

THE ROAD AHEAD

WINTER 2026

BEETLE MANIA is back • Queenstown on **TWO WHEELS** •
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• **TAKING THE STRESS OUT** of driving lessons

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TROPICAL NORTH
QUEENSLAND HOLIDAY
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Contents

- 04 President's Viewpoint; Managing Editor's Note
- 05 RACQ launches community initiative
- 06 VW Beetle fanatic's pride and joy



Travel



- 22 Shred happens at Queenstown
- 28 Portugal for beginners
- 32 Head west on the Overlanders Way
- 34 Cook Islands getaway

Mobility

- 38 Is your car spying on you?
- 40 New L-plater program
- 42 How to reverse a caravan

REVIEWS



- 44 Denza B5 Leopard
- 48 6 of the Best: People movers
- 50 Nissan Navara PRO-4X
- 51 Subaru Outback Wilderness Apex
- 52 Ford F-150 Platinum
- 53 Kia EV4 Earth

Clubhouse

- 54 Member's obsession with cars and gadgets
- 58 New step to stop scammers
- 61 Meals on Wheels celebrates

YOUR SAY

- 62 Members give their views

ABOUT US

- 65 Car competition winner; Enter for chance to win \$250 gift card

ROAD RULES

- 66 Seatbelts

COVER: A section of the Great Barrier Reef Drive between Cairns and Port Douglas. Photo: Tourism Tropical North Queensland.

Tropical North Queensland

- 12 What to expect on a trip to the tropics

COMPETITION

- 13 Enter to win the Ultimate Tropical North Queensland Adventure
- 15 13 memorable Cairns day trips
- 16 Explore the wonders of the Great Barrier Reef
- 18 Mini Tropical North Queensland road trips

MAP

- 21 Tropical North Queensland guide





RAY'S NOTE

Queenslanders' love of their local communities was again evident after our autumn edition story that listed suggested stops on a 'big things' road trip.

The feature rounded up some of Queensland's best known big things and pointed readers to where they could find them.

As we were quickly reminded, a list like this is never truly complete. A couple of notable omissions were nominated – including the big rose in Biggenden and the mighty muttaburrasaurus in Muttaburra.

The Rose of the Burnett, in Biggenden, about 70km west of Maryborough, was unveiled in 2016 to mark 50 years since the Biggenden Rose Festival began.

Created by local artist Craig Nelson, the striking steel sculpture weighs an impressive 2,000kg and now takes pride of place on Edward St.

Meanwhile, the good folk from the Muttaburra Community Development Association were quick to point out that Muttaburra is the original discovery site of muttaburrasaurus langdoni in Queensland.

When it was uncovered in 1963 by local grazier, the late Doug Langdon, it was the most complete dinosaur fossil ever found in Australia, and the first to be cast and mounted.

Visitors can learn more about this prehistoric giant – and see a replica – at the Muttaburrasaurus Interpretation Centre.

Both attractions are worthy additions to any list of Queensland's big things.

Enjoy your winter edition.

RAY ANDERSEN
Managing Editor

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\$250
GIFT CARD
See page 65
for details



Viewpoint

Some of my most rewarding experiences at RACQ have been the opportunities to volunteer and give back to communities across Queensland.

From Community Assistance Projects in the First Nations communities of Cherbourg and Yarrabah, to our work alongside Australia Zoo, I've seen firsthand what's possible when we come together with a shared purpose. Each experience has reinforced my pride in our Club and deepened my connection to the communities we serve.

Volunteering plays such an important role in our new Community Impact Strategy – one of three core pillars focused on creating safer and stronger communities.

Later this year we will be inviting members to be part of our volunteering efforts because we know when we work together, the impact is always stronger. You can read more on the opposite page.

Beyond our community work, we've also been making steady progress on other important areas of the business including the proposed sale of RACQ's retail lending and deposit business to Bendigo Bank.

Throughout the sale process, members with an RACQ Bank account will receive clear, detailed information about what is changing, what it means for their accounts, new terms and conditions, and any actions they may need to take with plenty of notice. We understand this is a significant change and want to reassure members that during the transition period, existing RACQ Bank products remain unchanged.

Finally, I want to personally thank Glenn Toms, our Deputy Chief Executive Officer for his 36 years of outstanding service with RACQ. Glenn is moving away from his full-time executive position at the Club to take up future board roles.

Since joining the Club in 1990, Glenn has built a strong reputation for innovation that improved member service at scale – most notably through the creation of the Mobile Member Centre, which for more than two decades has become synonymous with supporting members during natural disasters and major events.

From being appointed the Club's youngest executive to establishing the long-running LifeFlight (formerly CareFlight) aero rescue sponsorship, Glenn has consistently sought practical ways for RACQ to make a meaningful difference for Queenslanders when they needed us most.

It's through the commitment of our people, including leaders like Glenn, that RACQ continues to drive a better future for all Queenslanders.

LEONA MURPHY OAM
President

Leona joined RACQ volunteers in Cherbourg.
Photo: Dave Pattinson.



RACQ ANNOUNCES COMMUNITY STRATEGY

RACQ has launched a new Community Impact Strategy, guiding a long-term approach to improving road safety, supporting an inclusive energy transition and strengthening community resilience through volunteering.

By **TORI MAYNE**

For more than 120 years, RACQ has been there for Queenslanders when it matters most – earning trust through action, service and community support.

Building on this legacy, RACQ has implemented a Community Impact Strategy which establishes a framework for future partnerships that will improve road safety, support a more inclusive energy transition and foster community resilience through volunteering.

A critical part of the strategy is the establishment of a \$100 million Community Investment Fund, providing a sustainable source of capital to support investment, partnerships and measurable impact.

RACQ Chief Executive Community MJ Bellotti said the strategy which focuses on Road Safety, Inclusive Transition and Social Resilience, highlights how collaboration can lead to impactful results.

'Our aim is long-term change that saves lives and protects future generations.'

"Partnering with government, innova-

tors across the social sector and community groups allows us to ensure our efforts are purposeful, effective and directly address the challenges our members face now and into the future," Ms Bellotti said.

"Supported by the Community Investment Fund, this strategy will focus on creating real benefits for members and the communities in which they live and work.

"We want our members to be part of this journey as we work towards a better future for all Queenslanders."

ROAD SAFETY

Ms Bellotti said road trauma directly impacts hundreds of Queensland families every year, making road safety a top priority for RACQ.

"Our aim is long-term change that saves lives and protects future generations," she said.

INCLUSIVE TRANSITION

As transport and energy solutions evolve,

RACQ aims to support Queenslanders, especially regional communities and community organisations to adapt in practical ways - so people aren't left behind.

"It's about making sure the shift to cleaner energy works for everyone, with the right tools, infrastructure and advice to help communities move forward with confidence."

SOCIAL RESILIENCE THROUGH VOLUNTEERING

Our pillar to building social resilience through volunteering, expands on the legacy of the RACQ Foundation.

Our support will evolve from disaster recovery to a wider focus on social resilience.

For the first time, members will have opportunities to volunteer through community assistance projects and partnerships.

Volunteering Queensland CEO Jane Hedger said volunteers are the first people Queensland communities turn to when they need help.

"Like RACQ's new strategy, ours is built on ambitions for connected, sustainable, and thriving Queensland communities," Ms Hedger said.

"We know volunteering is changing, and organisations that involve volunteers need support to adapt and grow their volunteering programs.

"By enhancing these volunteering programs, we want to see greater community capability and capacity and increase local participation in responding to disasters, supporting community sustainability and helping vulnerable people."

More information on upcoming projects and how members can volunteer with us will be communicated soon.

Beetle mania

For some people a love of classic cars is an acquired taste, but for this Sunshine Coast Volkswagen enthusiast it was more like a hereditary trait.

By GED BULMER



Photos: Iain Curry



You don't have to look hard to identify Ashleigh Smith's passion. It's right there in her 'missvdub' email signature.

It's also positioned in the middle of her yard as 'garden art', in the form of a weathered '72 bay window Kombi with a fake skeleton at the wheel.

And it's there in her shed, where a 2013 New Beetle daily driver is parked alongside a 1963 single-cab split-screen Kombi ute.

But the real apple of Ash's eye is 'Gracie', her beloved '56 oval-window Volkswagen Beetle, which is also the catalyst for how we first came to meet Ash at RACQ Motorfest.

Despite her vintage, Gracie is no 'Trailer Queen', and Ash is happy to point her nose down the highway from her Sunshine Coast hinterland home for our annual classic car gathering, where the rare Beetle finds plenty of admiring fans.

Like all good tales, the story of Ash, Gracie and her passion for Volkswagens starts in a faraway place – specifically Perth, where Ash grew up, the daughter of a pair of equally passionate Volkswagen fans.

"It's in my DNA," she said.

"I definitely get it from my parents, but mostly my mother. I pretty much grew up in a Volkswagen.

"The only way she could get me to sleep as a baby was to put me in a baby seat in the back of her little pink convertible Beetle and drive me around the block until I fell asleep."

Ash moved to Queensland in 2007, following her line of work as a health and safety advisor in the oil and gas industry, and spends her working days as a FIFO worker on sites between Chinchilla and Roma.

She lives for her downtime back on the Sunshine Coast, where Ash and Gracie are regular sightings on hinterland roads.

Asked what it is about the '56 Beetle that is so special to her, Ash pondered for a moment.

"It's the refinement and simplicity at the same time," she said.

"They're so simple and sleek. People often refer to them as 'the poor man's Porsche 356'.

"As Beetles got older and safer, they also got chunkier and fatter, whereas the early-model Beetles have lovely curves and proportions."

While the VW Beetle was originally designed as an affordable people's car, early models such as Ash's, along with their closely related Kombi cousins, now attract big dollars from avid collectors.

"They're absolutely appreciating in value," said Ash.

"But the earlier model Beetles are more sought after, and the oval window models are probably among the most desirable.

"I wouldn't say they're rare, but they can be a bit harder to come by, as people tend to hold onto them."

“When they come on the market, they sell quite well because they’re a favourite among Volkswagen lovers.”

Ash's car came from a fellow VW enthusiast and friend who had bought two Oval Beetles for a restoration project, with the car that became Gracie essentially a parts car.

Ash recalls the Beetle was in rough condition, having been cut up and parts removed by a previous owner to become a Baja off-road model, requiring many hours of welding and panel work to return it to the mint condition it's in today.

She explains that it was the Beetle's graceful curves that provided the inspiration for its pet name.

“To me, she seems to have a lot of grace. You know, just everything about her is so graceful – her lines,” Ash said.

“She's also an absolute pleasure to drive, and I wanted to go with a bit of an older, classy name, so Gracie sort of embodied everything that she was.

“I'm not afraid to drive her, either. I've happily driven her to Valla Beach in New South Wales for the big Volkswagen Spectacular that's held there every two years, and back to the Sunshine Coast.”

While Gracie is a capable open-road cruiser, Ash admits that like most older, air-cooled Volkswagens, she's not a fan of hills.

“She has the 36-horsepower engine with the Okrasa dual carb kit and a Vintage Speed Abarth exhaust on her, so she's got a little bit more poke,” Ash said.

“But obviously hills are a weakness. She'll easily sit and do 100 or 110km/h, but because she's got an older engine and I don't want to push her, I'll just cruise along doing 90 on the highway, enjoying life.

“But she drives beautifully, she sounds great, and even though she sits a bit low to the ground, she has beautifully sprung seats that act like her suspension.

“Gracie was built to be enjoyed, and that's definitely what I do with her.”



← Ashley's partner Nathan Quire built Gracie a little friend 'Mike' – a 200cc mini bike he fabricated from two Beetle front guards, among other parts.



ART, HEART AND CREATING A PLACE LIKE HOME

How Queenslanders are helping make hospital feel more like home for sick kids across the state.



At just four weeks old, Evie Smith was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis following a routine newborn screening.

Within days, her family's world shifted from their home in Toowoomba to regular trips to the Queensland Children's Hospital and the beginning of years of specialist care, medications and hospital admissions which often lasted weeks at a time.

Evie, pictured, required a port for IV treatments, a feeding tube to support her nutrition and ongoing physiotherapy to help keep her lungs strong. Strict infection-control rules meant she could not mix with other children on the ward, making long hospital stays especially isolating.

Beyond the treatments, it was the time away from school, friends and everyday childhood that weighed heaviest. Hospital became a second home, but one that was far from everything familiar.

Evie's experience is shared by thousands of Queensland families each year.

Every day, some of Queensland's sickest children leave the places they call home to receive life-saving care at the Queensland Children's Hospital.

For one in three families, that journey begins far from Brisbane, in regional towns, rural communities and coastal centres across the state. It often means weeks or months away from familiar routines, siblings, school and support networks.

When a child becomes seriously ill or injured, hospital becomes their second home.

While medical teams provide world-class clinical care, the Children's Hospital

Foundation helps make hospital feel more like home – funding therapy programs, play spaces, library services and practical family support that surround children with wraparound care and connection when they need it most.

During Evie's long admissions, the Foundation helped bring moments of colour and connection into her hospital days through bedside art packs, play activities and visits from support dogs that lifted her spirits when she needed it most.

Today, at nearly 12 years old, Evie's health is more stable, and hospital visits are less frequent.

Her story is a reminder that hospital care is about more than medicine.

Children's Hospital Foundation CEO Lyndsey Rice said it was about helping hospital feel more like home.

“The Children's Hospital Foundation is incredibly proud of the way communities across Queensland came together this year to help bring the feeling of home into hospital for children like Evie,” Ms Rice said.

“Through our Help Make Hospital Feel More Like Home campaign, families, artists and local communities shared what home means to them, creating a powerful collective portrait of connection and care from right across the state.

“From regional art workshops and exhibitions in Warwick and Mackay to a large-scale projection across Brisbane Powerhouse, it was a moving reminder that when children can't be at home, Queenslanders come together to help bring that feeling to them.”

You can support more kids like Evie by donating to childrens.org.au using the QR code.



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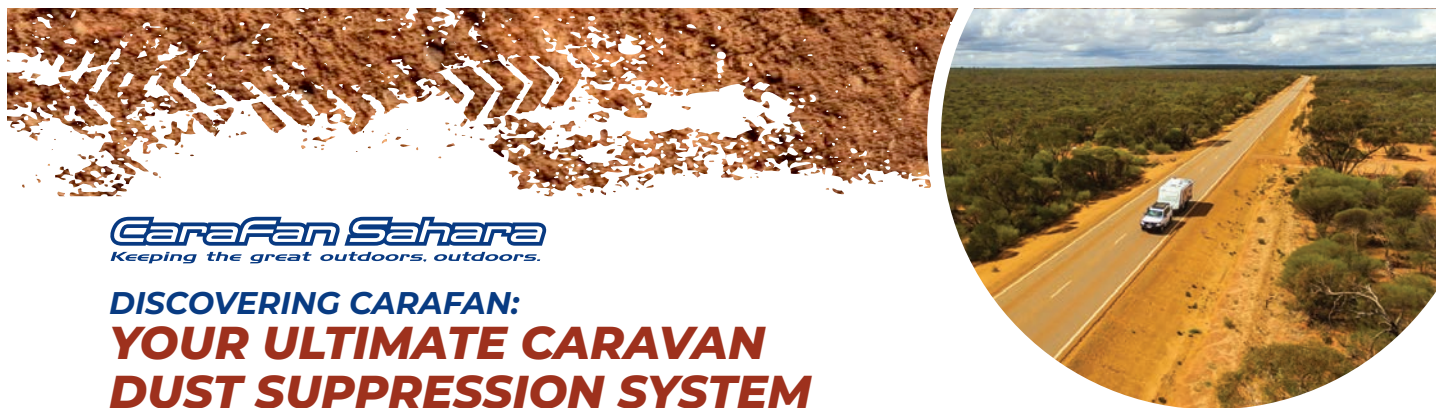


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Below & Beyond

**13 UNFORGETTABLE DAY
TRIPS FROM CAIRNS**

**SEE THE BARRIER REEF
FROM ALL ANGLES**

**CHOOSE YOUR ROAD
TRIP ADVENTURE**

Experience our tropical paradise by land and sea

From the world's largest coral reef and ancient tropical rainforests to the lush Atherton Tablelands, Tropical North Queensland is a region defined by extraordinary natural attractions and unforgettable landscapes.

Tropical North Queensland is one of the country's most diverse and spectacular travel destinations.

At the heart of the region is Cairns, a vibrant coastal city that serves as the gateway to some of the world's most extraordinary natural landscapes.

Visitors are drawn to the area for its colourful coral reefs, tropical rainforests, beautiful islands and beaches, unique wildlife, and rich Indigenous culture.

One of the most famous attractions in Tropical North Queensland is the Great Barrier Reef, the largest coral reef system on Earth. Stretching over 2,300km and containing more than 3,000 individual reefs and 600 islands, it is home to thousands of marine species, including around 1,600 types of fish and 600 varieties of coral.

Snorkelling and diving tours depart regularly from Cairns, Port Douglas, Mission Beach, and Cape Tribulation, allowing visitors to explore the reef's vibrant underwater world.

Several islands along the reef offer unique experiences.

Fitzroy Island, located only 45 minutes by ferry from Cairns, features rainforest walking trails, snorkelling spots, and the famous Nudey Beach.

Green Island, another popular destination, offers eco-tours, glass-bottom boat rides, and even helmet dives that allow visitors to walk underwater.

Luxury travellers may visit Lizard Island, on the outer reef, where pristine beaches, world-class diving, and scenic hiking trails create a secluded paradise.

Cairns itself is a lively tropical city with excellent tourism infrastructure.

The Esplanade waterfront area features restaurants, bars, and shops, while the city's international airport provides easy access to the region.

Just north of Cairns lie the Northern Beach suburbs of Palm Cove and Trinity Beach that offer beachside resort-style accommodation options as an alternative to the vibrant CBD hotels.

Cairns also serves as the starting point for scenic road trips through the region, to the north, south and west.

One of the most famous drives is the Great Barrier Reef Drive, which stretches from Cairns to Cape Tribulation.

This spectacular coastal road runs between the ocean and the rainforest, offering breathtaking views along the way.

Port Douglas is a popular stop along the route. Known for its relaxed atmosphere, boutique shops, and marina, Port Douglas also provides easy access to the reef and the nearby Daintree Rainforest.

The Wet Tropics Rainforest, which includes the Daintree National Park, is one of the oldest tropical rainforests in the world, estimated to be around 130 million years old.

Visitors can explore the rainforest on guided tours or walking trails, cross the Daintree River by ferry, and visit the Daintree Discovery Centre to experience canopy walkways and observation towers.

Beyond the mountains lies the fertile Atherton Tablelands, a highland region known for its waterfalls, lakes, wildlife, and farmland.

Be sure to stop at Kuranda on your way from Cairns to the Tablelands. The quirky village has everything from local foods to handmade arts and crafts, the Australian Butterfly Sanctuary and a real life fairy!

Atherton Tablelands visitors can follow the Waterfall Circuit, which includes spectacular sites such as Millaa Millaa Falls, Zillie Falls, and Ellinjaa Falls. The region is also famous for its local produce.

Further inland, the landscape gradually changes into the vast Gulf Savannah and Australian Outback. This region features dramatic gorges, lava tubes, and rugged red-earth landscapes.

South of Cairns lies Mission Beach, a peaceful coastal destination where rainforest meets the sea. The area is famous for its population of cassowaries.

Nearby islands such as Dunk Island and Hinchinbrook Island offer hiking trails, secluded beaches, and opportunities to experience pristine nature.

From exploring coral reefs and ancient rainforests to experiencing Indigenous traditions and outback landscapes, Tropical North Queensland offers a wide variety of activities and landscapes.



- ↑ An aerial view of Cairns and its harbour.
- ↘ Driving through rolling green hills on the Atherton Tablelands.

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GREAT BARRIER REEF
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Experience the best of Tropical North Queensland with 13 unforgettable day trips from Cairns including the reef, rainforest, wildlife and waterfalls.

①

Embrace island time on Fitzroy Island

Welcome to island paradise. Walk to stunning Nudey Beach, try stand-up paddleboarding off the main beach, or relax with a cocktail at Foxy's Bar.

②

Taste the Tablelands with Brett's Outback Tasting Tours

Get your foodie fix on a flavour-filled itinerary visiting some of the best food, coffee and distillery stops across the Atherton Tablelands.

③

Go batty at Tolga Bat Hospital

Discover the fascinating world of bats at the Tolga Bat Hospital and Visitor Information Centre. Meet tiny insect-eating microbats and larger fruit-eating flying foxes.

④

Explore geological wonders with Billy Tea Safaris

Visit the Chillagoe Caves, Granite Gorge and other highlights of Tropical North Queensland on a full-day guided tour.

MEMORABLE DAY TRIPS FROM CAIRNS

⑤

Drive south to Mission Beach

Take a road trip along the Cassowary Coast to Mission Beach. Walk along unspoilt beaches and watch for cassowaries in nearby rainforest.

⑥

Make waves with Jetski Cairns

Throttle up on a guided jet ski tour across the Coral Sea, with views of Green Island and the rainforest coastline. It's fast, fun and a great way to see Cairns from the water.

⑦

Wander through rainforest at Mossman Gorge

Take a refreshing dip in a rainforest stream and join a local Kuku Yalanji guide on the Ngadiku Dreamtime Walk to learn about traditional plant use and ceremonies.

⑧

Chase waterfalls with Barefoot Tours

Spend a day exploring spectacular natural wonders including Babinda Boulders, Josephine Falls and the famous Millaa Millaa Falls.

⑨

Discover the Daintree and Cape Tribulation

Join a guided day tour to experience the ancient rainforest of the Daintree and Cape Tribulation with operators like Down Under Tours, Billy Tea Safaris or Cairns Discovery Tours.

⑩

Explore the outer Great Barrier Reef

Spend the day on the Outer Great Barrier Reef, where pontoons and boats provide easy access to colourful coral and marine life. Snorkel or try an introductory scuba dive.

⑪

Paddle through the rainforest with Babinda Kayaking

Kayak down a clear rainforest creek while searching for fish, turtles and platypuses. Pack a picnic to enjoy along the way.

⑫

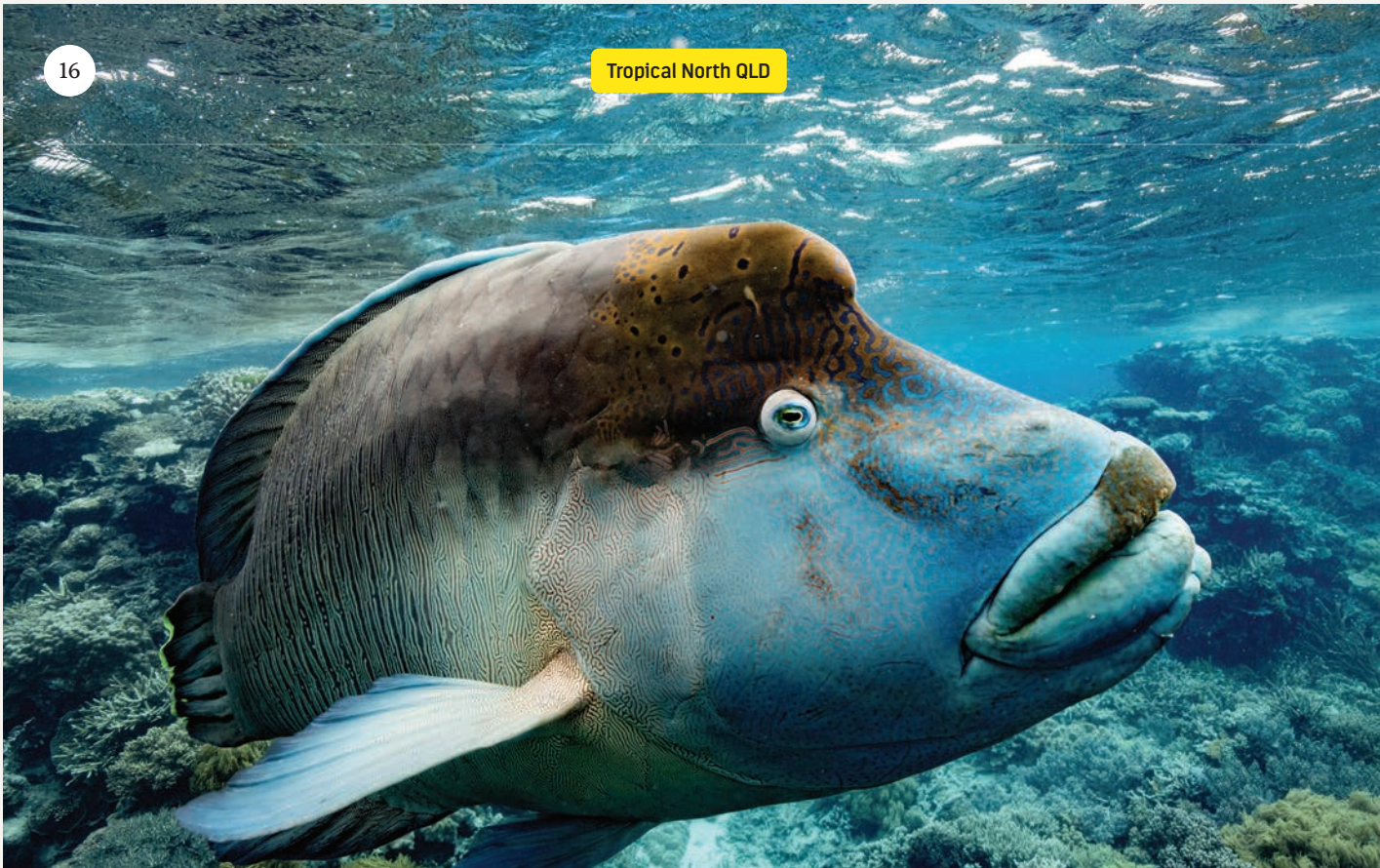
Head up to Kuranda

Ride the Kuranda Scenic Railway past rocky gorges and waterfalls to the village of Kuranda. Return to Cairns on the Skyrail Rainforest Cableway or join Tropic Wings for a seamless day tour.

⑬

Visit Paronella Park with Cairns Discovery Tours

Travel south on a day tour to the Cassowary Coast, spot cassowaries at Etty Bay, and explore Paronella Park before finishing with the iconic "Darkness Falls" tour.



Explore the reef from above and below

Explore Tropical North Queensland, from world-class reef adventures and scenic flights to tranquil island stays and unforgettable marine encounters.

As temptations go, it's hard to go past Tropical North Queensland's unique offerings: the world's most extraordinary reef – dotted with tropical islands where the only sound is the waves lapping the shore and pristine ocean bordered by kilometre after kilometre of white-sand perfection.

Start your adventure on the World Heritage-listed Great Barrier Reef.

You could spend weeks exploring this amazing underwater universe, with its colourful coral gardens and bommies and its abundant marine life, from tropical fish to turtles, rays and even whales.

There are plenty of snorkelling and scuba-diving excursions to choose from, but that's just the start.

Non-swimmers will love the glass-bottomed boats that give you a window onto the reef, while thrill seekers might want to try helmet diving.

Prefer staying above water? Set sail for a day or take a kayaking tour between Mission Beach and Dunk Island.

Take to the skies in a heli or fixed wing aircraft for an unforgettable bird's-eye view of all this unmatched beauty.

To make the most of your stay, book into one of the area's tranquil oceanside retreats.

From family-friendly apartments in Trinity Beach, north of Cairns, to a back-to-nature experience sleeping under canvas or one of Port Douglas's fabled five-star resorts, an unforgettable experience awaits.

Photos: Tourism Tropical North Queensland



- ← An inquisitive Maori wrasse swims past a diver.
- ↑ A Nautilus Aviation helicopter near Green Island.
- The vibrant colours of the Great Barrier Reef.



SNORKEL

Spend the day on the Outer Great Barrier Reef with Reef Magic, whose state-of-the-art pontoon offers a sheltered coral lagoon, guided Snorkel Safaris with marine biologists, scuba diving and even helmet diving. For a more intimate reef experience, set sail to Upolu Reef with Reef Daytripper aboard a small catamaran. Or cruise aboard Down Under Cruise & Dive's Evolution, a luxury super-yacht that offers snorkelling, diving and the option to upgrade to the Gold Class VIP Lounge for a premium reef experience. If you're pressed for time, join a half-day tour with Tusa, Pure Snorkelling or Reef Adventures, leaving plenty of time to discover the rest of Cairns.

SCUBA DIVE

Plunge into an underwater wonderland with Passions of Paradise, Ocean Freedom or Quicksilver. Whether you're a newbie or a pro, their skilled crews will lead you on an unforgettable adventure. Get acquainted with a giant Maori wrasse or tag along with a friendly sea turtle amid the stunning coral gardens of the Outer Barrier Reef.

LIVEABOARD

Extend your reef experience with liveaboard trips. Join Reef Encounter for diverse courses and pristine reef tours, swim with dwarf minke whales with Pro Dive Cairns, witness coral spawning in November and December, or try a night shark dive with Divers Den on OceanQuest.

SCENIC FLIGHT

Prepare to be awestruck by the Great Barrier Reef from above. Take a scenic flight with Nautilus Aviation, Zoom Helicopters or Daintree Air Services to truly appreciate this incredible ecosystem.

GLASS-BOTTOM BOAT

Experience the Great Barrier Reef while staying dry and comfortable on a glass-bottom boat or semi-submersible with Sunlover Reef Cruises. The pontoon features an underwater observatory, marine biologist presentations and touch tanks.

ISLAND VISITS

Join Reef Unlimited or Sunlover as they whisk you away to Fitzroy Island. Just 24km away, it offers beachfront snorkelling and rewarding scenic walks with cocktails at Foxy's. Great Adventures has an amazing Green Island tour, with snorkelling, rainforest strolls, and marine adventures. Join Frankland Islands Reef Cruises for a taste of uninhabited island life.

SAIL AWAY

Step aboard a multi-day small ship voyage with Coral Expeditions, combining the Great Barrier Reef with remote islands, reef systems and cultural experiences. With expert guides, onboard comforts and extended time on the water, these journeys offer a deeper way to connect with the reef and its surrounds.

OVERNIGHT STAYS

Make the adventure last a little by staying overnight. Fitzroy Island Resort offers a range of accommodation from beachfront cabins to contemporary suites, with easy access to walking trails, snorkelling spots and the Cairns Turtle Rehabilitation Centre.

Over on Green Island, Green Island Resort blends reef and rainforest with luxury suites just steps from the beach.

A highlight of any stay is sipping sunset drinks while the twinkling lights of Cairns city appear on the horizon.

BE A MARINE BIOLOGIST FOR A DAY

Fancy joining a team of conservationists to physically contribute to reef conservation? Look no further than Passions of Paradise's Marine Biologist for a day program, a Citizen Science project that will see you directly contributing to reef conservation projects.

Confident snorkellers can assist conservationists in completing a Rapid Monitoring Survey for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority to assess the health of the reef.

Reef education is also on the cards, as the Master Reef Guide will help them to identify the types of fish and coral that they see.

Certified divers can get a piece of the reef restoration action by watching coral planting on a coral nursery or directly onto the reef itself.



Photos: Tourism Tropical North Queensland.

HIT THE OPEN ROAD

From reef to rainforest and beyond

Discover Tropical North Queensland with these short road trips and explore stunning coastlines, ancient rainforest, wondrous waterfalls, amazing wildlife, and adventure-packed inland detours.

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GREAT BARRIER REEF DRIVE

Welcome to one of Australia's most scenic drives. Head north from Cairns and fuel up with brunch at Palm Cove.

Follow the palm-fringed highway, beach-hopping your way along sandy stretches and tiny coves until you reach Port Douglas.

Peruse the boutiques, taste your way through enticing eateries or kick up your feet in one of the high-end resorts.

Make your way to Mossman Gorge to explore the ancient rainforest with a Kuku Yalanji guide.

Turn this picturesque excursion into a two-day trip, or longer, with a stay at Daintree Beach Resort.

Located at Wonga Beach, about 22km north of Mossman and on the doorstep of the Daintree Rainforest, the resort offers caravan and camping sites along with luxury glamping options, cabins and air-conditioned tents. The resort is set in an idyllic location with 5km of beach frontage.

From here you can continue north to the Daintree River and hop on a boat cruise to search for crocodiles.

Cross the river and wind your way through the rainforest to Cape Tribulation, stopping off to wander through the ancient rainforest on boardwalks and roam beaches where the rainforest meets the reef.

Optional detour: CREB TRACK

If you are up for an off-road challenge try the CREB Track. One of the country's most challenging four-wheel drive adventures, it traverses spectacular World Heritage-listed rainforest as it weaves its way north from Daintree village to the Aboriginal community of Wujal Wujal and on to Cooktown. Check road conditions and weather forecasts before setting off.

CAIRNS TO ETTY BAY

Swapping Cairns for the Cassowary Coast takes just shy of 90 minutes if you go direct, but this is a journey worth allocating a whole day to explore.

You won't be sitting in the car for long when you have some of Mother Nature's best water parks along the way.

Optional detour: FRANKLAND ISLANDS

Combine reef, rainforest and river into one spectacular adventure to the Frankland Islands. Tours depart from the small village of Deeral and cruise down the Mulgrave River before reaching rainforest-clad Normanby Island, fringed with stunning coral reef and full of marine life.

Soak in the emerald-green water at the Babinda Boulders or slide down the smooth rockslide at Josephine Falls.

Or, if you feel like more of a hike, head to Behana Gorge en-route and take a 45-minute walk to the stunning Clamshell Falls.

Either way, you'll want to fuel your adventure with a stop at the Babinda

Bakery whose cream buns have earned them a near-perfect five-star global review online.

Dust off the icing sugar and continue south to find the stunning ETTY Bay. This beach is no ordinary spot – it's a scenic masterpiece.

But what truly steals the spotlight? The elusive southern cassowaries that practically rule the beachfront. Keep your eyes peeled for these magnificent birds.

Don't miss magical Paronella Park or the Mamu Tropical Skywalk to experience the rainforest from above.

Finish your day at Mission Beach, considered one of the most beautiful villages in the world and a hidden gem for lovers of the great outdoors.

Make a beeline for the quirkiest cafe on the Cassowary Coast. Fringed by palm trees and painted purple, the Bingil Bay Cafe is a locally owned gem that'll satisfy your tummy and tantalise your taste buds.

Rub shoulders with the locals in their sunshine-filled garden, and tuck into a bite to eat while listening to live music.

- ← The emerald-green waters of the Babinda Boulders.
- Exploring Pompeii Cave at Chillagoe-Mungana Caves National Park.



Shangri-La The Marina, Cairns
 Some call it paradise, we say it's home.

DISCOVER YOUR WATERFRONT STAY

CAIRNS TO THE WATERFALL CIRCUIT

Tropical North Queensland's summer produces a spectacular side-effect.

All that rain trickles into creeks and rivers, some of which spill spectacularly over the jagged landscape into waterholes and rock pools.

Happily, for visitors, it's easy to soak up the sight of these photogenic waterfalls – and perhaps enjoy a refreshing swim or

even a few mist-fuelled rainbows – on a languid day or multi-day trip around the region on the Waterfall Circuit.

Hit the road to the Atherton Tablelands and make your first stop at The Teahouse on Lake Barrine, part of the Crater Lakes National Park.

Ten minutes down the highway is the village of Yungaburra. Take the Peterson Creek Wildlife & Botanical Walking Track, where you might spot a platypus or rare Lumholtz tree kangaroo.

Head back east and follow the signs to Millaa Millaa Falls, which is straight out of a fairytale.

Then drive 10 minutes to the beautiful Zillie Falls and take in the tumbling waters from a viewing platform. Complete your waterfall hopping with a refreshing dip at Ellinjaa Falls.

← A soothing waterfall at historic Paronella Park.



Optional detours: CAVES AND OUTBACK

Take a detour to the invigorating Emerald Creek Falls or Davies Creek Falls.

Keep driving inland until the landscape transforms from grassy farmlands to red dirt, keep your eyes peeled for giant termite nests.

The highlight of the Chillagoe-Mungana Caves National Park are the caves themselves. Join a guide to explore three majestic caves, then bring a torch and live out your Indiana Jones dreams exploring three more self-guided caves on your own.

Or head south to find a landscape shaped by ancient volcanoes and the powerful forces of nature.

As you continue to drive inland the bushland gradually transforms into the red outback of Undara Volcanic National Park.

Head to Undara Experience and join a guided tour of the Undara Lava Tubes, which were formed by volcanic activity 190,000 years ago.

Tropical road trips



HANDY TIPS: Road conditions can vary greatly and may include winding, narrow, steep, or remote sections, unsealed roads, or ferry crossings. Weather can change quickly, wildlife is common, and services such as fuel and mobile coverage may be limited outside towns. Drivers should check road and weather conditions before departure, ensure their vehicle is suitable, allow extra time, carry water and essentials, and drive to the conditions and posted warnings.

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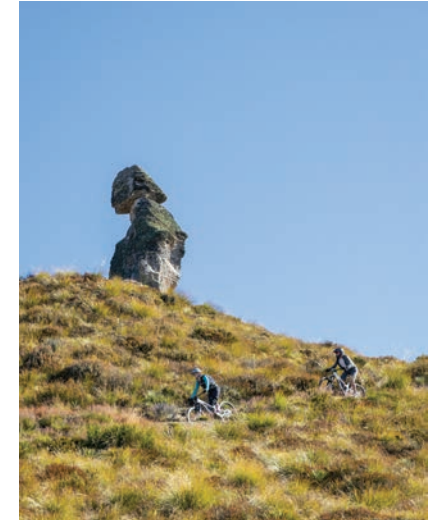
Queenstown: Where shred happens

Queenstown is a place that's best explored on two wheels, with plans afoot for further trails catering to all kinds of cyclists.

By **MARK DAFHEY**



↙ Mountain bikers on Coronet Peak Trail, below and far right.
→ Crossing the Old Lower Shotover Bridge.



The writer was a guest of Destination Queenstown (queenstownnz.com). Photos: Mark Daffey

It's a glorious autumn day in Queenstown. The sun is shining, there isn't a cloud in the sky, and real estate investors would pay millions for the views over the Wakatipu Basin from the Coronet Peak gondola station.

For someone who's about to go mountain biking, days don't come much better than this.

"It was like this yesterday," says a lift attendant. "I can count the number of riders on one hand, though."

"This is a really good time of the year to ride," adds HeliBike NZ Operations Manager Fraser Gordon.

"The dirt's really grippy... what we call 'superhero dirt'. It really holds the moisture."

As a novice rider in these parts, it's all music to my ears.

From the summit, there's a choice of six downhill trails to ride, including a new one that's rated suitable for beginners.

Called Wakatipu View, it only opened a few weeks earlier, allowing less experienced riders to understand why hardcore shredders rave about these trails.

"We can leave that 'til later," suggests Amanda Tutton, our local guide for the day.

"How about we ride all the way to the bottom? Then we can catch the midday shuttle back up in time for lunch."

Sounds like a plan to me.

Tutton leads us down a meandering intermediate-level trail with tight, technical berms and subtle rock-drops that keep us off our saddles.

Called Dirt Serpent, it cleverly utilises the contours of the mountain until it merges with a similarly spectacular trail called Rude Rock.

Named after the trail's dominant topographical feature, Amanda reluctantly admits that its original rhyming name had

been sanitised for a discerning public audience.

By the time we meet the shuttle bus on Malaghans Road, we've descended 1200m and ridden 12km, making this New Zealand's longest downhill flow trail.

The inevitable consequence is that we immediately want to repeat the feat.

But before we do, other unriden trails beckon. And of those, there are many around New Zealand's adventure capital.

A cycling-mad mate and I have come to Queenstown to see how many trails we can ride across a four-day break, knowing that we'd be spoiled for choice.

Mountain, road, rail trail or jumps parks – it's ridiculous how well pedal-powered enthusiasts are catered for here.

Road cyclists can tour between towns through some of the loveliest snow-capped scenery imaginable.

Mountain bikers can pedal up and down hand-carved trails on the slopes of Ben Lomond or tackle seesawing cross-country ribbons out towards Wānaka.

Families can hire e-bikes to ride up to 135km of interconnected gravel roads and purpose-built bike paths collectively making up the Queenstown Trails – one of 23 Great Rides around the country.

A day earlier we eased into our stay by doing exactly that, hiring e-bikes from Better by Bike in historic Arrowtown soon after our flight had touched down.

We rode for several hours before landing in the beer garden at Gantley's Tavern in Arthurs Point, a few doors up from our accommodation at the recently redeveloped Coronet Ridge Resort.

We pedalled past golf courses and vineyards and crossed historic bridges, passing multi-million-dollar mansions and homely cottages, barely breaking a sweat until we reached the Shotover Gorge Trail.

With the Shotover River raging below and the excited screams of jet boat passengers echoing along the gorge, we passed through a tunnel that had been built during gold-rush days then switched to Turbo mode for the final uphill section to Arthurs Point.

The trail opened less than a year earlier, adding a further 5km to the Queenstown Trails network that 420,000 people rode during the last financial year.

That figure is set to grow after the Kawarau Gorge Trail opens later this year.

When that happens, it will be possible to cycle for 265km from Queenstown to Middlemarch, close to Dunedin.

The 32km Kawarau Gorge Trail will be the newest addition to the Great Rides network that includes the Alps 2 Ocean Cycle Trail and the Otago Central Rail Trail. A trail connecting Jack's Point with Frankton is also pending.

It's hard to fault their ambition.

Further downhill trails will open at Coronet Forest in time for the next summer season, accompanied by one of the largest native revegetation programs in the country.

On our final morning, we squeeze in a couple of hours of mountain biking at the 7 Mile Scenic Reserve, where a family-friendly trail following gorgeous Lake Wakatipu will eventually end.

Then we do one last run on the twisting, forested Fernhill Trails, a taster I suspect that's designed to leave us hankering for more.

I have little doubt it will.



Mountain biking enthusiasts are well catered for with plenty of riding options in Queenstown



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10 DAYS

✈️ **One-way airfare to Townsville**
Image credit Tourism Australia

DEPARTS > 15 AUG 2026

TREASURE ISLANDS OF QUEENSLAND

- ★ Flight to Townsville ex Brisbane
- ★ Luxury 'Diamond Class' coach travel
- ★ 2 nights Townsville, Hamilton Island & Heron Island
- ★ Magnetic Island day tour
- ★ Whitsundays Ocean Rafting jet boat tour
- ★ 1 night Parkhurst, Gladstone & Agnes Water
- ★ Capricorn Caves Cathedral Cave tour
- ★ Heron Is daily eco and naturalist guided tours
- ★ Childers
- ★ Gympie
- ★ 25 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$6,620***

10 DAYS

✈️ **Return airfares included**

DEPARTS > 7, 27 OCT 2026

TASMANIA GRAND TOUR

- ★ Flights from Brisbane to Hobart
- ★ Luxury 'Diamond Class' coach travel
- ★ 3 nights in Hobart
- ★ Guided tour of Port Arthur and harbour cruise
- ★ 2 nights Strahan Village, Gordon River Cruise and Wilderness Railway
- ★ Overnight Cradle Mountain & St Helens
- ★ Tasmanian Devil feeding
- ★ 2 nights Devonport
- ★ Chairlift ride at Cataract Gorge, Launceston
- ★ Scenic flight over Wineglass Bay
- ★ 26 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$7,675***

9 DAYS

✈️ **Return airfares included**

DEPARTS > 8 NOV 2026

EYRE PENINSULA & BAROSSA VALLEY

- ★ Flights from Brisbane to Adelaide
- ★ Luxury 'Diamond Class' coach travel
- ★ Overnight in Clare Valley, Ceduna, Barossa Valley & Adelaide CBD
- ★ 2 nights Port Augusta & Port Lincoln
- ★ Boston Bay Wines
- ★ Seafood Bay Cruise
- ★ Coffin Bay Oyster Farm tour & tasting
- ★ 'Big Galah' & painted silos at Kimba
- ★ Seppeltsfield Winery tour & lunch
- ★ 23 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$5,800***

6 DAYS

DEPARTS > DIAMOND: 9 SEP 2026; GOLD: 13 NOV 2026

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

- ★ Luxury 'Diamond Class' or 'Gold Class' coach travel
- ★ O'Reilly's Canungra Valley Vineyard lunch & Alpaca Farm
- ★ 2 nights at O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat
- ★ Tree top canopy walk
- ★ Birds of Prey show
- ★ 4WD Rainforest Safari tour
- ★ Tweed River Eco lunch cruise
- ★ 2 nights at Kingscliff
- ★ Tropical Fruit World
- ★ Byron Bay day tour
- ★ Wheel of Brisbane
- ★ 1 night Brisbane
- ★ 14 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$2,950***
GOLD CLASS

13 DAYS

✈️ **Return airfares included**

DEPARTS > 4, 8 AUG 2026

DARWIN, KAKADU, KIMBERLEY & BROOME

- ★ Flights to Darwin & from Broome ex Brisbane
- ★ Luxury 'Gold Class' coach travel
- ★ 2 nights Darwin, Kakadu & Broome
- ★ 30-min scenic flight & wetlands cruise
- ★ 1 night Katherine
- ★ Katherine Gorge dinner cruise
- ★ 3 nights Kununurra with Ord River cruise
- ★ Bungle Bungles flight
- ★ 1 night Halls Creek
- ★ 1 night Fitzroy Crossing
- ★ Willie Creek Pearls, camel ride
- ★ 35 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$10,975***

8 DAYS

DEPARTS > 5 SEP 2026

ICONS OF OUTBACK QUEENSLAND

- ★ Overnight 'Spirit of the Outback' rail journey in Sleeper Cabins
- ★ Luxury 'Gold Class' coach travel
- ★ 3 nights Longreach with local iconic touring
- ★ Sunset cruise dinner & show
- ★ Winton's Australian Age of Dinosaurs
- ★ 2 nights at Toogunna Plains Farmstay
- ★ Eromanga Dinosaur Museum tour & dinner
- ★ Bilby encounter
- ★ 1 night Roma
- ★ 21 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$4,525****
GOLD CLASS, QPCV - QLD PENSION CARE

8 DAYS

DEPARTS > 31 AUG 2026

SOUTH WEST QLD & LIGHTNING RIDGE

- ★ Luxury 'Diamond Class' coach travel
- ★ Overnight Roma, Charleville & Goondiwindi
- ★ Charleville Bilbies
- ★ Big Sky Observatory Outback Stargazing
- ★ 2 nights St George
- ★ Winery tour, lunch & tasting
- ★ Thallon Silo Trail
- ★ Australian Opal Centre
- ★ 2 nights Lightning Ridge with guided tour
- ★ 'Chambers of the Black Hand'
- ★ Albert River Wines finalé long lunch
- ★ 22 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$4,575***

6 DAYS

Image credit Tourism & Events Qld

DEPARTS > 28 FEB 2027

TURTLE HATCHING ON HERON ISLAND

- ★ Luxury 'Gold Class' coach travel
- ★ Gympie Duck Ponds
- ★ 1 night Gladstone
- ★ 2 nights Heron Island Resort
- ★ Join naturalist guides to witness lifecycle of turtles & hatchlings
- ★ Join marine biologists to learn about the Great Barrier Reef ecosystem
- ★ 2 nights Agnes Water
- ★ Full day LARC eco tour
- ★ Historic Childers
- ★ Palace Backpackers Memorial
- ★ 16 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$3,275***

9 DAYS

✈️ **Return airfares included**

DEPARTS > 25 JUL; 5 SEP 2026

SAVANNAHLANDER & GULFLANDER OUTBACK TRACKS

- ★ Flights from Brisbane to Cairns
- ★ Quality locally operated coach
- ★ 2 nights in Cairns, Karumba & Cobbold Gorge
- ★ Kuranda, Gulflander & Savannahlander rail journeys
- ★ Overnight in Georgetown & Undara
- ★ Sunset cruise & dinner at Karumba
- ★ Scenic helicopter flight
- ★ Cobbold Gorge cruise with Savannah guide
- ★ Undara Lava Tubes
- ★ 23 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$6,015***

19 DAYS

✈️ **Return airfares included**

DEPARTS > 10 OCT 2026

NEW ZEALAND NATURAL WONDERS

- ★ Flights from Brisbane to Auckland & from Christchurch
- ★ 2 nights Auckland, Bay of Islands, Rotorua, Wellington, Queenstown & Dunedin
- ★ Maori Village experience and Hangi
- ★ 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
- ★ 2 nights Christchurch
- ★ 52 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$13,615***

6 DAYS

DEPARTS > DIAMOND: 15 JAN 2027; GOLD: 20 JAN 2027

TAMWORTH COUNTRY MUSIC FESTIVAL

- ★ Luxury 'Diamond Class' or 'Gold Class' coach travel
- ★ Tropical Fruit World
- ★ 1 night Dorrigo
- ★ Petersons wine tasting & lunch
- ★ 3 nights Tamworth celebrating Tamworth Country Music Festival
- ★ 2 surprise shows
- ★ Big Golden Guitar
- ★ National Guitar Museum
- ★ Australian Country Music Hall of Fame
- ★ 1 night Armidale
- ★ Ballandean Estate wine tasting and lunch
- ★ 11 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$3,220***
GOLD CLASS

11 DAYS

✈️ **Return airfares included**

DEPARTS > GOLD: 24 OCT 2026; DIAMOND: 20 NOV 2026

VICTORIAN ROVER GRAND TOUR

- ★ Flights from Brisbane to Melbourne
- ★ Luxury 'Diamond Class' or 'Gold Class' coach travel
- ★ 2 nights Inverloch
- ★ Wilson Prom cruise
- ★ Phillip Island Penguin Parade
- ★ Q Train
- ★ Overnight in Lorne, Warrnambool, Echuca & Melbourne
- ★ Scenic helicopter flight over Twelve Apostles
- ★ 2 nights Ballarat
- ★ 2 nights Albury
- ★ Ned Kelly's Last Stand, Glenrowan
- ★ 27 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$7,120***
GOLD CLASS

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Beginner's guide to Portugal

Planning your first trip to Portugal? Discover how to explore Lisbon, Porto and the Algarve at a relaxed pace without missing the highlights.

By JENNIFER JOHNSTON

When planning a holiday, you can attempt to tackle all the highlights of a country, then leave feeling exhausted.

That was not the outcome I wanted from my first-ever visit to Portugal in April (spring).

So how did I strike the right balance?

I took advice from those who had been and narrowed it down to just three stops: Lisbon (three nights), Porto (four nights), and the Algarve region in the south (four nights).

As the second-oldest European capital city (after Athens), Portugal's capital, Lisbon, has character, charm, a relaxed vibe, and plenty of hills.

A port city at the mouth of the Tagus River where it meets the Atlantic Ocean, the area has a long history of occupation, including Phoenician traders, Celtic and Iberian peoples, Romans, and later Germanic tribes.

In 1143, Portugal became an indepen-

dent kingdom, and in 1256 King Afonso III moved the capital from Coimbra to Lisbon.

In 1755, a massive earthquake, followed by a tsunami and six days of fires, destroyed 85% of Lisbon.

Rebuilding the city resulted in a modernised Lisbon with earthquake-resistant architecture, known as Pombaline, which can be seen in many of Lisbon's older neighbourhoods.

Many of Lisbon's popular sights are in the city centre.

This is a walkable city – provided you can manage the cobblestone pavements and the seven hills.

If these are too challenging, you can take a trolley (tram) or an inexpensive tuk tuk.

On my first afternoon, I left my guesthouse in the trendy Príncipe Real neighbourhood, a residential area crammed with restaurants, art galleries, and shops, to wander the narrow streets of the bohemian Bairro Alto, full of vintage shops

and street art. With the sun setting around 8pm, evenings were luxuriously long with daylight.

My afternoon stroll ended at Time Out Market Lisboa in Mercado da Ribeira around 6pm – it was perfect timing for an early dinner and my first glass of port in Portugal.

On the way back, I paused at the Miradouro de São Pedro de Alcântara, a garden terrace offering stunning panoramic views of São Jorge Castle, Alfama, and the Baixa district.

Small groups, families, and friends mingled casually on the benches and around the water fountain.

My last stop was the Moorish building next to my guesthouse, Embaixada.

Built in 1877 as a mansion, when exotic neo-Moorish architecture was fashionable, the stunning building is now an innovative shopping gallery where several national brands and artists share their creations.

Downstairs is a casual and very relaxed restaurant and bar. I ended the evening with a cocktail nightcap.

The best way to appreciate the history and culture of Lisbon is to take a guided walking tour.

On the second day, I met my guide, Pedro Osório Graça, organised by Divita Tours.

For four hours, Pedro led me around the steep and hilly neighbourhoods of Bairro Alto, Chiado, and Baixa.

We wandered up and down medieval streets, eventually ending at a high point in Bairro Alto overlooking the Tagus River.

MUST SEE:

- Casa das Velas Loreto – the oldest shop in Lisbon, selling handmade beeswax candles made by the same family since 1789 (no photos allowed inside).
- Livraria Bertrand, in the Chiado neighbourhood, declared the oldest operating bookstore in the world by Guinness World Records in 2011 (photos allowed).
- Tram 25 – a less-crowded alternative to the popular 28 tram, running between Prazeres and Campo das Cebolas, ending near Casa dos Bicos (Museum of Lisbon).

From Lisbon, there are many day trips:

- Sintra is touristy but worthwhile, especially to see the National Palace of Sintra, the oldest royal palace in Portugal.
- Cabo da Roca is the westernmost point in mainland Europe, with panoramic views over the Atlantic Ocean and one of the oldest lighthouses in Portugal.
- Cascais is a chic coastal town not far from Sintra. Because of the late sunset, you can do both in one day. It's busy but fun.

I caught the train from Lisbon to Faro, hired a car at Faro Airport, and drove to Lagos.

Aside from the adjustment to driving on the right, driving in the Algarve region presented minimal challenges.

I based myself in Lagos's old town.

One morning, I walked from the old town to Ponta da Piedade, a clifftop walk following dramatic limestone cliffs and offering coastal views over turquoise water.

From Lagos, I drove west to Sagres and, braving strong winds, visited the headland at Cape St Vincent, the southwesternmost point of mainland Europe.

The sun may set over the Atlantic in Sagres, but not on the cloudy day of my visit.

On the drive back to Faro, I stopped in Silves, the oldest city in the Algarve, to visit the Moorish Castle – a beautiful Muslim fortification on a hilltop overlooking the town.

Like Lisbon, the charming river city of Porto is best experienced slowly, with many attractions on either side of the Douro River.

Porto's central neighbourhoods each have their own charm and vitality.

Ribeira is one of Porto's most photographed neighbourhoods because of its colourful houses. It is relatively flat but can be touristy.

Baixa, where I stayed, sits just above Ribeira.

To visit downtown Porto's attractions, you need to climb up to Baixa to find Porto Cathedral, which features an interesting mix of architectural styles: Romanesque foundations support Gothic vaults and delicate Baroque decorations.

Also in Baixa is the Livraria Lello bookstore, which has become a major tourist draw thanks to *Harry Potter* fans who believe its red staircase inspired Hogwarts (pre-purchased tickets are the easiest way to enter).

On the other side of the river, Vila Nova de Gaia is home to the city's port cellars



← A view of Lisbon at sunset with the São Jorge Castle at top left.
→ The streets of the Bairro Alto district in Lisbon.



and tasting houses, reached by walking across the magnificent Dom Luís I Bridge.

In Porto, I attended a Fado performance, a traditional Portuguese music genre originating in early 19th-century Lisbon.

Fado features a solo singer accompanied by a Portuguese guitar and classical guitar.

The music is mournful and emotional, expressing saudade – deep longing, nostalgia, or melancholy.

From Porto, I recommend a visit to the Douro Valley, with its breathtaking landscapes and excellent wine and port tastings. It's a long day, but worth the effort.

Portugal's cities and villages are vibrant destinations with complex layers.

My three destination choices were the ideal introduction to Portugal and have left me wanting more.



↑ The Livraria Lello bookstore in Porto, which has become a major tourist drawcard for fans of Harry Potter.

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Overlanders Way: A road trip of discovery



Take a journey through the beating heart of Outback Queensland with a road trip along the Overlanders Way.

Stretching from Townsville in North Queensland to Camooweal in Queensland's far north-west, the Overlanders Way follows the Flinders Highway, weaving together authentic country towns, pioneering history and unforgettable landscapes.

Covering over 905km, the Overlanders Way passes through the communities of Charters Towers, Hughenden, Richmond, Julia Creek, Cloncurry and Mount Isa and is best explored at a slower pace where you can park up for a few days and discover your surrounds.

For budget-conscious travellers, the Overlanders Way is the perfect road trip with free camp sites and affordable caravan parks and attractions along the way.

The iconic town of Julia Creek offers a great base to park up for multiple days, saving fuel and allowing you to live like a local. The Caravan Park will even lend

you free cruiser bikes to pedal your way around town.

Every road trip has a story to tell but the Overlanders Way is one to be especially enjoyed, drawing upon the state's rich pioneering, paleo and mining history.

Perhaps the most rewarding part of this route though, is the small communities and townships that you will experience along the way.

These are authentic country towns, far remote from city chaos, and where a hearty pub meal is best shared with the locals.

The scenery along the Overlanders Way is some of the best and most diverse that Queensland has to offer.

National parks and reserves break up the drive with walking trails, lookouts and swimming holes. It's a landscape that shifts constantly and rewards those who take their time to explore.

Photo: Erin Baachi

↑ Porcupine Gorge, near Hughenden, is described as Australia's "Little Grand Canyon."

Highlights of the Overlanders Way

TOUR LIKE A TEXAN

Saddle up for one of the Overlanders Way's most unexpected experiences. Just outside Charters Towers, Texas Longhorn Tours delivers a slice of the American West in Outback Queensland. Ride in a traditional horse-drawn wagon or join a Texas Longhorn Safari, rumbling across the ranch alongside a magnificent herd of longhorn cattle.

NATURE'S FINEST SHOW

The scenery along the Overlanders Way is a constantly changing spectacle, shifting from tropical North Queensland to the red, rugged heart of the Outback. Porcupine Gorge, near Hughenden, is a standout. Often called Australia's "Little Grand Canyon", it features towering sandstone cliffs, sweeping views, tranquil walking trails and inviting waterholes perfect for a refreshing swim.

SOAK UNDER THE STARS

Julia Creek Caravan Park's artesian baths are a classic Outback surprise. Custom-built private bathhouses allow you to soak in mineral-rich waters beneath wide, star-filled skies. With warm water, quiet surrounds and the option to sip champagne as you unwind, it's a deeply relaxing end to a day on the road.

MARY KATHLEEN

A short detour from Cloncurry leads to Mary Kathleen, a former uranium mining town abandoned in 1983. Today, empty streets and concrete slabs hint at its past, while the electric-blue water of the mine pit offers a striking reminder of former prosperity. Interpretive signs and scattered relics invite visitors to imagine the once-thriving community. Self-contained caravanners can free-camp here, or join a guided tour with North West Tours. A 4WD is required to reach the mine.

THE SPIRIT OF THE OUTBACK

Cloncurry captures the ingenuity of Outback Queensland. Learn about the beginnings of the Royal Flying Doctor Service at John Flynn Place Museum, explore mining history at Cloncurry Unearthed and see one of the original Qantas hangars still operating at the local airport.

GO TO GROUND

In Mount Isa, discover stories beneath the surface. Tour the World War II-era Underground Hospital carved into solid rock, then step into a miner's boots at the Hard Times Mine experience for a gritty, hands-on insight into underground life.

Plan your road trip

THE OVERLANDERS WAY promises vast stretches of stunning scenery but with sizeable distances between towns, it pays to be prepared. Plan your Overlanders Way journey with these top tips:

BEST TIME TO GO

April through to October. Think crisp mornings, sunny days and star-filled nights.

DISTANCE

The Overlanders Way from Townsville to Mount Isa is approximately 905km so plan at least 10 to 14 days to enjoy the journey at a relaxed pace and spend time exploring the towns of Charters Towers, Hughenden, Julia Creek, Richmond and Mount Isa.

PACKING LIST

First-aid kit, water, insect repellent, swimmers for artesian bathing and warm layers for cool nights. Towns may have limited access to specific medications so be sure to plan ahead for what you could need and bring enough for the entire trip.

KNOW YOUR TOW LIMITS

Ensure you have had your loaded van and vehicle weighed prior, so you don't exceed specified weight limits, including the ball load.

Drive the Overlanders Way



outbackqueensland.com.au

Townsville > Charters Towers > Hughenden > Richmond > Julia Creek > Cloncurry > Mount Isa > Camooweal

Paradise found

Your guide to a family-friendly holiday in the beautiful Cook Islands.

By **RACHAEL GROHN**

The Cook Islands are home to arguably the prettiest beaches in the world. About a six-hour flight from Brisbane, this largely untapped destination is made up of 15 islands and has a population of just 18,000 people.

The locals are extremely warm and welcoming, and they love sharing their culture and home.

They also adore children, which makes travelling with a two-year-old and a six-month-old much easier – especially for a nine-night stay.

This family-friendly destination is well and truly one for the travel wishlist.

Our trip began on the main island, Rarotonga, which was filled with friendly locals, waterfront restaurants and crystal-clear waters. Days were spent visiting the beach, the

pool and nearby islands.

The Koka Lagoon Cruise is a must-do during your stay. The tour guides will have you singing all day long while you soak up the stunning beaches and enjoy a vibrant cultural show.

The buffet lunch was delicious and the snorkelling pristine – this day was a highlight for the family.

After six nights in Rarotonga, Aitutaki was next. This smaller atoll is famous for its lagoon and One Foot Island.

The Vaka Cruise allows you to experience everything the lagoon has to offer, including snorkelling with giant trevallies, two island stopovers and a delicious barbecue lunch served onboard. The boat has plenty of space, giving kids room to move around and explore.



The writer was a guest of Cook Islands Tourism. Photos: Rachael Grohn, Cook Islands Tourism.



- ↑ Kayaks are provided for guests at Pacific Resort, Rarotonga.
- ↑ Writer Rachael Grohn and her family.
- ← An aerial view of one of the Cook Islands' pristine beaches.

WHERE TO STAY Pacific Resort, Rarotonga

The family room at Pacific Resort was right next to the pool and provided the perfect base for exploring with a young family. Right at your doorstep is a beach with complimentary kayaks and paddleboards.

The staff are wonderful and genuinely love children, accommodating every need. Our room was perfectly set up for a family of four, with everything close by for convenience. As a bonus, the night markets – right next door – offer an authentic culinary experience.

Tamanu Beach, Aitutaki

Tamanu Beach is best described as casual luxury, offering intimate, family-friendly bungalows. Each bungalow includes private amenities such as a deluxe outdoor shower and a private verandah.

With only 23 bungalows, the resort provides personalised service and is thoughtfully divided into family-friendly and adults-only wings.

WHERE TO EAT

There was no shortage of dinner options, all with convenient dining times for a baby and a toddler.

Tamarind House

Dining here was one of the highlights of the entire trip. Located right on the water, the seafood platter was outstanding.

Sandals Restaurant, Pacific Resort

If you're staying at or near the Pacific Resort in Rarotonga, this restaurant serves Pacific Rim cuisine using the freshest local ingredients.

Trader Jack's

Iconic in the Cook Islands, Trader Jack's is known for its great service, food and unbeatable location in the heart of Avarua Harbour. It's the ideal spot to unwind after a day of exploring.

Tamanu Beach Resort Restaurant

This beachfront restaurant offers stunning ocean views and a delicious menu. Breakfast is complimentary for guests, and cultural shows run periodically. Happy hour is not to be missed.

Avatea Cafe

A fun and quirky spot in Aitutaki, Avatea Cafe is known for its relaxed atmosphere and excellent service. The menu is full of flavour, including a colourful and creative take on the traditional seafood platter.

TOP TIPS

Hire a car

There's so much to explore, and the freedom to create your own schedule is worth it. Driving conditions are similar to Australia.

Stay central

Being close to neighbouring resorts and restaurants gives you more flexibility when travelling with children. Choose accommodation that makes this easy.

Make the most of amenities

A good-sized pool is invaluable when filling time between tours. Do research and pick a hotel that suits your family.

Absorb local knowledge

Chatting with locals often leads to discovering hidden gems you won't find online.

Treat yourself

Holidays are the perfect time to indulge. The Waterfall Spa offers a tranquil experience and is ideal for some well-deserved self care in Rarotonga.

Aitutaki is worth the visit

Just a 50-minute flight from Rarotonga, Aitutaki's turquoise lagoon is unforgettable – and your camera roll will prove it.

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Is your car spying on you?

Connected vehicles can be seen as a godsend of enhanced convenience, functionality and safety, or as advanced surveillance devices on wheels. It's possible they could be both.

By **GED BULMER**

When Australians buy a new car today, they're buying much more than a powered machine that can move them from point A to point B in a high degree of comfort and safety. They're also buying something that can rightly be described as a computer on wheels.

Cars have long been known as one of the most complex mass-manufactured products on the planet, but the degree of complexity in modern automobiles is changing rapidly as consumers expect the same levels of connectivity they have at home and at work to be available in their vehicles.

Car makers are responding with vehicles that have the ability to connect to the

internet, sync with smartphones and mirror on infotainment screens the apps, websites and other internet-enabled services used when not in the car.

However, these so-called connected vehicles are also quietly collecting data in the background, something that has raised concerns with privacy advocates, politicians and the military.

Last November, the topic became the focus of national attention when reports emerged of thousands of Chinese-made connected vehicles being stored near RAAF Base Amberley in South East Queensland.

Most, if not all of these vehicles would have been equipped with multiple cameras which are an integral part of modern driver

assistance systems, as well a microphone array that provides listening capability for their voice control systems, automatic speech recognition software, and internet connectivity via 4G, 5G or Wi-Fi.

China doesn't have a monopoly on connected vehicles, of course, but given the complex and sometimes difficult relationship Australia has with its largest trading partner it's understandable why a car park full of internet-enabled Chinese vehicles near our largest operational air base might cause concern.

Defence officials said there was no evidence of wrongdoing but the episode sharpened a broader debate about how much data connected vehicles collect, where is it stored, and what risks come with trading privacy for convenience?

Austroroads is the peak organisation of Australasian Road transport and traffic authorities. In a 2021 report the organisation estimated there were 1.2 million connected vehicles on our roads, forecasting that figure to rise to 93% of all new vehicles by 2031.

Leaving aside the negative aspects of a connected vehicle having the potential to spy on us, the technology has been developed primarily to introduce convenience features likely to be viewed positively by drivers.

RACQ Principal Technical Researcher Andrew Kirk said connected vehicle technology can also deliver tangible cost saving and reliability benefits for motorists.

"Telematics systems can continuously monitor critical vehicle health indicators such as 12-volt battery voltage, giving drivers early warning of a failing battery.

"Many connected vehicles can also track tyre pressures and indicators of wheel misalignment, helping identify issues that can accelerate tyre wear."

A modern connected vehicle infotainment system collects data from any device connected to the vehicle, which in most instances is your smartphone.

Lower insurance premiums are another potential advantage of telematics for drivers willing to share limited driving behaviour data with insurers who reward smooth, safe driving, Mr Kirk said.

"Used responsibly, these diagnostic and maintenance features have the potential to improve vehicle reliability, extend component life and reduce overall ownership costs for consumers."

While these are all undeniably convenient aspects of connected vehicles, there remain potential downsides including privacy concerns.

The Australian Signals Directorate (ASD) is the key Australian Government intelligence agency within the Defence portfolio responsible for foreign signals intelligence, cyber security, and offensive cyber operations.

Its website offers a range of information about connected vehicles noting that "the data a CV collects can be stored by the manufacturer overseas, where Australian data protection laws will not apply."

The ASD bulletin goes on to state that this data may be attractive to cybercriminals, referencing several large and high-profile data breaches of manufacturers in recent years.

While not mentioned specifically, automotive brands that have been involved in major data breaches overseas include Hyundai, Kia, Volkswagen, Nissan, and Toyota.

One of the most alarming data breaches was a well-publicised 2015 hack by US security researchers of a Jeep Cherokee. The hack, which was perpetrated over the internet by researchers located hundreds of miles from where the vehicle was being driven, allowed the hackers to remotely take control of the vehicle's brakes, steering, and transmission.

That incident led to the recall of 1.4

million vehicles and a growing awareness among manufacturers of the software vulnerabilities accompanying the rise of von-connected vehicles.

A modern connected vehicle infotainment system collects data from any device connected to the vehicle, which in most instances is your smartphone. Examples of the type of data that can be collected and transmitted to car makers and third-party providers include smartphone call logs, SMS logs, contacts and calendar events, external and internal image or video captures, real-time GPS locations, navigation entries, and more.

According to the ASD, this data may be extracted from devices connected to the vehicle and can, in some cases, be stored long term by manufacturers. The data can also be recovered using specialist tools, in some cases without having physical access to the vehicle.

Given this, you would want to have confidence that your connected vehicle is doing the right thing with your data.

But a 2025 report by Dr Katharine Kemp, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Law & Justice, UNSW Sydney, found "serious privacy flaws in the data practices of new internet connected cars in Australia".

Dr Kemp's research analysed the privacy terms from 15 of the most popular new car brands selling connected vehicles here, uncovering what she described as "enormous obstacles for consumers who want to find and understand the privacy terms". Her research also found that some brands make "inaccurate claims that certain information is not 'personal information', implying the Privacy Act doesn't apply to that data."

Similar concerns were raised in a 2022 discussion paper on connected cars and Big Data by the Australian Automotive Dealers Association (AADA).

"The software-defined connected car is here, transmitting data, sending and receiving, storing information in the cloud and vehicle owners do not have access to the data, and dealers do not have access either."

The peak organisation representing Australia's motoring clubs, the Australian Automobile Association (AAA), is urging the Federal Government to give consumers the right to choose the third parties their data is shared with. By unlocking vehicle-generated data, the AAA believes it can boost productivity, drive competition, and deliver better value for motorists.

Much as we've grown accustomed to the internet being equal parts blessing and curse, the same may be true of con-

nected vehicles. For some people this may be seen as merely the cost of convenience, with the assumption being that if you are using a smartphone or internet-enabled vehicle, then your data is fair game.

For others who are more concerned about data privacy, ways to reduce your risk of data breaches include reviewing the privacy and data collection policies of the manufacturer before buying a vehicle, and considering the data laws of the country in which the manufacturer will store the data.

CONNECTED VEHICLES: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Many new cars are now connected to the internet through a built in SIM or a paired smartphone. These Connected Vehicles can send and receive data in real time.

WHAT THEY CAN DO

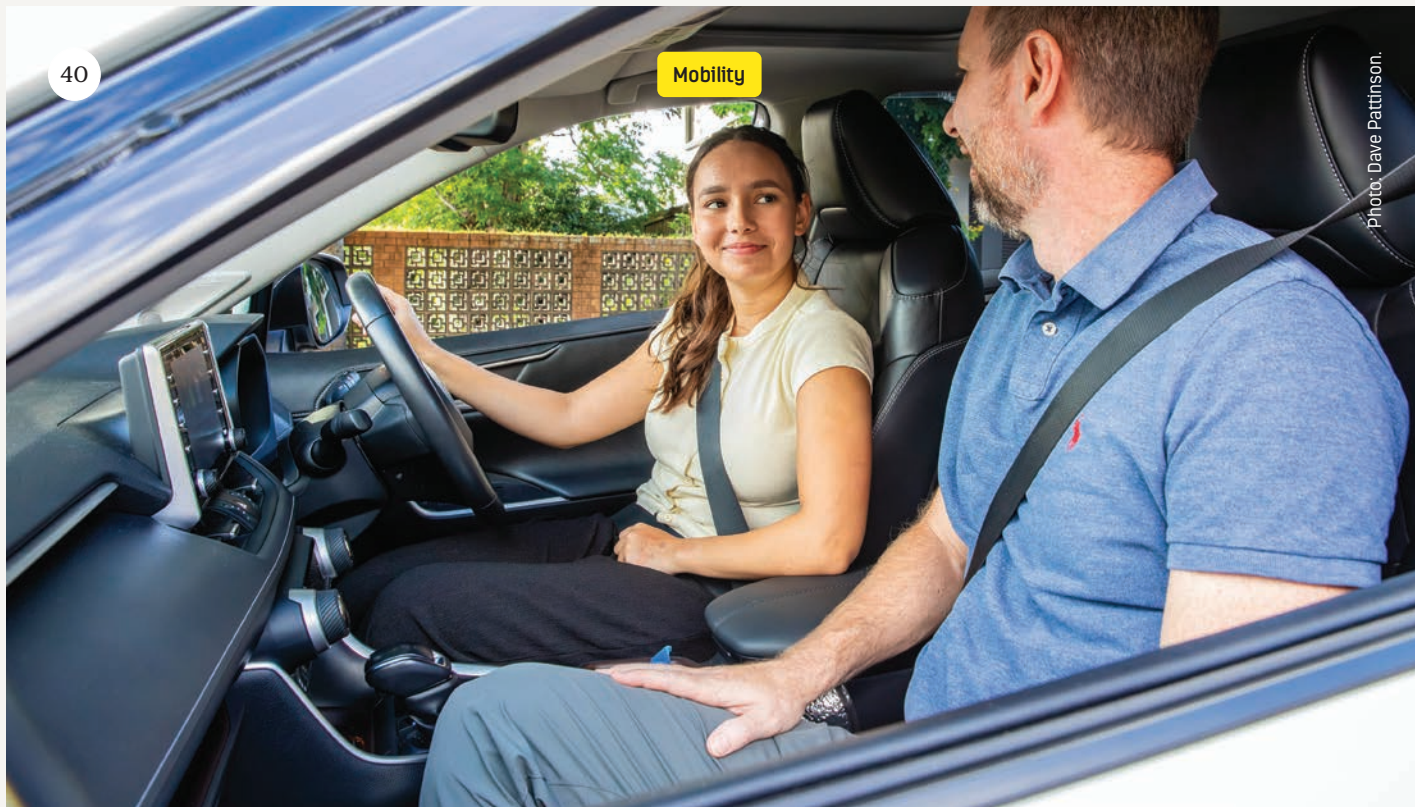
- Update software remotely
- Lock, unlock or start the car via an app
- Pre heat or cool the cabin
- Provide live traffic, weather and maintenance updates
- Detect crashes and send alerts
- Show vehicle location and system status
- In some models, allow viewing through external or internal cameras.

WHAT DATA THEY CAN COLLECT

- Location and navigation history
- Driving behaviour and vehicle performance
- Camera images and in car audio
- Infotainment use
- Data from connected phones, such as call and text logs.

HOW TO REDUCE PRIVACY RISKS

- Read the manufacturer's privacy policy before buying
- Check where vehicle data is stored and under which country's laws
- Turn off data sharing features where possible
- Be cautious connecting devices, especially in rental cars
- Factory reset vehicles when buying or selling.



TURN L-PLATE STRESS INTO SAFER DRIVING

Teaching a teen to drive just got easier, with a new program offering parents techniques to support young drivers.

By MICHAEL HYLARD

To find out where upcoming sessions will be held and to register your interest, scan the QR code.



Sitting in the passenger seat while your teen learns to drive is a heart-in-your-mouth rite of passage for Aussie parents.

For learners, logging 100 hours behind the wheel often feels like running a never-ending obstacle course.

But what if those L-plate days didn't have to be so stressful?

RACQ has launched The Coaching Lane, a new road safety program designed to help parents and supervisors navigate the bends, bumps, and roundabouts of teaching teens to drive.

This initiative follows RACQ's latest Young Driver Survey revealing that a whopping 82% of learner drivers get most of their instruction from parents or carers yet, until now, there has been a shortage of support for those instructing from the passenger seat.

RACQ consulted parents to identify the biggest challenges when teaching teens to drive, making sure the program addresses real family issues.

THE TOP THREE CHALLENGES FOR PARENTS

1. Watching the road and trying to teach at the same time.
2. Giving feedback without it sounding like criticism (or starting an argument).
3. Turning everyday driving into structured, meaningful lessons.

This new program aims to give parents, carers and supervisors the tools they need to teach drivers safely and confidently.

RACQ wants to help adults identify key risks facing young drivers, reinforce safe driving habits, manage distractions, and build their own confidence as supervisors.

The course also teaches techniques that encourage meaningful conversations about road safety.

TOP TIPS FOR TEACHING A LEARNER DRIVER

- **Make every drive count**
Have a clear goal for each drive. Focus on one or two skills (roundabouts, merging, right turns etc.) and choose roads that suit the learner's level.
- **Model the driving you expect**
Learners copy what you do. Drive well and talk through your decisions – even the tricky moments.
- **Vary the experience**
Introduce real-world conditions as skills grow: school zones, wet weather, night driving and new routes.
- **Set the tone**
Start calm, agree on how to reset if stress rises, and finish by noting two wins and one focus for next time.
- **Build independence**
Ask more questions and give fewer instructions as they improve, helping them understand the 'why' behind decisions.

Program up and running

RACQ officially launched The Coaching Lane in April, and started by teaching parents in Bundaberg, Rockhampton, Gladstone and Brisbane.

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Mastering the art of reversing your caravan



Reversing a caravan doesn't have to be stressful. Master these proven techniques to set up camp with ease.

Reversing and manoeuvring a caravan can feel daunting, particularly for new caravanners or when arriving at a tightly packed campsite with 'spectators' watching.

The good news is that reversing a caravan is a skill anyone can learn.

With the right techniques, clear communication and a calm mindset, it becomes a manageable and often satisfying part of setting up camp.

How to reverse using mirrors

Your mirrors are your primary guides when reversing a caravan, so they must be set up correctly.

Extension mirrors are essential, allowing you to clearly see both sides of the caravan and, ideally, its rear corners.

Before you begin, adjust them so you don't need to move your head excessively to check each side.

A popular technique is placing your hands at the bottom of the steering wheel.

When reversing, your caravan will move in the same direction as your hands – move your hand left and the caravan moves left, move it right and the caravan follows.

This method makes steering far more intuitive when watching the mirrors.

As you reverse, constantly scan from mirror to mirror, watching how the caravan responds to your inputs.

Small steering movements are key. If the caravan begins to drift too far to one side and disappears from a mirror, gently steer towards that side to bring it back into view.

If things start to feel rushed or messy, stop completely, straighten the wheels and regroup.

Spotter communication tips

Using a spotter can significantly reduce stress and improve safety.

The spotter's job is to guide the driver, watch for obstacles and maintain an overall view of how the caravan is tracking into the site.

Before reversing, agree on clear and simple communication.

Hand signals should be basic and consistent – pointing the direction the rear of the caravan needs to go, a clear 'stop' signal, and a signal for straight wheels. Handheld UHF radios or mobile phones

on speaker mode are also useful communication options for the driver and spotter.

The spotter should always stand where the driver can clearly see them, never directly behind the caravan.

Staying calm and using steady, deliberate signals keeps both driver and spotter focused and prevents tension from building during the manoeuvre.

How to position on a site

Good positioning starts before the vehicle goes into reverse.

Take a moment to get out and inspect the site. Look for obstacles such as bollards, taps, trees, slopes or uneven ground that may not be visible from the driver's seat.

Planning your path before reversing saves time and reduces mistakes.

Whenever possible, reverse with the caravan entering the site on the driver's side, as visibility is far better.

Begin with the tow vehicle and caravan in a straight line and slightly past the bay entrance. From there, use slow, deliberate steering inputs to guide the caravan into position.

If alignment isn't quite right, drive forward a little, straighten the wheels and try again. Reversing is about control, not getting it perfect on the first attempt.

Once positioned, ensure there's adequate room for awnings, annexes and access to services before disconnecting.

Common mistakes to avoid

One of the most common mistakes is rushing. Speed magnifies errors and leads

to oversteering or jack-knifing. Reversing slowly gives you time to think, observe and correct.

Another mistake is trying to 'save' a bad angle instead of stopping and resetting.

Pulling forward to straighten up isn't failure, it's smart driving.

Ignoring pressure from onlookers is also important; everyone in a caravan park has been in the same situation at some point.

Confidence is built through repetition.

Set up cones or markers in an empty car park to practise straight reverses and gentle turns before tackling tight campsites.

Learn how your caravan pivots and how quickly it responds to steering inputs. With repetition, movements become instinctive.

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REVIEW

Denza B5 Leopard joins luxury pack

By GED BULMER

Not content with having already up-ended the ute and electric vehicle segments in Australia, Chinese car maker BYD is now gunning for luxury car makers with the launch of two new models under the auspices of its Denza sub-brand.

Denza's first models, the B5 and B8, are both 4x4s and similar in size to Toyota's Prado and 300 Series LandCruiser respectively, with both vehicles featuring a

plug-in hybrid electric (PHEV) powertrain.

We're focused here on the smaller, five-seat B5 which is likely to be the biggest seller in a niche model range that targets established premium 4x4 brands like Land Rover, Range Rover and Mercedes-Benz, but also the Ford Everest and Toyota LandCruiser Prado.

Despite boasting a list of standard equipment that rivals some large luxury European SUVs, the Denza B5 is priced from \$74,990

(MRLP) for the entry-level model, rising to \$79,990 (MRLP) for the better-equipped Leopard variant tested here.

With its chunky, angular styling, short front and rear overhangs and tailgate-mounted spare wheel, the B5 immediately signals to onlookers that it is a proper 4x4 and not a soft-roader.

That's also the case under the skin where a heavy-duty ladder-frame chassis underpins its sturdy body-on-frame design.

Suspension is fully independent with coil springs and double wishbones at the front and rear, and all-wheel disc brakes as standard.

The Leopard adds standard active hydraulic suspension which allows the shock absorbers to control and counteract body roll, pitch and dive, as well as allowing ride height to be raised and lowered for extra ground clearance or a low-set entry mode.

Under the bonnet is a turbocharged 1.5-litre four-cylinder petrol engine, which might sound a bit underdone for a vehicle of this size, but it's complemented by front and rear electric motors and a 31.8kWh lithium iron phosphate (LFP) battery.

The so-called 'super-hybrid' system is like that BYD uses in the Shark 6 ute, delivering healthy combined outputs of 400kW/760Nm, a pure electric range of 90km, and a combined touring range of 850km (WLTC).

Acceleration from 0-100km/h is quoted as 4.8 seconds, which is decently quick for a vehicle which weighs 3,007kg, and the Leopard's combined cycle fuel consumption is just 3.9L/100km with a fully charged battery, or 10.9L/100km once the battery is depleted.

Unusually, for a vehicle positioned as a serious off-roader, the B5 does not have a transfer case with high- and low-range ratios, nor does it have any sort of drive shaft connecting the front axle to the rear.

Instead, it uses a reduction gear on the rear e-motor, and a sophisticated traction control system with Low and Creep modes to control drive from the front and rear electric motors.

The range of drive modes is bewilderingly extensive, incorporating Intelligent, Snow, Sand-Mud, Mountain, Rock, Wade, Race, Custom, and U-turn.

The latter refers to the B5's so-called 'Leopard Turn' capability, which locks the inside rear wheel while driving the outer wheels, to enable a sub-5.9m turning radius.

This, along with good fundamentals of approach, departure and ground clearance, plus the added traction of front and rear electrically actuated mechanical differential locks, endows the B5 Leopard with an impressive level of off-road capability.

The caveat here is that the vehicle is very heavy and uses its traction control systems to maintain progress, so makes harder work of rough conditions than might a conventional 4x4 with low range.

The Leopard's road-oriented 275/55R20 tyres aren't especially suited for off-roading either (the lower-grade B5 wears more sensible 18-inch tyres).

Nonetheless, we covered some challenging terrain in and around the spectacular Wilpena Pound in South Australia's rugged Flinders Ranges with only a single puncture across a fleet of a dozen vehicles.

The B5's list of standard features is very comprehensive and includes a huge 15.6-inch touchscreen, 12.3-inch digital driver's display, supple perforated Nappa leather seats, panoramic sunroof, and a suite of advanced safety features including a 360-degree camera and 11 airbags.

On top of this the Leopard adds a 16-speaker Devialet sound system, a second wireless phone charger, con-

sole-mounted fridge/hotbox, heated/ventilated/massaging front seats, automatic LED headlights with 'matrix assistance' and much more.

While it's generously equipped, one area where the B5 doesn't match its 4x4 rivals is braked towing capacity, which at 3,000kg trails the likes of Prado and Everest (3,500kg), while its 490kg payload is also underwhelming. Denza does, however, supply a towbar and 12-pin trailer wiring harness as standard.

Dynamically, the B5 Leopard lacks some finesse, particularly with regards to ride quality.

The ride is firmer than necessary, possibly due to its high kerb weight, proving a constant low-level irritant on anything but smooth tarmac.

Also on the negative side of the ledger is the fact the B5 features an annoying (and distracting) driver-attention alert system which seemingly can't handle prescription eyeglasses or sunglasses.

On the plus side, the drivetrain is smooth and quiet, there's plenty of power underfoot for highway cruising and overtaking, and the interior is well insulated from road and wind noise.

There is also the undeniable value equation that the B5 Leopard brings to the table with its pricing undercutting even the base-spec Prado GX while its equipment list rivals the \$100,000 Prado Kakadu.

Given the success the Shark 6 has achieved in the past year or so, it's unlikely competitors will take Denza lightly.

It's not perfect, mind, and there is certainly room for improvement, but as a first-up effort from an all-new brand it makes a compelling case for itself.

**PRICE**

\$79,990 (plus on-road costs) (MRLP)

POWERTRAIN

1.5-litre four-cylinder turbo petrol, dual electric motors, electronic CVT transmission, full-time AWD, (combined 400kW/760Nm)

BATTERY

31.8kWh (LFP)

RANGE

90km (WLTP)

ENERGY CONSUMPTION

23.3kWh/100km (WLTP)

FUEL CONSUMPTION

3.9-10.9L/100km (WLTP, pending battery SOC); 92g/km (WLTP)

ANCAP CRASH RATING

Five stars (2025)

WARRANTY

Six years, 150,000km vehicle; eight years, 160,000km battery and drive unit

FOR

Keenly priced; generously equipped; strong performance; excellent fuel-efficiency; impressive drivetrain tech; quality fit, finish and materials.

AGAINST

Suspension needs further refinement; low towing and payload rating; complex digital drive system engagement.

REVIEW

NEW DENZA B5 PHEV HAS FAMILY APPEAL

By TACE CLIFFORD

DENZA'S VERSATILE plug-in hybrid 4x4 can manage the weekday school run, tow the caravan on weekends, and tackle off-road adventures.

With room for a double pram plus your weekly shop, the B5's tall boot can be stacked high for family holidays.

A flat boot floor suits emergency nappy changes and provides comfortable footing for the family dog. Hooks on either side of the luggage bay can secure school and shopping bags, and there's a 12-volt socket to run the portable fridge.

Three child seats fit easily across the second row, whether forward- or rear-facing. There's plenty of head and leg room and a flat footwell makes access easy.

A 184cm tall driver can still fit comfortably in front of a rear-facing child seat, stretching to 186cm-plus if using forward-facing seats.

Air vents above the rear doors and behind the centre console help keep rear-seat passengers comfortable, with lights above the rear doors to help with nighttime ma-

noeuvres and grab handles to aid getting in and out, or for hanging infant toys.

Rear sockets allow tech-savvy teens to charge their devices, while ventilated rear outer seats help keep the crew comfortable and calm.

A handy temperature-controlled centre console compartment with rear-seat access drawer cools or heats items from -6°C to 50°C, ensuring you can arrive at the family picnic with cold drinks or warm pies (but not both at the same time).

The B5's 11 airbags include side curtains extending to second-row passengers. Individual rear child locks are conveniently located on the driver's door and within the media screen. A five-star ANCAP rating includes a market-leading 95% child occupant protection score.

Height adjustable suspension can be raised for more ground clearance or lowered for easier loading, enabling access to garages and carparks with low-ceiling heights.

An in-built modem allows access to YouTube and an in-car karaoke system will



keep everyone entertained.

You can also use the 90km of battery range to help get the baby off to sleep with a late-night emissions-free drive around the block.

The B5 is a large SUV but it's easy enough to get comfortable with its proportions thanks to front and rear parking sensors, a high seating position with good all-round visibility, and a 360-degree camera system.

There's also dedicated cameras for lane-changing and a digital rear-view mirror that provides clear visibility even when the boot is fully loaded.



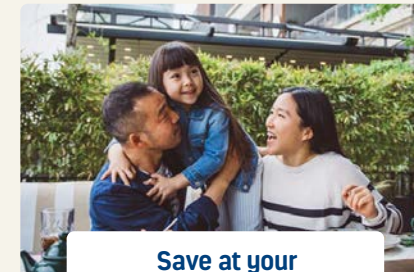
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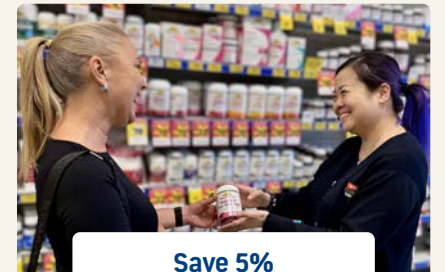
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People Movers



DENZA D9 AWD

HARD ON THE heels of the launch of Denza's B5 and B8 off-roaders comes the D9 people mover. Characterised by its striking oversized grille, the all-electric D9 comes in two trim grades starting with the single-motor front-wheel drive priced from \$85,990 (MRLP) rising to the more powerful and better equipped D9 all-wheel drive from \$95,990 (MRLP). Under the futuristic skin of both variants is a 103.3kWh BYD Blade battery which, in the AWD grade, powers dual electric motors delivering outputs of 275kW/470Nm and a range of 480km (WLTP). A 3,110mm wheelbase and 5,250mm overall length provide plenty of interior space, with seating for seven. The seats in all three rows are finished in plush Nappa leather with second-row captain's chairs featuring ventilation, massage function, power leg rests, four-way lumbar adjustment and seat position memory, all controlled via a 5.5-inch display built into the armrests. Double-layer acoustic glass and a 14-speaker, 420-watt Dynaudio system, power sliding doors and electronically controlled dampers round out Denza's impressive luxury offering.

PRICE: \$95,990 (MRLP)

MOTOR: Dual electric, all-wheel drive (275kW/470Nm)

BATTERY: 103.3kWh BYD Blade battery (lithium iron phosphate)

RANGE/ENERGY CONSUMPTION: 480km (WLTP)/ 23-27 kWh/100km (WLTP)

SAFETY RATING: Not tested

WARRANTY: Six years, 150,000km vehicle; eight years, 160,000km battery and drive unit.



ZEEKR 009 AWD

PART OF CHINA'S sprawling Geely Automotive group – which also owns Volvo Cars, Polestar, Lotus and Proton – Zeekr has been steadily building its brand presence in Australia since late 2024 with a premium portfolio that includes the Zeekr X compact SUV, the Zeekr 7X mid-size SUV, and the Zeekr 009 electric people-mover. The three-variant ultra-luxury 009 is priced from \$115,900 for the seven-seat front-wheel drive (FWD) model, rising to \$135,900 for the seven-seat all-wheel drive (AWD), and \$139,900 for the six-seat AWD. Both FWD and AWD variants utilise a 116kWh battery enabling a range of 604km on the single-motor FWD or 582km on the dual-motor AWD. The latter boasts stellar maximum outputs of 450kW/693Nm which shifts the Zeekr's 2,870kg mass from zero to 100km/h in a scintillating 4.5 seconds. The 009 can be configured as a six- or seven-seater, with the former featuring second-row captain's chairs that look like something out of an airline business class cabin. There are lashings of top-spec Nappa leather throughout, along with a 30-speaker Yamaha sound system, and a 17-inch rear seat OLED display screen.

PRICE: \$139,900 (MRLP)

MOTOR: Dual electric, all-wheel drive (450kW/693Nm) **BATTERY:** 116kWh lithium-ion (NMC)

RANGE/ENERGY CONSUMPTION: 582km (WLTP)/19.5kWh/100km (WLTP)

SAFETY RATING: Not tested

WARRANTY: Five years, unlimited kilometres vehicle; eight years, 160,000km battery.



GAC M8 LUXURY

ANOTHER CHINESE NEWCOMER is the GAC M8, a seven-seat people mover offered in Premium and Luxury grades, priced from \$76,590 and \$83,590 respectively. Measuring 1,823mm high, 1,893mm wide and 5,212mm long, the M8 is about the size of a Kia Carnival and is easily distinguished by its enormous chrome grille. Available exclusively with a plug-in hybrid powertrain, the M8's 25.57kWh battery delivers 106km of electric range, with its front-mounted electric motor assisting the 2.0-litre turbo-petrol engine to a total range of 1,032km at an average of 6.05L/100km (WLTP). Peak outputs of 274kW/630Nm are enough to propel the M8 from 0-100km/h in a respectable 8.8 seconds. The interior is generously equipped with second-row captain's chairs with built-in armrests, electric adjustment and air-pump massage function. In Luxury specification, the interior is cloaked in high-grade half-aniline leather. Electromagnetic dampers help deliver a supple ride over variable surfaces, while V2L technology with a discharge rate of up to 3.3kW allows the M8 to power electrical appliances like a barbecue grill.

PRICE: \$83,590 (MRLP)

POWERTRAIN: 2.0-litre four-cylinder petrol turbo, single electric motor, front-wheel drive (274kW/630Nm combined)

BATTERY: 25.57kWh lithium iron phosphate **RANGE/FUEL CONSUMPTION:** 1,032km/ 6.05L/100km (WLTP)

SAFETY RATING: Not tested

WARRANTY: Seven years, unlimited kilometres vehicle; eight years, 200,000km battery.

Long seen as the pragmatic but plain stablemate to more on-trend SUVs, people movers are having a 'moment' with new models and new powertrains bringing fresh flair to the once sensibly staid segment.



LEXUS LM 500H

NOT CONTENT TO let Chinese rivals have the luxury people mover segment to themselves, Lexus has its own polished player in the shape of the seven-seat LM 350h and four-seat LM 500h. While a four-seat luxury people mover might sound like an oxymoron, the LM 500h compensates for its lack of pews with a luxury fitout. Pricing for the more affordable seven-seat LM 350h starts from \$163,520 for the front-wheel drive variant powered by a 2.5-litre four-cylinder petrol hybrid mustering 184kW. Stepping up to the all-wheel drive version with the same powertrain raises the bar to \$168,520. But it's the LM 500h that's the showstopper, with its reclining rear 'VIP throne' seats, a 48-inch rear widescreen display, and a 14-litre refrigerator. Positioned as a 'super-luxury limousine', the all-wheel drive 500h even features an automatic glass partition that separates the cockpit from the cabin. The LM 500h's hefty \$223,520 (MRLP) price tag puts it in the rarified air of exotic sports cars and premium European saloons.

PRICE: \$223,520 (MRLP)

POWERTRAIN: 2.4-litre turbocharged petrol engine (202kW/460Nm), hybrid front transaxle and rear electric motor (273kW combined), all-wheel-drive.

BATTERY: 288-volt nickel-metal hydride (NiMH).

RANGE/FUEL CONSUMPTION: 900km/ 6.6L/100km (ADR)

SAFETY RATING: Not tested

WARRANTY: Five years, unlimited kilometres vehicle; five years, unlimited kilometres hybrid components.



VOLKSWAGEN ID. BUZZ GTX

VOLKSWAGEN LOOKED TO its back-catalogue for styling cues for its battery-electric ID. Buzz, delivering one of the best-looking vehicles in the segment. Available in short and long wheelbase forms, the electric Kombi comes in a four-variant range that stretches from the fleet-oriented three-seat Cargo at \$69,900 to the sporty seven-seat ID. Buzz GTX at \$109,990. The luxuriously appointed long-wheelbase GTX is the only dual-motor all-wheel drive variant in the otherwise single-motor rear-wheel drive range, delivering outputs of 250kW/545Nm which are enough to propel the retro-styled 2,874kg van from 0-100km/h in a brisk 6.4-seconds. Featuring a 91kWh battery, the ID. Buzz can travel up to 450km between charges. Standard features of the distinctively styled GTX include 21-inch alloy wheels, black styling accents, and a panoramic roof with smart glass. Electric sliding and opening side doors and a power tailgate make for easy ingress and egress to a spacious interior, expanding to 1340 litres with the third row folded and a yawning 2469 litres with both rows folded.

PRICE: \$109,990 (MRLP)

MOTOR: Dual-electric, all-wheel drive (250kW/560-590Nm)

BATTERY: 86kWh lithium-ion (NMC)

RANGE/ENERGY CONSUMPTION: 450km (WLTP)/21.2kWh/100km (WLTP)

SAFETY RATING: Long wheelbase not tested; short wheelbase five stars

WARRANTY: Five years, unlimited kilometres vehicle; eight years/160,000km battery.



KIA CARNIVAL GT HYBRID

WHILE IT MIGHT seem like a stretch to include the long-serving Kia Carnival in this list of new people movers, the segment-leading eight-seater was the beneficiary of a major facelift in early 2024 which introduced a fresh look and new hybrid powertrain. The introduction of a 1.6-litre turbo-petrol hybrid has been popular with families seeking thrifty fuel consumption than that offered by the alternative 3.5-litre V6 petrol and 2.2-litre turbo-diesel engines. The Carnival range starts from \$50,570 for the entry-level S with petrol V6, going all the way to the GT-Line Hybrid at \$76,630. The hybrid powertrain is also available in cheaper S and Sport+ guise where it delivers identical outputs of 180kW/366Nm. We like the look and fitout of the better-specified GT-Line. A spacious and versatile cabin, power-sliding doors and easy access to the third row are staples across the Carnival range, but the hybrid drivetrain's strong performance and 5.8L/100km fuel consumption is increasingly making it the preferred powertrain for Australia's best-selling people mover.

PRICE: \$76,630 (MRLP)

POWERTRAIN: 1.6-litre turbo-petrol hybrid, single electric motor six-speed automatic, front-wheel drive (combined 183kW/367Nm)

BATTERY: 270-volt lithium-ion

RANGE/FUEL CONSUMPTION: 1,200km/ 5.8L/100km (ADR)

SAFETY RATING: Five stars (2025)

WARRANTY: Seven years, unlimited kilometres vehicle; seven years, 150,000km high-voltage components.

REVIEW

NISSAN NAVARA PRO-4X UTE

By GED BULMER

Nissan has launched the fifth generation version of its hard-working Navara ute, which has been a staple on Aussie roads, farms and worksites for some 40 years.

One of Australia's longest running ute nameplates, the Navara first went on sale here in 1986 with the D21 series.

In a ruthlessly pragmatic decision from the global Renault Nissan Mitsubishi Alliance, the Navara now shares its platform and mechanical underpinnings with the Mitsubishi Triton, the current generation of which launched in 2024.

In another departure from previous generations, the D27 Navara is available exclusively as a turbodiesel powered 4x4 dual cab with automatic transmission. Anyone wanting a 4x2 drivetrain, manual transmission or a different body style will need to look elsewhere.

Recommended retail pricing for the four-grade lineup starts with the Navara SL at \$53,348, followed by the ST at \$56,765, the ST-X at \$63,177, and the range-topping PRO-4X, which costs \$68,418. That's between \$2,500 and \$5,000 more expensive than equivalent Triton variants.

The best looking Navara is arguably the lifestyle-oriented PRO-4X, with its Lava Red accents on the grille, wheelarch flares and tailgate, complemented by a black sports bar and black 17-inch alloy wheels clad with 265/65R17 all terrain tyres.

All Navara variants are powered by the

same 2.4-litre four-cylinder bi-turbo diesel, driving through a six-speed automatic transmission. The engine develops category-competitive outputs of 150kW/470Nm – an increase of 10kW/20Nm over the outgoing model – and consumes 7.7L/100km on the combined cycle test, an improvement of 0.2L/100km.

There are also two different 4x4 systems available, with the base models adopting a conventional part-time 4x4 system with high and low range, and the ST-X and PRO-4X gaining a so called 'Super 4WD' system with a full-time all-wheel drive mode in high range.

All variants have an electronic rear differential lock as standard, with the ST-X and PRO-4X adding a seven-mode multi-terrain traction system for enhanced off-road capability.

The biggest change to the mechanical package versus its Mitsubishi twin is the suspension, which has been developed and tuned by Australian vehicle development specialist Premcar.

Premcar has added Australian-made twin-tube shock absorbers and three distinct suspension tunes, ranging from a heavy-duty setting for the SL and ST models, a mid-grade setup for the ST-X, and a more comfort oriented setting for the PRO-4X.

These changes provide useful, tangible dynamic advantages over the Triton, which will be an important selling point for the Navara against its Mitsubishi doppelganger.



PRICE

\$68,418 (MRLP)

POWERTRAIN

2.4 litre four cylinder bi-turbo diesel, six-speed automatic transmission, full-time 4x4 with high and low range, electronic rear differential lock.

FUEL CONSUMPTION

7.7L/100km (204g/km CO₂)

ANCAP CRASH RATING

Five stars (2024)

WARRANTY

10-year / 300,000km service-activated warranty (five years, unlimited kilometres standard)

FOR

Excellent 10-year warranty if serviced with Nissan; extensive national dealer network; refined and proven mechanical package; improved ride and handling dynamics over donor model; strong tow rating; good off-road ability; well finished and well equipped.

AGAINST

More expensive than the Triton on which it's based; no manual transmission, 4x2 drivetrain or alternative body styles; competitive but not benchmark performance; dated infotainment system; over-vigilant driver attention system.

SEE IT FOR YOURSELF:

Scan to watch Ged's video review.



PRICE

\$62,690 (MRLP)

WARRANTY

Five years, unlimited kilometres

POWERTRAIN

2.4-litre turbocharged four-cylinder 'boxer' engine, CVT automatic, full-time AWD (194kW/382Nm)

ANCAP CRASH RATING

Not rated

FUEL CONSUMPTION

9.7L/100km (225g/km CO₂), estimated

FOR

Enhanced off-road capability; new and improved interior; strong turbocharged engine; comfortable ride; balanced handling; impressive refinement.

AGAINST

Price increases across the range; low braked towing capacity; five-seat only; polarising design; lacks some features of the less-expensive Outback Touring; road-oriented tyres limit off-road ability.

REVIEW

SUBARU OUTBACK WILDERNESS APEX MY26

By GED BULMER

Subaru has taken its all-new seventh-generation Outback further down the off-road path, repositioning the versatile all-wheel drive wagon as more of a purpose-built SUV, with a taller, tougher and more powerful appearance.

Leading the Outback's charge down rougher roads and tracks are two new Wilderness variants, which Subaru is pitching as the most adventure-ready and capable models the brand has produced.

Prices are up across the five-variant Outback range, which comprises three

non-turbocharged and two turbocharged options.

The entry-level Outback AWD is priced from \$48,990 (MRLP), while the turbocharged engine is reserved for the Wilderness variants, with the Outback AWD Wilderness listed at \$59,690 and the range-topping Outback AWD Wilderness Apex topping out at \$62,690 (both MRLP).

Despite their high price tag, the Wilderness variants are not based on the range-topping Outback AWD Touring but the entry-level Subaru Outback AWD, so lack some features like Nappa leather, sunroof and an active lane-change assist system.

What they gain are 18-inch alloy wheels in matte black, LED fog lights, redesigned bumpers, front skid plate, and high-strength ladder-style roof rails with increased load capacity.

To this, the Wilderness Apex adds a 360-degree camera system and 12-speaker Harman Kardon sound system.

Front and centre inside is a 12.1-inch horizontal infotainment touchscreen with Wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto connectivity, while ahead of the driver is a new 12.3-inch digital instrument cluster.

The seats are clad in a hard-wearing, water-repellent synthetic leather with Wilderness-branded logos, while all-weather floor mats round out the outdoorsy theme.

The luggage bay boasts a slightly squarer and taller opening accessed via a hands-free powered tailgate for a generous 530-litre (VDA) space, expanding to 1844 litres with the rear seats almost flat.

Both Wilderness variants are powered

by a 2.4-litre turbocharged four-cylinder 'boxer' engine which produces a healthy 194kW/382Nm, driving all four wheels via a Lineartronic CVT with eight-speed manual mode.

Electronically controlled dampers are another major technical upgrade to the Wilderness, providing a worthwhile improvement over the standard suspension.

The rough road ride is wonderfully supple with handling that's balanced and predictable, further aided by a new dual-pinion electric power steering system which improves steering precision and on-centre feel.

The Wilderness variants also shine in off-road conditions thanks to a Land-Cruiser-like 240mm of ground clearance. Despite lacking the transfer case and low-range gearing of a 'proper' 4x4, they gain a lower 4.44:1 final drive ratio versus 4.11:1 for their stablemates.

We put the Wilderness Apex through some moderately challenging off-road tracks and trails and, while we wouldn't necessarily recommend taking yours to Cape York or across the Simpson Desert, we came away impressed by how easily it accounted for tracks and trails that would usually be the domain of low-range-equipped vehicles.

The Subaru Outback has long offered superior road manners to most 4x4s and many SUVs. The addition of the Wilderness variants with their strong turbocharged performance and improved off-road ability further broadens the appeal of this practical, purposeful and capable family wagon.





REVIEW

FORD F-150 PLATINUM

By GED BULMER

They say that timing is everything and Ford Australia's timing of its F-150 facelift – weeks after the US and Israel declared war with Iran prompting a global fuel crisis – could hardly have been worse.

Big American pickups like the F-150 are rightly regarded as fuel guzzlers at the best of times, but with the price of unleaded soaring, 2,600kg utes with 136-litre fuel tanks and large capacity petrol engines aren't exactly what the market is crying out for.

To be fair, fuel efficiency is probably something that is not top-of-mind with buyers in a segment populated by giants like the RAM, Chevrolet Silverado and Toyota Tundra.

It's certainly not a factor with this facelifted F-150 model which powers on with its impressive 3.5-litre twin-turbo-charged V6 intact, still producing a mighty 298kW/678Nm while slurping a hearty 13.4L/100km combined cycle.

What has changed in this relatively modest mid-life update of what has long been America's best-selling vehicle is Australian consumers now have access to the top-spec F-150 Platinum variant.

The Platinum joins the updated XLT and Lariat to create a three-variant lineup, all in 4x4 Crew Cab configuration, with the option of long and short wheelbases bringing the available combinations to six.

In a win for consumers who buy their utes by the metre, the short and long wheelbase are priced identically, with the updated lineup starting at \$114,950 for the XLT, rising to \$143,950 for the Lariat, and

topping out with the Platinum which costs a hefty \$163,950.

While both the XLT and Lariat include minor design updates and changes to spec and equipment, it's the new Platinum we're focused on here, with Ford estimating sales will be evenly split between the three variants, with long wheelbase examples making up around 35% of sales in each case.

We drove the standard wheelbase Platinum and anyone with a whiff of petrol running through their veins couldn't help but be impressed by the effortless grunt of Ford's 3.5-litre EcoBoost V6.

The engine channels the sound and the stomp-pulling torque of a large-capacity V8, putting its power to the tarmac via a smooth-shifting 10-speed automatic transmission and a full-time 4x4 system.

The combination delivers a 4,500kg maximum braked towing capacity and 704kg payload which is, of course, largely the point of these big and powerful pickups.

While towing and load hauling might be among the F-150's more obvious capabilities, the enormous cabin, luxury fitout and relaxed cruising manners are other desirable attributes.

Bespoke badging, black and smoked-metal accents, and 20-inch wheels distinguish the Platinum from its stablemates, as does the generous list of standard features including auto power-deployable side steps, a multi-folding hard tonneau cover, Pro Access tailgate with side-hinged and drop-down access, and bespoke suspension tune using adaptive dampers.

Inside, there's luxury leather trim,

PRICE

\$163,950 (MRLP)

POWERTRAIN

3.5-litre 'EcoBoost' twin-turbo V6 (298kW/678Nm), 10-speed automatic, full-time 4x4 with high and low-range, electronic locking rear differential.

FUEL CONSUMPTION

13.4L/100km (311g/km CO₂)

ANCAP CRASH RATING

Not Rated

WARRANTY

Five years/unlimited kilometres, covering both the vehicle and the local conversion.

FOR

Excellent performance, refined drivetrain, hefty towing-capacity, good payload, large tub, well equipped, generously proportioned cabin, improved steering over predecessor.

AGAINST

High purchase price, high fuel consumption, over-sized dimensions, quality of some trim items doesn't match price, noisy electric side steps, no motorised tonneau (rigid).

multi-adjustable front seats with massage function, heating and ventilation, and a fold-flat sleeping mode for those times when you've forgotten the tent or need a kip while on a road trip.

Less desirable attributes of the big Ford include its sheer dimensions, which make navigating congested areas a chore, including finding carparks that can accommodate its near-6m length.

While you'll see plenty of them navigating city streets, it's out on the open road where the F-150 really shines, delivering excellent ride comfort, great visibility, a cosseted cabin and assured overtaking ability.

In essence, the F-150 is big, comfortable, powerful and meant for open road touring rather than threading bends at pace.

It's a role the F-150 Platinum fills to a tee and while it certainly won't be everyone's cup of tea, there's no denying such full-size pickups provide a level of comfort, performance and load carrying ability you simply can't get in mid-sized utes like Ranger and HiLux.

The relentless march of SUV body styles into every automotive segment and niche has been accompanied by a hollowing out of our once thriving passenger sedan and hatch segments.

Given this, it might seem bold, brave or even reckless to launch a brand-new medium-sized sedan when sales of such vehicles have been in terminal decline for years. Kia has gone where others fear to tread with its EV4.

The EV4's key differentiator is that it's electric and it arrives at a time when there seems to be signs of a faint heartbeat in the passenger sedan and hatch segments that's being led by electric vehicles.

Tesla has, of course, long kept its faith in the electric sedan segment with the strong-selling Model 3, while the BYD Seal is a more recent arrival, as is the Polestar 2.

Kia's EV4 is similar in size to these rivals and comes in a three-variant lineup starting with the Air Standard Range at \$49,990, rising to \$59,190 for the Earth Long Range, and topping out with the GT-Line Long Range at \$64,690.

We're focused here on the Earth Long Range which, as its name suggests, sports a larger 81.4kWh battery versus the entry-level 58.3kWh unit, allowing it to travel an impressive 612km (WLTP) on a single charge.

It's the longest range yet for any Kia EV and competitive with the BYD Seal Premium (650km) and the base Model 3 Rear Wheel Drive (513km), but not the Model 3 Long Range Rear Wheel Drive's stellar 750km (WLTP).

The EV4's 400V electrical architecture enables a maximum DC charge rate of 128kW, allowing the battery to charge from 10-80% in about 30 minutes.

A single front-mounted electric motor is the only powertrain available, developing outputs of 150kW/283Nm. That's enough to shift the 1,912kg sedan from 0-100km/h in about 7.8 seconds, which is decently but not outrageously quick.

Dynamically, the EV4 shows the benefits of Kia's long-established local ride and handling development program, with well-weighted and accurate steering, good handling balance and nicely judged ride quality.

Inside, the EV4 features a cleanly designed and contemporary-looking interior that errs towards minimalism, but which thankfully retains some traditional switchgear for frequently used features.

The dash is dominated by two 12.3-inch screens separated by a 5.0-inch climate control panel.

A long wheelbase ensures generous interior accommodation with comfortable seating for five and a competitive

490 litres (VDA) of luggage space.

Standard equipment includes 19-inch alloys, cloth and synthetic leather upholstery, a 10-way powered driver's seat with heating, an auto-dimming rear-view mirror and an exterior vehicle-to-load socket.

Notable features the EV4 Earth misses out on versus the GT-Line include a sunroof, powered boot, heated steering wheel, full synthetic-leather seats with front seat ventilation, and an eight-speaker Harman Kardon stereo.

It also lacks some kit that might reasonably be expected at this price point, including wireless phone charging, a 360-degree reversing camera and a head-up display.

Despite this the EV4's above-average range, quality finishes and its excellent ride and handling make it a worthy contender to electric medium-sedan rivals.

PRICE

\$59,190 (RRP)

POWERTRAIN

Front-mounted electric motor (150kW/283Nm), front-wheel drive

BATTERY

81.4kWh lithium-ion

RANGE

612km (WLTP)

ENERGY CONSUMPTION

14.9kWh/100km (Combined Cycle)

ANCAP SAFETY RATING

Five stars (2025)

WARRANTY

Seven years, unlimited km (vehicle); eight years, 160,000 km (battery)

FOR

Long range, well priced, polished ride and handling, roomy interior.

AGAINST

Unusual rear-end styling, limited rear seat headroom, no spare wheel (space-saver), no frunk storage, lacks some key features available on rivals at this price.

REVIEW

KIA EV4 EARTH

By GED BULMER



Built to last

By ANNA CAHILL



Cor Marcus was known as the 'Flying Dutchman' in his racing days.

From handmade race cars to radical electric builds, Cor Marcus has spent a lifetime engineering solutions. Now in his 90s, the former motor racing champion's workshop is still buzzing with new ideas.

Cor Marcus is a mechanical marvel. He lives to make things and is always up for a challenge. Being almost 92 is quite incidental to the machines he is actively creating. His inventive mind is much too spritely to waste time sitting about.

The Redland innovator, designer, motor mechanic, former car and motorbike racing champion, nonagenarian driver, and RACQ member made his first motorbike when he was 12 years old.

Give him moving parts to tinker with and he's right in his element.

"Everything starts with an idea – design it, build it, modify it if it's not quite right," he said, as if this is the most natural thing in the world.

This interest in all things automotive started when he was a young child playing with his Meccano construction toy set, the perfect choice for inquisitive minds: "They taught me to make things."

He "learned the hard way" by trial and error and worked diligently to gather the parts for that motorbike.

"I knew a man who had an engine and he told me I could have it if I harvested his potato crop," Cor said.

"The frame was made from old push-bikes collected from the dump, and another man did the welding I needed in exchange for me sanding down his canoe."

His mother taught him to tune an engine.

"My father was a truck driver – he was handy and could get things to go, but he wasn't a mechanic. It was my mother who had an ear for fine-tuning."

Cor (short for Cornelis) came to Australia from Holland in 1953 as a young man, fresh from an apprenticeship in mechanics, welding and manufacturing. Before long, he was running his own workshop; the creativity, ingenuity and skill he applied to everything earned him the nickname 'Mr Good Job'.

He taught his late wife Janet, his sons and a granddaughter to weld, and is happy to share his ideas.

Janet, a teacher, helped build his rac-

ers and was extremely proud of his accomplishments.

Always willing to try different materials, one of the first sportscars he built was a Macros racer with a laminated plywood chassis – strong, lightweight and fast.

Then there was the back-to-front racer he made from a 1948 Ford Custom V8, reversing the chassis to enhance handling at speed.

"I looked at all the problems other drivers were having with their cars before I built it," he said.

"If a car is too long, it doesn't handle very well. That car handled so well – the steering was very light and responsive, and the engine was right next to me."

For the first race of the season, he asked to start last "because I didn't know this car very well – and guess what, I won".

After the fifth win from last position, the manager of the Empire Speedway did something that had never been done in Australia before.

He suggested Cor be handicapped by a lap.

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"I said, 'No, I can't win,' but he insisted he'd spoken to my wife and she thought I was competitive," Cor said.

"Then he offered to pay me £100 and get all the media involved in the race. That was a lot of money – at the time, a tradesman's wages were £18 a week, and the prize money for winning a race was £30.

"I still said, 'Forget it, it's too far, Frank,' but then the fuel companies got behind us, offering oil and racing fuel in return for advertising on the car."

So Cor took on the challenge, against all odds.

He waited out the first lap, then set off

in hot pursuit, only to encounter a broken-down car stranded sideways across the track, certain to cause a pile-up. He stopped, gave it a push to safety, and started off again.

"Even with the handicap, and giving him a push, I won," Cor said.

"Better still, they gave me the title 'Best and Fairest' of the 100 competitors on the circuit for preventing a hell of a smash."

"The Flying Dutchman", as he'd become known, raced that stockcar many times, culminating in a win at the Golden Fleece Trophy for the 1963 Marathon 100 during the Brisbane Exhibition.

"That is the greatest race of all – 100 laps, driving for Queensland against all the best racers from Australia and New Zealand," he recalled proudly.

An Australian champion in motorbike, sidecar and stockcar racing, and a twice Queensland champion, Cor and his self-made vehicles were such a distinctive presence at races throughout the country in the 1950s and 60s that it's little wonder he is still remembered with great admiration by motorsport aficionados.

Four of his creations are housed at the Panorama Motorcycle and Memorabilia Museum near Boonah.

He also spent two years restoring a 1930s dentist's chair for the Redlands Coast Museum. A few years ago, he designed a special pedal-powered trishaw to give less nimble seniors outdoor adventures along the bayside.

Cor has an impressive collection of vehicles and machines at home, constructed, adapted or maintained in his fully equipped workshop.

There is his pride and joy: a 12-year-old Can-Am super trike that looks brand new, with spider paintwork that turns heads whenever he takes it out for a spin.

This three-wheeler is such a substantial vehicle that it requires a car licence to drive.

'Marcus by Marcus' is an electric bike he built from scratch as a handy ride. He converted another electric trike into a two-wheeler and has various mobility scooters waiting to be repurposed.

Not one to rest on his laurels, he is repurposing an old SUV bought for \$1,000 into an electric vehicle by fitting an extra wheel at the back, on a swivel, to support the generator and batteries. It will, he is confident, pretty much steer itself.

Having designed a nifty hybrid generator powered by a solar panel in the wake of last year's storm blackout, he is now onto a new, improved model.

This version will still be compact enough to wheel into the house to run the fridge all day, as well as the toaster, kettle and microwave, but will have three solar panels, hinged to fold down when not in use, for greater output.

Cor is generous with his designs and ideas but has no interest in being a hired hand.

"People often ask if I will make something for them. I say to them, 'No, I make nothing for you, but you are welcome to copy.'"

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NEW RULES TARGET SMS SCAMMERS

Ray Andersen

Australians will soon see changes to how text messages from businesses and organisations appear on their phones, under new rules designed to crack down on SMS scams.

From 1 July 2026, text messages that claim to be from a business, bank, government agency or other organisation will be clearly identified if the sender has not been verified.

The changes are part of a new SMS Sender ID Register, introduced by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), aimed at stopping scammers from impersonating trusted brands.

Under the new framework, any business or organisation that sends texts using a branded sender ID, such as a business name, must ensure that identifier is formally registered.

Messages sent with an unregistered sender ID will be flagged as 'Unverified' on customers' phones.

'Unverified' messages will be grouped together in a single message thread on phones.

An 'Unverified' message could be a scam, but it may also come from a legitimate organisation that has not yet registered its sender name.

ACMA says consumers should treat these messages with caution, especially if they ask for personal information, contain links, or request payment.

ACMA advises:

- Don't reply
- Don't click on links
- Don't share personal or financial info
- Don't send money.

Unverified

An 'Unverified' message could be a scam, but it may also come from a legitimate organisation that has not yet registered its sender name.

If a message claims to be from a bank or government service and you're unsure, contact the organisation directly using contact details from its official website, not those in the message.

RACQ Head of Bank Resilience and Financial Crimes Sarah Richardson said the changes would help ensure trust in SMS communications.

"Branded SMS messaging has long been an important way for businesses and organisations to alert customers about account activity and potential fraud," Ms Richardson said.

"The Sender ID Register helps ensure that when our customers see our name on a message, they can trust it's genuinely from us."

The rules only affect text messages from branded senders and would not apply to phone numbers. ACMA says mes-

sages from unknown numbers should be treated with caution.

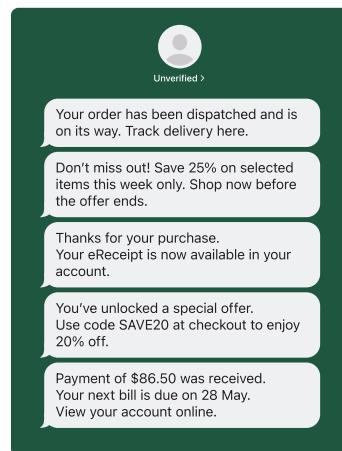
Ms Richardson said organisations had been working with their telecommunications companies to register approved sender IDs.

"Registered sender IDs will give customers extra confidence and make it harder for scammers to exploit trusted brands," she said.

Australians lost more than \$13.8 million to text message scams in the first nine months of 2025.

ACMA says the new system will make it easier for people to recognise trusted messages and harder for scammers to exploit well known organisations.

Learn more at acma.gov.au/sms-sender-id-register



YOUR HOME BATTERY QUESTIONS ANSWERED

With electricity prices continuing to rise, more Queensland households are asking whether a home battery could help reduce their power bills and make better use of their solar energy.

Here are the RACQ Solar team's answers to six of the most common questions RACQ members ask about home batteries.

①

How does the Cheaper Home Batteries Program work?

The Cheaper Home Batteries Program is a Federal Government initiative designed to reduce the upfront cost of installing home battery storage.

The program works in a similar way to the Federal Government's solar rebate. It uses Small-scale Technology Certificates (STCs) to provide an upfront discount on eligible battery systems, which is typically applied directly to your invoice by the installer. The rebate can only be claimed once per premises.



The number of STCs your system creates is based on your battery's usable capacity (measured in kilowatt hours, or kWh). Only the first 50 kWh of usable capacity is eligible.

An STC factor is applied to calculate how many certificates are created per kWh and tapers according to the amount of capacity installed.

②

Has the rebate changed recently?

Yes. In December 2025, the Federal Government updated how the program phases down over time.

Under the new rules, the rebate decreases every six months. These step-downs began in May 2026 and will be applied every January and July until the program is scheduled to end in December 2030.

③

How much does a home battery cost in Queensland?

While home batteries were once considered expensive, government incentives have made them far more accessible.

Currently, a good quality 10 kWh battery system typically costs around \$6,000-\$8,000 installed, while 20 kWh systems usually range between \$13,000-\$19,000 depending on the brand and installation requirements.

④

What size battery do most homes install?

Most Queensland households install batteries between 10 kWh and 20 kWh.

This is typically enough to store excess solar energy generated during the day and use it later in the evening when electricity prices are highest.

The right battery size depends on several factors, including:

- Your household's daily electricity use.
- The size of your solar system.
- Whether you want backup power during outages.

⑤

Will a home battery eliminate my electricity bill?

A battery can reduce how much electricity you need to buy from the grid, but it usually won't eliminate your bill entirely.

You may still need grid power:

- If you are using more electricity than your solar is producing or you have stored in your battery.
- During periods of low solar generation, such as cloudy weather.

Batteries let you store and use your own solar energy, which is cheaper than exporting it to the grid for a lower rate and buying it back later at a higher price.

⑥

Will my battery work during a power outage?

Some batteries can keep parts of your home running during a blackout, but not all systems include backup power by default.

If outage protection is important, your system must include:

- A battery with backup capability.
- A configuration that powers essential circuits in your home. Backing up too many circuits can cause overloads and drain the battery quickly. While whole-of-home backup is possible, it requires active management by the homeowner to prioritise essential circuits, particularly during extended outages or poor weather when solar generation is limited.

Visit energy.gov.au/rebates/cheaper-home-batteries-program for more information on the rebate.

Scan the code to visit RACQ Solar for panels and batteries packages



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Whether you want to lend a hand, show your support or simply stay in the loop, there are so many ways you can be part of our Meals on Wheels community.

VOLUNTEER



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Delivering 'more than just a meal' for 70 years

From an Ipswich backyard to a statewide network, Meals on Wheels in Queensland marks its 70th year.

By RAY ANDERSEN

A simple idea to provide home-cooked meals for older people has evolved into a statewide organisation supporting thousands of Queenslanders at a time when its role has never been more important.

Meals on Wheels in Queensland was started 70 years ago by Rhoda Cameron, the wife of the then Commonwealth health minister, Donald Cameron. She began preparing and delivering meals to neighbours in need from her home in Ipswich, charging two shillings per meal, the equivalent of around 20 cents today.

Mrs Cameron was inspired after seeing a similar service during a trip to England, where it had been established during World War II to support people unable to cook for themselves after losing homes in the Blitz.

With no government support at the time, the service in Queensland quickly grew through the efforts of volunteers. Local committees began forming across the state, driven by a strong sense of community and a desire to look after their neighbours.

Today, as Queensland's population ages and cost-of-living pressures increase, Meals on Wheels has become a critical support service for many older and vulnerable Queenslanders.

The statewide network of 100 members is powered by more than 6,300 dedicated volunteers. Last year they collectively supported 23,500 Queenslanders with three million meals and an invaluable front-line health and wellbeing check.

"We call it more than just a meal, which refers to the all-important welfare check that volunteers provide with every delivery," Meals on Wheels Queensland CEO Evan Hill said.

"If the client is living on their own, it provides peace of mind for family members, knowing that someone is checking in when they can't be there."

While the basic premise of delivering meals to those in need has not changed, the landscape in which Meals on Wheels in Queensland operates has evolved significantly.

As Meals on Wheels enters its eighth decade of supporting Queensland communities the organisation is focused on building a sustainable future.

With growing demand, the team is seeking new corporate partnerships to ensure its vital community infrastructure remains resilient for generations to come.

"We want to grow our family of sponsors and partners so we can be more financially sustainable and less reliant on government funding," Mr Hill said.

"Ensuring our services are well-resourced means we can continue to meet the needs of our local communities effectively."

Beyond the tangible impact of the work, Mr Hill noted that the social connection was often just as meaningful for the volunteers as it was for the clients they served.

"Volunteering is a fantastic way to meet new friends and build lifelong bonds with like-minded people in your own neighbourhood."

Meals on Wheels in Queensland will celebrate its 70-year milestone on 26 August with a gala dinner at the Queensland Art Gallery in Brisbane.

The event will also feature the launch of a commemorative book, *70 Years: Seasoned with Care*, which traces the journey from that first Ipswich backyard to the statewide network of today.

Members of the public can purchase the book at qmow.org, with all proceeds directly supporting services and programs.





HEAVY VEHICLE HASSLES

ONE ONLY HAS to travel our highways to experience the dangerous and disrespectful behaviour of many heavy vehicle drivers. My long held respect for truck drivers has been almost extinguished by personal experiences in recent years. To cite just two examples: I was forced off the Gore Highway by a multi combination truck while it was overtaking, despite my travelling at the posted speed limit of 100km/h. The driver continued the manoeuvre even when it was obvious that oncoming traffic was approaching. Recently, while travelling on the Warrego Highway and slowing (not braking) to comply with an upcoming reduced speed limit, a truck followed dangerously close behind me, despite the right-hand lane being clear and available for overtaking. It appears that, for some truck drivers, speed limits are treated as advisory rather than mandatory. Our lawmakers and policymakers should travel our major highways – the Bruce, Warrego and Gore, to name a few – and I would challenge them to do so at or below the posted speed limits while sharing the road with heavy vehicles. For the full experience, carry a UHF radio and, if game enough, tow a caravan.

SHANE HOUNSLOW Drayton

Your Say



WHAT PETROL CRISIS?

WHEN I WAS a lad, back in the 1970s, we lived through Arab-Israeli wars, OPEC, fuel embargoes, oil sheikhs, energy crises, petrol rationing, gas guzzlers, and the ever-present “soaring price” of pet-

rol. In the 1980s came the so called “Tanker War,” when Iranian and Iraqi forces attacked oil tankers in the Persian Gulf. The Gulf Wars of the 1980s and 1990s again sent fuel prices soaring. All of these events highlighted our vulnerability and heavy reliance on hydrocarbons – oil and gas. Even back then, I wondered why we could not reduce the impact of Middle East turmoil by using more solar power and less oil and gas. Today, science allows me to calmly dismiss many of the fears surrounding solar energy and electric vehicles as largely social or urban myths. By contrast, the ongoing news of petrol shortages, fuel cri-

TV ADS POPULAR

I AM FROM Victoria but spending time in Queensland. The TV commercials featuring the various animals and birds are just wonderful. They are so clever and funny. My favourite is the two cockatoos in “Spotto” (the full version) and the one with the two kookaburras (“Too soon”) is my second favourite. I’m a member of RACV but your ads are the best.

MARGARET HEDT
Port Douglas

FAULTY TYRES

I HAVE NOTICED that some large four-wheel drives and utes, when travelling on the road, make a distinct “thump, thump, thump” sound, often indicating a bubble or internal failure in a tyre. If this is not identified during servicing, the tyre may eventually blow out and could cause a serious accident. Alerting members and other drivers to this issue may help prevent injuries, or even save a life.

KEITH EVERTON Rockhampton

ses, tankers being attacked, and renewed tensions in the Middle East is very real. We can move away from dependence on hydrocarbons. The advances in EVs, battery storage, and solar power technology are real and proven. The fears are not. Equally real is the long history of instability in the Middle East and repeated disruptions to oil supply. Promises of guaranteed supply and low prices are just that – promises. Meanwhile, back at home, I plug my EVs into a home charger, charging at no cost thanks to solar panels and storage batteries, and think: “No petrol crisis here.”

SHERMAN OH Indooroopilly



TATTOO DOWN UNDER

CONGRATULATIONS TO YOU and your team on the latest edition of *The Road Ahead*. I was particularly interested in the article ‘Scottish heritage on parade’, as I was fortunate to see the recent Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo in Brisbane. The final paragraph of the article mentions that the Brisbane performance of the Tattoo marked its return to Australia after 17 years. I attended a performance of the Tattoo at Etihad Stadium in Melbourne in February 2016, just on 10 years ago.

IAN WOOD Alexandra Headland

OUR SAY: Ian is correct. The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo visited Melbourne in 2016. Its next Australian appearance was in Sydney in 2019. The Brisbane shows earlier this year marked the Tattoo’s first visit to Queensland.

DEALING WITH FUEL ISSUE

THE QUEENSLAND PREMIER is promoting development of a new oil field, but that will not provide a fast enough solution for the problem of fuel shortages and increased fuel costs. Battery electric vehicles offer a better solution, but that solution is also too slow. The fastest solution would be to convert road vehicles to operate on gas. Australia is a major gas exporter, so we have plenty of gas. The technology to convert vehicles to operate on gas is already available, it was used for many years in taxis in major cities, and gas is viable for both petrol and diesel vehicles,

SPARE A THOUGHT

RECENTLY, WHILE DRIVING from Mackay to Townsville, we were confronted with what can only be described as a nightmare. There had been heavy rain, and the highway was riddled with large potholes. We blew our first tyre about an hour out of Mackay. There were so many potholes that it was impossible to avoid them all. We stopped at Proserpine for repairs and then continued on our way. About an hour out of Ayr, our front left tyre struck a pothole about 20 cm deep, which blew out a piece of rubber around 15 × 15 cm. This time the rim was also bent. We fitted the run-flat spare and slowly hobbled our way to Townsville. The entire trip was absolutely terrifying, made worse by truck drivers and other motorists who were clearly not driving to the wet conditions. Horns were blasting because we were travelling at 80 km/h, as instructed when using the spare tyre. Upon our return to Mackay, I ordered a new rim and a full-size spare tyre for my Subaru Liberty. I will never be caught out again without a proper spare.

JULIE MARGRIE Mackay

including heavy-duty engines. Conversion of road vehicles to operate on gas should be encouraged with government subsidies, and subsidies should also be provided for the conversion of rural petrol stations to gas, to ensure the transition extends beyond high-profit centres. Improvements in public transport and rail freight services will also help, and all-weather (fully enclosed) pedal or pedal-battery tricycles or quad-cycles could also provide a solution for short journeys, but transitioning road vehicles to gas will provide the best solution to the current fuel crisis and will make Australia road-fuel self-sufficient in the future.

PETER SCHAPER Biggenden

PEDESTRIAN DANGER

AT INTERSECTIONS with traffic lights, when a pedestrian crossing is on the right-hand side of a driver, the pedestrian ‘Walk’ signal should not operate at the same time as a green traffic light. Recently, when leaving the RACQ head office at Eight Mile Plains, I was waiting at the Levington Road-Logan Road intersection. When the lights turned green, pedestrians on the right-hand crossing over Logan Road also received a ‘Walk’ signal. The

WALK ON THE RIGHT SIDE

I ENDORSE Rob Eley’s remarks (TRA Autumn) about walking on the right-hand side of roadways to face oncoming traffic. This is something many of us were taught in primary school years ago. The same principle applies on shared pathways, such as along beachfronts or through parks. Where possible, I walk on the right-hand side of the path. This provides better separation between pe-

destrians and wheeled devices travelling in the same direction, and it means that devices on my side of the path are approaching from the front rather than from behind. Unfortunately, local council signage on many shared pathways directs pedestrians to keep left. I have long advocated that this signage be reviewed and changed to encourage pedestrians to walk on the right, which I believe would improve safety for all path users.

MIKE WILKINS Rochedale South

destrians and wheeled devices travelling in the same direction, and it means that devices on my side of the path are approaching from the front rather than from behind. Unfortunately, local council signage on many shared pathways directs pedestrians to keep left. I have long advocated that this signage be reviewed and changed to encourage pedestrians to walk on the right, which I believe would improve safety for all path users.

PATRICK O’CALLAGHAN
Bray Park



LIGHTBULB MOMENT

I AGREE with complaints about overly bright vehicle headlights. Traditionally, most headlights produced a light cone that gradually decreased in intensity toward the edge. Many modern LED headlights, however, have a sharply defined upper cut-off. When these LEDs are viewed in a rear-view mirror at night, a disturbing phenomenon can occur. As the following car bounces

up and down on the road, the sharp upper edge of its light cone oscillates up and down across the mirror of the car in front. This creates a flashing effect, where a very bright light alternates with near darkness. This is a major distraction and can interfere with the leading driver’s night vision. I believe a solution would be to modify or introduce new Australian Design Rules that require headlight beams to taper gradually in intensity toward their upper edge, rather than having a sharp cut-off. This would eliminate the on/off flashing effect. I hope my description is clear. Thank you for producing an excellent magazine.

GARY LE LACHEUR Frenchville

YOUR PRIVATE HEALTH FUND COULD NOW COVER THIS TOP-TIER PREMIUM HEARING AID THAT RIVAL'S \$12,000 DEVICES, WITH LITTLE TO NO OUT-OF-POCKET COSTS

At \$960 for one, or \$1,850 for a pair, before private health rebates, they contain the same high-performance premium features found in top-tier hearing aids sold at hearing clinics. They're completely rechargeable, automatic, and with bluetooth built in, they can even wirelessly connect to a TV or phone for enhanced speech clarification.

How are our Hearing Aids different? Our Automatic EarWave Technology means our hearing aids don't need hearing tests or personalised hearing aid programming to use them. They work straight out-of-the-box and come direct to you. They are simple to use and are designed to meet the needs of those with hearing loss levels ranging from mild to severe.

WHAT ARE PEOPLE SAYING?

"The Diamond 12 hearing aids are far superior to any aids I have previously experienced. They are far more comfortable, and their noise suppression is excellent."
— Walter, NSW

"Clearest hearing I've had out of last 3 sets of aids. Bluetooth great for calls."
— Adrian, NSW

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

"I found the Diamond Stream 12 had much better functionality (Bluetooth, rechargeable and a remote to easily adjust volume and select the most suitable program to suit your environment), was just as effective (if not better) than the two other brands I trialed and required minimal outlay. As I only needed one hearing aid, and the cost was substantially covered by my health fund extras rebate, I managed to get a great hearing aid with very little out of pocket cost." — Paul, VIC

★★★★★ Hundreds of 5 Star Reviews available on website www.PocketAid.com.au



PocketAid® What your new hearing aid has in it...

- AUTOMATIC OPERATION**
Intelligently adapts to your surroundings using a state-of-the-art compression system.
- FULLY RECHARGEABLE**
Up to 20 hours of battery life from a single charge.
- SMART DIRECTIONAL AUDIO**
Cut the noise – silence distractions from behind. Hear who matters.
- BLUETOOTH STREAMING**
Pairs effortlessly to any phone, Television or tablet.



- 4 CONVENIENT PROGRAMS**
4 Expertly engineered programs, each with 11 volume levels.
- ADVANCED RIC CLARITY**
Speaker sits within the ear canal to deliver sound directly at the eardrum for crystal-clear clarity.
- FREE* REMOTE CONTROL** *Limited Offer.
Because controlling what you hear should be easy.
- OPEN EAR**
'Behind-the-ear' design. Your ear canal remains open for a very natural listening experience.

For too long, Australians have navigated hearing clinics expecting their private health cover would give them access to advanced, top-tier hearing aids. Instead, many discovered that selecting a premium model—often around \$6,000 per ear—still left them paying thousands out of pocket! As a result, many settled for stripped-back versions of the technology they actually wanted.

Even with private health rebates of up to \$1,800, this still falls well short of top-tier clinic pricing for hearing aids. Why? Because a large portion is absorbed into clinic costs—appointments, and overheads—leaving less for the hearing aid itself. This puts you in a difficult position: pay more... or settle for basic models that don't deliver the clarity and features you need.

But now, with PocketAid, there's a better way.

With PocketAid hearing aids, your private health fund contribution goes directly toward the hearing aid itself. For the first time, that means your cover can actually do what you expected it to — often covering the full cost for one aid, or leaving only a small out-of-pocket amount for a pair.

Enter the New Diamond Stream 12 Hearing Aids.

We built the Diamond Stream 12 to bring premium hearing to everyone, with crystal-clear sound and all major premium features included, at a fraction of

traditional clinic prices. Based on the success of our direct-to-you, ready-to-use range, it includes the key features found in expensive clinic-sold devices — without the need for appointments or programming.

What's remarkable is that many customers who've paid as much as \$12,000 for clinic fitted hearing aids are saying the Diamond Stream 12 performs even better overall in comparison. Clear hearing in restaurants, cafes, and family gatherings for the first time in years.

No clinic appointments or digital programming via apps are required. Users now have access to a large range of volume and clarity changes they wish to make, via a simple on-board button located on the hearing aid, or they can simply use the free wireless remote control (included).

At just \$960 for one aid or \$1,850 for a pair, before health fund rebates, true premium and advanced hearing technology is finally affordable, and easy to use. Like all PocketAid Hearing Aids, the Diamond Stream 12 comes with a 30-day money-back guarantee, 3-year warranty and free express delivery Australia-wide.

Order NOW via the website www.PocketAid.com.au or call 1300 903 355 to order over the phone with our customer service team.

Health fund cover averages between \$600 and \$1,400.* If you do wish to use your private health fund rebates towards our hearing aids, please check your level of cover and eligibility for hearing aids with your health fund first, and email us at info@pocketaid.com.au before purchasing.

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

BE QUICK — MOST PRIVATE HEALTH FUND REBATES RESET EACH YEAR. USE YOUR BENEFIT BEFORE IT'S GONE.

Always read the label. Follow the directions for use.

ROAD AHEAD

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Dr Jeannette Young PSM,
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DIRECTORS

Annabel Dolphin, Will Fellowes,
Andrew Moore, Richard Umbers,
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MANAGING DIRECTOR, GROUP CEO
David Carter

THE ROAD AHEAD

MANAGER PUBLICATIONS

Belinda Watson

MANAGING EDITOR

Ray Andersen

MOTING EDITOR

Ged Bulmer

DESIGNER

Anthony Smith

CONTACT US

roadahead@racq.com.au
TRAAAdvertising@racq.com.au
PO Box 4, Springwood,
Queensland 4127

PUBLISHER

RACQ Operations Pty Ltd
(ABN 80 009 663 414)

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GENERAL ENQUIRIES

Visit racq.com or call RACQ: 13 1905
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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.



Photo: Dave Pattinson.

RACQ MEMBER WINS BYD SHARK 6 UTE

LONG-TIME RACQ MEMBER Yvonne Sutherland won a new BYD Shark 6 ute simply by renewing her RACQ Roadside Assistance.

The competition was open to anyone who bought, renewed or upgraded their Roadside Assistance with RACQ between 1 November 2025 and 28 February 2026.

Yvonne, who has been an RACQ member for nearly 30 years, renewed her Roadside Assistance during that period and was automatically entered into the draw.

"I was stunned to win," Yvonne said. "When I got the call, I was thinking, 'This is a scam, but I'll go along with it.'"

"Then the lass told me I had won a you-beaut new ute and I nearly died. It's been three weeks since I found out I'd won and I'm still grinning from ear to ear."

The 76-year-old, who lives in Brisbane, had been driving a blue Barina she affectionately called Betsy.

Yvonne plans to give Betsy away to someone young and in need of a car.

She has named her new white plug-in hybrid ute Bruce, after the great white shark character in the animated film *Finding Nemo*. See page 67 for details on how you could win a Hyundai Sante Fe.

MATILDA WAY COMPETITION

THE WINNER OF our Matilda Way competition featured in the summer edition is getting ready to enjoy his prize of a \$10,000 HelloWorld travel voucher for the ultimate Outback holiday.

Michael Gordon, of Brookfield, is planning a 22-day journey from Charleville to Burketown, stopping at many towns and enjoying many great experiences along the way.

See page 13 of this edition for details on how you could win a \$10,000 holiday package in Tropical North Queensland.

FOR THE RECORD

THANK YOU TO the members who got in touch with *The Road Ahead* to let us know about a caption error in our autumn edition.

A photo identified as Green Hill Fort on Thursday Island was, in fact, an aerial view of nearby Goods Island and its lighthouse.

The error was made due to incorrect caption details supplied with the image.

We appreciate the members' help in setting the record straight.

WIN A **\$250** GIFT CARD

THE ROAD AHEAD is giving readers the chance to win a \$250 EFTPOS gift card*. To enter, tell us what you think about this edition of the magazine at racq.com/trasurvey. The survey opens at 8am (AEST) on Monday 1 June 2026 and closes at 5pm (AEST) on Friday 17 July 2026.

*Terms and conditions apply

SEATBELTS

Wearing a properly adjusted and fastened seatbelt is compulsory in Queensland for all motor vehicle occupants. *Seatbelts must be worn with:* the belt over your shoulder, running firmly across your chest; the lap part of the belt running firmly across your pelvic area and buckled low on your hip. *If you recline your seat:* You must ensure that the seatbelt is still across your shoulder and chest.

DRIVERS • As the driver of the vehicle, it is your responsibility to ensure you and all passengers in the vehicle are correctly restrained (including correct use of Australian Standard approved child restraints where applicable). Each seating position in the vehicle must only be occupied by one person.

EXEMPTIONS • Exemptions from the seatbelt rules only apply in limited circumstances, including if: you have a seatbelt exemption certificate issued by an eligible doctor and stating that you can't wear a seatbelt due to a medical condition or disability; the vehicle was originally manufactured without seatbelts fitted and you are seven years or older. Children under seven years of age are not permitted to travel in any vehicle without correctly fitted seatbelts or child restraints.

Some drivers are also exempt from the requirement to ensure their passengers are wearing a seatbelt in certain circumstances, including bus drivers, as well as taxi or rideshare drivers in some specific circumstances.

RACQ provides road rules and tips to help keep you and other road users safe. For more information about the Queensland Road Rules contact the Department of Transport and Main Road at tmr.qld.gov.au or 13 23 80.

DID YOU KNOW* • Seatbelt wearing became mandatory in Queensland on 1 January 1972, as part of a nationwide rollout of compulsory seatbelt laws across Australia. This followed Victoria's world-first seatbelt law in December 1970, with other states – including Queensland – introducing similar requirements during 1971-72. From 1972, drivers and passengers in Queensland vehicles were legally required to wear a seatbelt if one was fitted.

The introduction of compulsory seatbelt laws produced rapid and measurable declines in fatalities. In the first year after Victoria's law was introduced, the state recorded about a 13% reduction in road deaths, which strongly influenced Queensland and other states to follow suit.

Queensland road safety research consistently shows that wearing a properly adjusted seatbelt reduces the risk of fatal or serious injury by up to 50%. Unrestrained occupants, by contrast, are several times more likely to be killed in a crash.



*Source: MAIC-QUT Road Safety Research Collaboration.



SANTAFE GIVEAWAY!



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Conditions, limits and exclusions apply. QLD residents 16+ only. Refers to eligible roadside assistance products. Visit racq.com/santafe for terms and conditions. Ends 30 June 2026.

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