Combined outputs are a healthy 238kW/550Nm which is enough to shift the 2,100kg SUV from 0-100km/h in a brisk 5.9 seconds. Electric driving range is a useful 81km with combined cycle consumption of 1.4L/100km.

PRICE: \$52,990 (MRLP)
POWERTRAIN: 1.5L turbocharged petrol four-cylinder (96kW/220Nm), dual electric motors (F 150kW/399Nm, R 120kW/250Nm), 18.3kWh battery
FUEL CONSUMPTION: 1.4L/100km (full charge), 5.8L/100km (battery below 25%)
RANGE: 1,277km (claimed)
ANCAP SAFETY RATING: Five stars (2023)
WARRANTY: Six years/150,000km (vehicle), eight years/160,000km (battery)

BY GED BULMER

SUZUKI FRONX GLX MY25

FINDING A WELL-EQUIPPED, Japanese-badged SUV priced under \$30,000 in today's market is becoming increasingly difficult, but small car specialist Suzuki has served one up in the form of its new Fronx.

The name is an amalgam of 'Frontier' and 'X' (as in crossover), positioning the Fronx as Suzuki's pint-sized SUV champion in a segment dominated by the Mazda CX-3 and the Toyota Yaris Cross.

With its stylish SUV-inspired looks including a coupe-like roofline in contrasting black, attractive 16-inch alloy wheels and black over-fender flares, the Fronx looks more in keeping with what buyers are looking for than the outgoing Ignis.

The interior design is quite conventional, with lots of hard-wearing plastics and a plethora of buttons and switches lifted from the Suzuki global parts bin. It's all perfectly durable and usable but a bit old-school by modern design standards.

The flat-bottom steering wheel is leather-trimmed and the manually adjustable seats clad in an attractive two-tone faux-leather. Ahead of the driver is a large and easy-to-read analogue speedo and tachometer, plus a head-up display.

The 9.0-inch central touchscreen offers quick and easy smartphone connectivity with wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto as standard.

Other standard equipment in the singular GLX variant includes a wireless smartphone charger, heated front seats, and keyless entry and start.

Under the bonnet is a 1.5-litre four-cylinder mild hybrid, driving through a six-speed torque converter automatic.

It's not overly endowed with torque and in its standard drive mode the Fronx feels leisurely.

Things liven up when you switch to Sport mode, with enough response to keep pace with traffic and deliver decent acceleration away from the lights.

Engine noise is pronounced under hard acceleration but on a lighter throttle the cabin is reasonably well insulated.

Combined cycle fuel economy is a thrifty 4.9L/100km but we saw a higher 6.2L/100 over a mixed 150km of congested urban and slightly freer-flowing driving on Brisbane's urban-fringe.

The limited test drive provided few opportunities to push the car through bends but where we were able to do so the Fronx felt competent and well balanced, although certainly not sporty.

At just under 4m in length and boasting a compact 4.8m turning circle the Suzuki SUV is easy to park and manoeuvre, aided by good cabin visibility, a 360-degree camera system and rear parking sensors.

The coupe-like roofline means you need to duck your head when accessing the rear seats but once in position the accommodation is comfortable enough for a 182cm passenger to sit behind a similarly sized driver.

The boot is accessed by a manual tailgate to reveal a segment-competitive 304 litres (VDA), expanding to 605 litres with the rear seat folded.

There's a decent list of safety kit but the Fronx lacks some of the latest inclusions so has no ANCAP rating.

Despite this, there's an honesty to the Fronx that makes it quite endearing.

It's attractively designed, well equipped and keenly priced, and like most Suzuki vehicles it conveys an underlying feel of quality engineering.



PRICE: \$28,990 (MRLP)

WARRANTY: Five years/unlimited km

POWERTRAIN: 1.5-litre four-cylinder petrol, mild-hybrid with Integrated Starter Generator and 12V lithium-ion battery, six-speed automatic, front-wheel drive (76kW/137Nm)

ANCAP CRASH RATING: Not rated

FUEL CONSUMPTION (CO2): 4.9L/100km (114g/km)

FOR: Affordably priced; well equipped; easy to park and manoeuvre; fuel-efficient; comfortable ride; roomy interior.

AGAINST: No ANCAP rating; lacks some of the latest safety features; modest performance; no full-size spare wheel (tyre repair kit).



BY GED BULMER

TESLA MODEL Y MY25

THERE'S NO DOUBT that many car makers initially underestimated Tesla, even doubted that a brand that builds only electric vehicle (EVs) and not a single ICE-powered variant could ever trouble industry giants like Toyota, Volkswagen and Ford.

But in 2023, the Tesla Model Y overtook the Toyota Corolla to take the title of the world's best-selling car, a feat it repeated last year. It has also been Australia's best-selling EV between 2022 and 2024.

The challenge now for Tesla is to retain its sales leadership in the face of growing competition from the likes of the BYD Sealion 7, Kia EV5, Hyundai Ioniq 5, and Polestar 4, to name just a few.

These days, practically every new battery-electric SUV is dubbed a 'Tesla Model Y killer,' something that no doubt spurred Tesla to release this updated MY25 version in a bid to keep its best seller ahead of the pack.

Prices for the Model Y range start at \$58,900 (plus on-road costs) for the entry-level Rear Wheel Drive variant tested here, rising to \$68,900 (plus on-road costs) for the Long-Range All-Wheel Drive.

Design-wise, the new Model Y is easily identified by a Cybertruck-inspired fascia with a full-width daytime running light bar, integrated turn signals, and repositioned pixel LED adaptive headlights.

At the rear, a striking cross-car light bar and a reflective taillight panel with the Tesla wordmark enhance its visual appeal.

Inside, the cabin has been upgraded with ambient lighting, ventilated front seats, and improved materials throughout.

The minimalist dashboard is anchored

by a 15.4-inch central touchscreen, with most functions located here, including side mirror adjustment and even gear selection.

Passengers in the rear now benefit from a new 8.0-inch infotainment screen plus redesigned seats with heating and power recline.

On the road the new Model Y is smoother and quieter thanks to suspension improvements that have removed the sharp edges of the ride, which was previously too abrupt.

Exhilarating acceleration remains a Tesla hallmark with the new Model Y covering the 0-100km/h dash in a rapid 5.9 seconds, a second faster than its MY24 predecessor.

More importantly, the Tesla delivers its performance in a smooth, linear fashion so that it feels effortless in general driving, when accelerating or overtaking.

Enhancements to the vehicle body and underbody have also improved aerodynamic efficiency, which along with drivetrain improvements mean estimated range is 11km better at 466km (WLTP).

On the safety front, this version carries over the previous model's five-star ANCAP safety rating earned in 2022.

Tesla's ADAS systems are also well integrated and largely avoid the cacophony of beeps and alerts that plague some rival models.

The new Model Y is an impressively well resolved vehicle that combines cutting edge technology, good range and performance, and decent pricing, in a practical and roomy package that will suit many Australian buyers.

Find the car that suits you at [racq.com/car/compare](https://www.racq.com/car/compare)



PRICE: \$58,900 (MRLP)

WARRANTY: Four years/80,000km (vehicle); eight years/160,000km (battery & drive unit)

POWERTRAIN: Single electric motor, rear-wheel drive, (220kW/350Nm)

BATTERY: 60kWh lithium iron phosphate (LFP)

RANGE: 466km (WLTP)


ENERGY CONSUMPTION: 14.6kWh

ANCAP CRASH RATING: Five stars (2022)

FOR: Updated styling provides differentiation over old model; Smooth and refined driving manners; impressively quiet; brisk performance; good energy-efficiency and range; industry-leading Supercharger network.

AGAINST: Overall design is now five years old albeit heavily updated; new vehicle warranty trails industry's best; no Apple Car Play or Android Auto; no spare wheel (at all); infotainment system not immediately intuitive.


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BY GED BULMER

FORD RANGER WILDTRAK PHEV

THE NEW VEHICLE Emissions Standard (NVES) has fundamentally changed the game for car makers in Australia. Except for a few EV-only brands, the new standard has prompted most manufacturers to introduce, or plan for new zero- or low-emission models to offset high-emitting models in their range. In the case of Ford Australia, whose biggest-selling model is the predominantly diesel-powered Ranger, it has led to the introduction of the brand's first plug-in hybrid electric (PHEV) version. The new Ranger PHEV is available in a four-variant 4x4 dual-cab lineup that mirrors the ICE-powered range with prices starting from \$71,990 for the Ranger XLT PHEV, rising to \$75,990 for the Ranger Sport PHEV, \$79,990 for the Ranger Wildtrak PHEV, and \$86,990 for the Ranger Stormtrak PHEV.

Visually, there's little external differentiation between a Ranger PHEV and its ICE-powered equivalent, with changes limited to PHEV badges on the front wheel arches, a charging port above the left rear wheel arch, and unique-design 18-inch alloy wheel.

But under the skin is a comprehensively reengineered version of what has been Australia's best-selling vehicle for the past two years.

In place of the popular 2.0-litre bi-turbo diesel and the 3.0-litre turbo diesel V6 is a 2.3-litre turbocharged four-cylinder EcoBoost petrol engine mated to a 10-speed automatic, with a 75kW electric motor integrated between the engine and transmission and powered by an 11.8kWh battery packaged between reengineered chassis rails.

The petrol-electric drivetrain boasts combined outputs of 207kW/697Nm, which is more than the Ford's 3.0-litre V6 diesel (184kW/600Nm).

More importantly, from an NVES perspective, the combination delivers a pure electric driving range of 49km (NEDC) and combined-cycle fuel-consumption of just 2.9L/100km.

The PHEV's super-low fuel figure is achieved when driving with a fully charged battery, and once discharged the vehicle consumes more, with some tests indicating up to 8.1L/100km.

The PHEV's lithium-ion battery can be charged to full overnight using a standard household plug.

The Ranger PHEV also has a feature called Pro Power Onboard, which allows the battery to be used for powering worksite equipment, campsites, or even a caravan, via twin 15-amp, 3.45kW power sockets in the tray, and a single 10-amp, 2.3kW socket in the cabin.

Ford Australia's development brief for the Ranger PHEV was that it had to deliver the same 4x4 off-road ability and 3,500kg braked towing capacity as its ICE-powered stablemates.

As a result, the new model gets the same full-time 4WD system with electronically controlled two-speed transfer case as the V6-powered Ranger, with the choice of 2H, 4A, 4H, or 4L driving modes.

A locking rear differential provides additional rough terrain capability, and the PHEV's electrics and air intake are designed to handle the same 800mm wading depth as ICE-powered models.

Out on the road the Ranger PHEV is smooth and quiet, with the drivetrain switching easily between electric and combustion power.

Performance is strong, but the combination doesn't feel quite as potent as the powertrain output figures suggest.



PRICE: \$79,990 (MRLP)

WARRANTY: Five years/unlimited kilometres (vehicle), eight years/160,000km high-voltage battery and electrical drivetrain components

POWERTRAIN: 2.3-litre turbocharged four-cylinder petrol engine, 10-speed automatic, 75kW electric motor, 11.8kWh battery, AWD or 2WD, (207kW/697Nm combined)

ANCAP CRASH RATING: Not rated

FUEL CONSUMPTION (CO2): 2.9L/100km (67.28g/km CO2)

FOR: Refined and well-integrated drivetrain; no reduction in towing or off-road performance; useful electric-only range and Pro-Power On Board technology.

AGAINST: More expensive than ICE-variants; more expensive and less electric driving range than key rivals (BYD Shark and GWM Cannon Alpha); no ANCAP rating; higher real-world fuel consumption likely.

Mobility

Road Rules

BICYCLES

Bicycles are a type of vehicle. When you ride a bicycle or e-bike, you must obey the general road rules the same as motorists, as well as the specific road rules for bicycle riders. Here are some of the rules you must follow:

WEAR A HELMET

WHEN YOU RIDE a bicycle, electric-powered wheeled recreational device or a personal mobility device like an e-scooter, you must wear an approved bicycle helmet. You must securely fit and fasten it. An approved bicycle helmet means a helmet that complies with: AS 2063, AS/NZS 2063, EN 1078, CPSC 16, ASTM F1447, Snell B-95.

Look out for a sticker on the helmet that certifies its compliance with one of the standards above. RACQ recommends that stand-up e-scooter riders wear full-face style compliant helmets, due to the high risk of facial injury in a crash.

SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

EVERY TIME YOU ride, your bicycle must have:

- At least one working brake; and
- A working bell, horn or similar warning device.

SIGNAL WHEN TURNING RIGHT

YOU MUST USE a hand signal when you turn right. To do this, extend your right arm out horizontally – at a right angle from the right side of the bicycle. Your hand should be open, with your palm facing forward.

USE LIGHTS FOR SAFETY

IF YOU RIDE at night or in poor visibility conditions, your bicycle (or you) must display:

- A white front light (flashing or steady) visible from at least 200m; and
- A red rear light (flashing or steady) visible from at least 200m; and
- A red rear reflector visible from at least 50m when illuminated by vehicle headlights.

CARRYING OTHER PEOPLE

ON A BICYCLE you can only carry another person if:

- The bicycle is designed to carry more than one person and has a passenger seat.
- Each person is wearing a compliant helmet.

LEAVE YOUR PET AT HOME

IT IS ILLEGAL under Queensland road rules to lead an animal while riding a bike or personal mobility device, including by tethering the animal to your bike or device.

WHAT PENALTIES CAN APPLY?

BICYCLE RIDERS WHO break the road rules while riding can be given the same fines as motorists, but do not accumulate demerit points.

TOWING WITH A BICYCLE

YOU CAN TOW a child in or on a bicycle trailer if:

- You are 16 years or older.
- The child is under 10 years old and is also wearing an approved helmet that is securely fitted and fastened.
- The bicycle trailer can safely carry the child.



Spring is a great time of the year to get out and ride your bicycle. RACQ is providing road rules and tips to help keep you safe when on the road. For more information about the Queensland road rules contact the Department of Transport and Main Roads at tmr.qld.gov.au of 13 23 80.

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