

THE ROAD AHEAD

SPRING 2024

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CONTENTS

Spring edition 2024

- MEMBERS
- QLD LIFESTYLE
- TRAVEL
- MOBILITY

- 04 Clubhouse**
RACQ news, Ray's note, President's Viewpoint, Your say
- 08 Talk to the animals**
Find out how our new brand campaign was created
- 10 Historic fleet**
Two new vehicles have been added to our historic fleet
- 11 Fix the Bruce**
RACQ has strong allies as it calls for improvements to the Bruce Highway
- 12 Island time**
RACQ Foundation volunteers travelled to the Torres Strait islands to lend a helping hand
- 14 Tough call**
A member writes about when senior drivers should give up their licence
- 16 Dingo safety**
Visitors to K'gari are reminded to take care around the island's dingo population
- 18 Lap of the map**
A member has written a book about her road trip around Australia
- 22 Stop food waste**
Artificial intelligence is being used to help people reduce the amount of food they waste
- 26 Email scam warning**
How scammers are using business emails to trick people and what you can do about it
- 28 Screen success**
A Brisbane organisation is behind a global movement removing barriers for blind people
- 30 Member benefits**
Your chance to win
- 32 Outback wander**
Discover the natural beauty on offer during a North West Queensland road trip
- 38 Grand walk in Blue Mountains**
Experience the best of the Blue Mountains trails and towns on foot
- 42 Magical Modena**
From historic sites to motoring museums, Italy's Modena has something for everyone
- 46 Hinterland hotspots**
Visit the Sunshine Coast hinterland for myriad experiences, from vineyard views to waterfall wonders
- 50 Real-world testing**
Take a tour of Australia's largest privately owned and independently operated automotive test facility
- 52 Six of the best**
We take a look at some of the best affordable hybrid SUVs
- 54 Rear View**
Step back in time for a look at the history of motoring, including the start of the Japanese industry and the birth of roadside motels
- 56 Road tests**
Behind the wheel of the Suzuki Swift Hybrid Plus and the GWM Tank 500 Ultra Hybrid
- 58 Road rules**
Learn about the requirements for senior drivers



OUR COVER: RACQ has launched a new brand campaign. Find out how it was made on pages 8-9.

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.

ABOVE: The setting sun delivers a stunning display of colours as seen from Cornish Beach, Thursday Island. Read about the RACQ Foundation's work in the Torres Strait on page 12. Photo Jake Ryan.

RACQ

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RACQ Operations Pty Ltd
(ABN 80 009 663 414)

CIRCULATION

Print: 564,398 SEP 2024
Digital: 734,215 JUL 2024

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CONTRIBUTORS The views expressed in The Road Ahead by external contributors are not necessarily those of RACQ.

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ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE: 13 1111.



ROADSIDE'S BUSY YEAR

RACQ'S ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE

fleet responded to 740,303 calls for help across the State last financial year.

These included more than 271,650 callouts for battery-related issues, 71,200 for flat tyres, 25,500 vehicle lockouts and 7,700 calls from drivers who had run out of fuel.

RACQ Chief Executive Assistance Glenn Toms said the fleet of more than 750 patrol vehicles responded to an average of 2,000 rescues a day in the past financial year.

"Queenslanders know if something

happens, like a flat battery or a child or pet locked in the car, they can count on RACQ to come to their rescue," Mr Toms said.

"We continue to see battery-related issues as the top callout and the figure increased again this year by almost 2,000 jobs. Adding to this tally is the growing number of electric vehicles (EV) on the road. We now have patrol and tow vehicles equipped with mobile EV chargers to help drivers who have run out of charge."

RACQ patrols also went to the aid of 374 mobility scooters, 211 wheelchairs and 209 e-scooters or e-bikes. ■

MEMBERS THANKED

IN THE WINTER edition of *The Road Ahead* we reported on QIMR Berghofer's frontier research designing supercharged immune cells, called CAR T cells, to treat the blood cancer, lymphoma.

A trial of CAR T cell therapy at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital has been remarkably successful for some patients.

QIMR Berghofer's Dr Siok Tey appealed for donations to improve the therapy and help deliver a new trial for patients with the aggressive blood

cancer myeloma. The appeal was a great success, and thanks to the generosity of RACQ members and others, more than \$525,000 was donated.

Dr Siok Tey said she and her dedicated team were deeply grateful for the support.

"Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your enthusiastic and generous support of our research," Dr Tey said.

"Your donations will help make this potentially life-saving immunotherapy better and, most importantly, help make it more accessible to Australian patients for whom it offers so much hope." ■

RAY'S NOTE

KATE MCHUGH'S JOURNEY from stubborn child to sustainability advocate underscores the profound impact of her early lessons on food waste.

This edition features Kate's story and how her lifelong passion for food and sustainability is rooted in her family's values.

Those childhood experiences, where she was taught the importance of not wasting food, inspired her to found KitchenHand, a platform combating household food waste through education and innovative tools.

KitchenHand's recipe creation tool, driven by artificial intelligence, empowers users to minimise waste by utilising available ingredients.

The amount of food wasted in Australia each year is staggering.

Beyond huge financial costs, wasted food significantly contributes to methane emissions, exacerbating environmental challenges.

Kate's initiative highlights the importance of personal responsibility in reducing food waste.

By adopting some simple actions, from making sure we use those leftovers to only buying what we need, we can all make a contribution to reducing this global problem in our own households.

Read Kate's story on page 22, and enjoy the magazine. ■

**RAY ANDERSEN,
MANAGING EDITOR**



VIEWPOINT THE PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

RACQ drives a positive future for all Queenslanders through its commercial businesses and social impact initiatives.

I'd like to spend some time reflecting on RACQ's social impact and our dedication to supporting Queenslanders this year.

From the Torres Strait islands off the tip of Far North Queensland to the outback, Wide Bay, Lockyer Valley and Sunshine Coast, our Community Assistance Projects delivered much-needed support to community clubs and organisations.

Reflecting on the initiatives and how they strengthen our communities fills me with immense pride in our Club and our people.

Supporting Queenslanders is at the heart of everything we do and that includes the State's wildlife.

Recently, I had the privilege of visiting the Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital to celebrate an incredible decade-long partnership between RACQ and Wildlife Warriors. The visit was to hand over the keys to two new vehicles to the Australia Zoo Rescue Unit, equipped with state-of-the-art medical equipment to serve as animal ambulances. Over the past year, the unit has come to the aid of more than 2,000 patients.

As part of the partnership, our volunteers also completed a Community Assistance Project in June that tackled the aftermath of extreme weather by clearing debris from a 9ha eucalyptus plantation. The project aimed to restore this vital food source for koalas at the Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital, ensuring the animals continue to receive the care and sustenance they need to recover from their injuries.

While the Community Assistance Projects were initially launched in 2011 to support recovery from severe weather events, the program has evolved to help communities enhance their climate resilience and disaster preparedness, especially as Queensland remains the State most vulnerable to growing climate impacts.

In March, 30 of our RACQ



Australia Zoo's Head of Global Sales Erina Kilmore and RACQ President Leona Murphy with the two new wildlife rescue vehicles.

Foundation volunteers spent a week at Mulgowie Farming Company in South East Queensland, planting trees and restoring vegetation.

Partnering with Healthy Land and Water Australia, our efforts contributed to the Laidley Creek Restoration Master Plan, aiming to reduce biodiversity loss, erosion and siltation in the face of potential flooding.

Most recently, the RACQ Foundation completed its 24th community project in the Torres Strait.

These initiatives are just a part of our ongoing efforts to support and improve our communities.

Thirty-eight volunteers worked tirelessly to revitalise the Frog Gully Community Gardens on Thursday Island and install an aquaponics system on Horn Island, helping to improve food security for island residents, while strengthening the island's resilience against natural disasters.

Our education team also conducted road safety programs in local schools, reinforcing our commitment to community wellbeing and safety.

These initiatives are just a part of our ongoing efforts to support and improve our communities.

You can read more about our time in the Torres Strait on page 12.

In the past financial year, RACQ provided more than \$8 million to communities across Queensland, including the delivery of safe driving programs and local community giving.

I would like to thank our members, partners, volunteers and employees for their support and dedication to bring these initiatives to life throughout the year.

Our collective efforts have made a significant impact and I am excited to continue this important work as we strive to build a better and more resilient Queensland, where everyone can move and live safely, securely and sustainably. ■

Leona

**LEONA MURPHY,
RACQ PRESIDENT**

YOUR SAY

Giving Members a Voice



RACQ member gets a lift after a Bruce Highway breakdown.

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

GRATEFUL TRAVELLERS

AFTER A CARAVAN trip to Cairns, we were 150km north of Rockhampton when our tow vehicle overheated. We called RACQ; a tow truck was sent from Rocky and we were put up in a van park for two nights. As mechanics in Rocky couldn't look at our vehicle for a week, we again called RACQ. The next day they towed us from Rocky to Bundaberg and our vehicle was taken to our mechanic. Because we had RACQ Ultimate Care membership our towing costs were covered for the long trip home. We're so thankful for their care when we needed them.

JANISE KREBS, BUNDABERG

DRIVING SKILLS INVALUABLE

IN THE EARLY 1970s I chose a school elective to attend an advanced driver training centre in Shepparton, Victoria.

As a 14-year old I knew everything, so the advanced driver training was a valuable lesson in humility. The lessons learned saved mine and other lives, numerous times. Years later, in the army, I undertook advanced driver training in trucks and four-wheel drives. Again, lessons learned saved mine and countless other lives, as in future years I chose a career in the operation of heavy vehicles, including road trains. These days I'm seeing many young drivers making dangerous and potentially fatal choices with their driving skills. I've always been in the vanguard for advanced driver training and the RACQ Mobility Centre offers all drivers the opportunity to learn life-saving skills that they can apply to enhance their driving. I strongly believe that advanced driver training should be mandatory for all drivers. I wish that there were such mobility centres in all the major cities of Australia and throughout our State.

PETER TERRILL, COOROY

BE A RESPONSIBLE DRIVER

I AGREE WITH Howard Griffin's letter (Autumn TRA 2024) regarding bad driving habits being passed on. Sadly, many young drivers don't value or respect their own lives nor those of their mates. It is such a sad state of affairs when the rest of us see the carnage and unnecessary loss of so many lives on the roads. A driver licence, once earned, is not something to be taken for granted. It is not an entitlement, it needs to be appreciated because it has given you permission to drive. If you are old enough to attain a driver licence, you should be sufficiently responsible to use common sense when driving. If only it could somehow be instilled in young drivers' minds that life is extremely precious and fragile, treat it kindly and remember that this life we've been given is not a dress rehearsal, it is the only one we get.

JULIE BERRY, KINGAROY



CLOTHING CONCERNS

WHILE THERE ARE real problems concerning scooters, e-bikes and bikes generally, I am appalled by the number of riders and pedestrians dressed in black or dark clothing. It might seem to be fashionable, but it makes them harder to see, more particularly in poor light or at night.

KERRY HERRON, PARADISE POINT

MISSED OPPORTUNITY

I AGREE WITH Kevin Austin's idea of a 'no-frills' Aussie-built car (Winter TRA 2024), but for different reasons. Many years ago there was a big push by road traffic authorities to remove 'old unroadworthy bombs' from our roads and fair enough too. However, forcing people already struggling with other financial burdens of everyday life to purchase a new or newer vehicle was out of reach. I felt that if Ford/Holden (in operation at the time) could have produced a lean, bare-bones yet roadworthy version of their popular Falcons or Commodores at half the price of new overly accessorised models then many more old bombs would be dispensed with. It's too late now as we have no car manufacturing industry nor vision for anything similar in the future.

NIGEL TICE, PALM BEACH

DELAY ON HIGHWAY

WHILE TRAVELLING TO Brisbane recently I had the unfortunate experience of being held up in a long line of vehicles for over six hours. We were initially told by police it would be a delay of two hours tops. That was the last time we saw anyone in authority. No one came back

with an update or to check if everyone was okay. There was no phone service and as the evening went on it got very cold. I understand that this was a serious fatal accident but surely it would be reasonable procedure to try to clear one lane and get the traffic moving again, even if it's slowly. If these long delays are unavoidable then emergency services need to put some procedures in place to keep travellers informed and checked so that another tragedy does not occur while we all wait hours in our cars, miss our motel bookings and have family members at home worried about where their family is and why they haven't been contacted.

GRAHAM COLLINS, FRESHWATER

VULNERABLE ROAD USERS

I AM WRITING in appreciation of the article "Pushing for safer roads" (Winter TRA 2024). Having seen the independence that kids have travelling to school on foot or by bicycle in Europe, I always wanted to foster that in my kids. However, I've received comments that it is too dangerous. I was surprised to learn that at 50 km/h a pedestrian has an 85% chance of dying if hit by a car. At 40 km/h it's 35% and at 30 km/h it drops to 10%. Even with good brakes in cars, there is an issue with 'thinking distance' before braking. I can see why we don't let kids walk or ride to school anymore, which would reduce a lot of congestion on roads. A speed limit of 30km/h on minor suburban roads doesn't seem too crazy now. Especially when it makes minimal difference to the travel time to get to a main road by car.

TRAVIS BASSETT, BRISBANE

JAIL AS DUI PUNISHMENT

AS A POLICE officer years ago, I dealt with many instances of DUI and the annoying factor was what could be called recidivism. This was the selfish and contemptuous behaviour of drivers being caught for six or seven offences, many still driving after their licence had been revoked. They refused to accept the laws applied to them. I have for decades proposed that DUI should be made a criminal offence, with mandatory jail sentences increasing as each offence occurs. On the first offence,

impose a criminal conviction coupled with a severe fine and thereafter bring in jail sentences, commencing at three months. At the second offence make it nine, seeing as the offender failed to take the first case seriously.

ROGER DESHON, TOOWOOMBA



SPARE A THOUGHT

WANT A SPARE tyre? Then don't buy electric. It is concerning to see the number of new cars coming into the country without a spare tyre, not even a space-saver spare. There is a huge push to electrify our vehicle fleet, but I don't think there is one electric vehicle on the market that has a spare tyre. If you are a city driver, this may not be a huge issue. But if the industry wants widespread adoption of electric vehicles, then obviously there will be a push for rural and remote drivers to go electric. Just imagine coming home to the station after a day in town and getting a flat. No mobile phone reception, no internet, with a car full of kids and it's getting dark. I wouldn't wish that on my family. No one in their right mind in the bush will even consider a vehicle without a spare tyre.

PETER CRAWFORD, MOUNT MARIA

REGISTRATION SUGGESTED

FOLLOWING ON FROM "Show courtesy to pedestrians" (Autumn TRA 2024), I suggest that motorised vehicles which can travel at fast speeds should be registered and have third-party insurance. Should someone be badly injured by one of these vehicles there should be accountability and cover for injuries incurred. Having a registration for individuals abusing road rules and registration plate would help to report culprits.

JAN BECKETT, NOOSAVILLE

How the new RACQ brand campaign and its quirky animals were brought to life.

STORY RAY ANDERSEN

THE ANIMAL MAGIC BEHIND NEW CAMPAIGN



Some of Queensland's most familiar animals have starring roles in RACQ's new brand campaign.

The ads feature cockatoos, kookaburras, possums and water dragons 'commenting' on Queenslanders experiencing various life events.

RACQ General Manager Marketing Membership and Digital Tim Cochrane said the ads gave the inevitabilities of life a voice through animals that were relatable to Queenslanders.



"In the ads, the animals are watching and offering their observations on some of the challenges and life experiences we go through," Tim said.

"These range from a car breaking down or being damaged in a storm to moving into a newly purchased home.

"The message is that when these things happen in our lives, the most important question to ask is, 'You with RACQ?'"

"From roadside assistance to home insurance and loans, RACQ has products and services to support Queenslanders through the good and bad times."

While the messaging is serious, it is delivered with a sense of fun and humour thanks to the cheeky animals, created using computer-generated imagery (CGI).

"There is so much doom and gloom in the world we thought we would use a lighter tone to deliver what are still important messages," Tim said.

The lighter tone evokes memories of one of RACQ's most popular advertisements ("Charter boat, what charter boat?") from more than 20 years ago.

"People still reference the charter boat ad after all this time and it shows how powerful humour can be in getting a message across," Tim said.

"The use of humour is a nice way to balance the seriousness of the topics and helps people connect with the advertisements and their messaging."

The campaign was developed for RACQ by creative agency VML and created by Brisbane film and television production company Chop Shop Post.

Chop Shop Post's recent film and TV credits include *Troppo*, *Last King of the Cross*, *Monkey Man* and *Bluey*.

The RACQ commercials were co-directed by Lav Bodnaruk and Mike

Mier, who began the project fresh from working on their latest film *Zombie Plane*, a comedy starring Chuck Norris, Vanilla Ice and Sophie Monk.

Filming of the RACQ campaign saw them return to Screen Queensland Studios where *Zombie Plane* was shot.

A furnished room was built inside a water tank that was flooded for the RACQ home insurance ad.

The other ads were filmed at the RACQ Mobility Centre and on a Manly West street.

Once the live-action components were filmed and edited to their 30-second spots, the animals were added using CGI.

Making the animals come to life involved meticulous study of their look and movements.

"In addition to looking at photos, our guys broke down the skeleton and muscle form of every one of these animals, so there is a lot of study that goes into how the animals should look," Lav said.

"The first one we did was the cockatoo and then the kookaburra and they were the most challenging because of their feathering system.

"Our artists worked very hard to groom these birds. The feathers are different colours and they behave differently."

To give the animals more character, tweaks were made to their final looks.

"For instance, with our kookaburra and cockatoo, we opted to make the eyes larger than they would be on a real bird to add an element of cuteness, and for happiness, we added a little smile to their beaks," Lav said.

"It's very subtle, and if you don't know to look for it, you won't notice, but it makes you feel a certain way when you watch the spots."

After putting so much time and effort into creating the ads, Lav and Mike look forward to seeing how the campaign is received.



"We are super proud of the result," Mike said.

"It has been a collaborative journey with RACQ and VML. The concept of this campaign rests with them – they came up with the ideas and we executed them."

Working on the campaign had special significance for the long-term RACQ members.

"We joke that we both started at uni, delivering pizzas and our cars were not that great, so we used to rely on RACQ a fair bit," Mike said.

"Knowing what RACQ is, having respect for it as an institution and brand for so long and now being able to make a campaign for them is something that is really dear to our hearts.

"I think we have encapsulated something new and fresh, and hopefully, it will connect with many different audiences and demographics."

THEY'RE THE VOICE

THE ANIMALS APPEARING in the new RACQ brand campaign may sound familiar. They include the voices of prominent actors and comedians, brothers Stephen and Bernard Curry (cockatoos), Sam Simmons and Madeleine Levins (kookaburras), Damien Garvey and Leon Cain (water dragons), Adam Zwar and Nelle Lee (possums). ■



A scene from one of the new brand ads shot at the RACQ Mobility Centre.

Scan the code for a sticky beak at the ads





The new historic fleet additions, a 1981 Daihatsu F20 and 1976 Toyota FJ40 LandCruiser, were on display at MotorFest 2024. Photos Jake Ryan.

WHAT'S OLD IS **NEW AGAIN**

RACQ has added two new vehicles to its historic fleet as we near the 100th anniversary of delivering roadside assistance.

STORY TORI MAYNE

From patrolling Queensland roads in AJS motorcycles with sidecars, to attending roadside callouts in Isuzu D-Max utes, RACQ's roadside fleet has experienced the full evolution of motoring in the past 99 years.

Nearly 40 vehicle makes and models have transitioned through the Club's fleet over this time and each forms a key part of its history.

RACQ's historic fleet consists of 16 models dating from 1904 to 2007. It includes authentic and replica vehicles used by the Club and they draw a crowd whenever they are displayed.

Two new historic vehicles – a 1976 Toyota FJ40 LandCruiser and a 1981 Daihatsu F20 – were unveiled at RACQ MotorFest 2024 in June.

The Club's Historic Fleet Coordinator Jim Butler is tasked with bringing these vehicles back to life and keeping the history of RACQ's fleet alive.

"In the leadup to RACQ MotorFest, the team spent more than 600 hours restoring both the LandCruiser and Daihatsu," Jim said.

"A lot of work went into restoring the bodywork but the cherry on top was fitting the RACQ bug light to officially transform them into patrol vehicles.

"We even organised for two former patrols, who used to drive these vehicles, to give their seal of approval before they were revealed to the public.

"It was also extra special for me personally as when I first joined the Club as an apprentice mechanic in 1980, I was maintaining the same types of vehicles."

The Toyota FJ40 LandCruiser was

used by the Club in the late 1970s and the Daihatsu F20 was a roadside vehicle until the mid-1980s.

Jim said the purpose of each of these vehicles was specific to the state of our roads at the time.

"During the 1970s and early 1980s, Queenslanders would have seen Daihatsu F20s and Toyota FJ40 LandCruisers patrolling both metro and regional areas," Jim said.

"Both proved to be reliable choices for assistance vehicles as they were four-wheel drive and could handle Queensland's many unsealed roads at the time."

While the story of these two vehicles gives an insight into the evolution of RACQ roadside assistance and motoring more broadly, as motoring moves toward battery power, it begs the question: What vehicles will form the Club's future fleet? ■



WHY IT'S TIME TO FIX THE BRUCE

RACQ Managing Director and Group CEO David Carter speaks at a *Fix the Bruce* media event. Photo Jake Ryan.

A group of prominent organisations have echoed RACQ's call for urgent action on the Bruce Highway.

RACQ has received prominent support for its campaign to *Fix the Bruce* after a member and community poll saw it identified as their top priority for the State Election campaign.

The Club has been joined by the Local Government Association of Queensland, Queensland Farmers Federation, Queensland Trucking Association, Royal Australian College of Surgeons Queensland and the Queensland Tourism Industry Council in urging political parties to commit to a 10-year funding plan with the Federal Government to eliminate all 'two-star' sections of the Bruce Highway.



A two-star section of the Bruce Highway.

RACQ analysis of AusRAP crash data revealed the Bruce Highway had an average Fatal and Serious Injury (FSI) crash rate three to five times higher than

major national highways in New South Wales and Victoria.

The data, from 2018 to 2022, shows upgrades, including the installation of dual carriageways on the Hume and Pacific Highways had almost eliminated the head-on crash risk – the type of crash responsible for more than half (81) of all fatalities on the Bruce Highway.

By contrast, 1,398km of the Bruce Highway (from Gympie to Cairns) remains single-lane and undivided, leading to an average 'per kilometre travelled' FSI crash rate three times higher than rural sections of the Pacific Highway and five times higher than rural sections of the Hume Highway.

RACQ Managing Director and Group CEO David Carter said the shocking statistics highlighted the urgent need to *Fix the Bruce*.

"The Bruce Highway is the backbone of this State." Mr Carter said.

"It's supposed to be a national highway but when you compare it to the Pacific or Hume, it's substandard.

"Those interstate highways have rightfully been upgraded to three, four and five stars out of five for infrastructure safety, yet there are still significant lengths of the Bruce that are a two-star rating.

"We know proper upgrades work and safer roads save lives.

"We need a 10-year funding commitment from the State and Federal Governments to continue upgrading the Bruce Highway.



A highway with a five-star AusRAP rating.

"We also need the State Government to fight for an 80-20 funding split commitment from the Federal Government."

RACQ asked Queenslanders to nominate their top election priorities from a shortlist of 10 wide-ranging issues relevant to the Club's core advocacy and business areas.

Fix the Bruce topped the poll ahead of *Give us a fair go on fuel* and *Plan and build for growth*.

RACQ will continue to advocate for members to seek commitments from all political parties to address these three priorities during the election campaign.

The Labor Government has committed to implementing RACQ's proposal to cap daily fuel price increases at five cents per litre if re-elected.

The State Election will be held on 26 October. ■

'BLUE ARMY' MARCHES ON

RACQ Foundation volunteers Mike Cusi and Jake Godfrey take a break. Photos Jake Ryan. BELOW: Torres Shire Council Mayor Elsie Seriat with Foundation volunteers Albert Budworth and Will Soutar.

RACQ Foundation's 'blue army' helped boost food security, taught transport safety and learned about Indigenous culture in the Torres Strait.

STORY TRISTAN VORIAS

It is described as Australia's hidden pearl and once you arrive in the Torres Strait, or Zenadth Kes as it's known by Traditional Owners, it's easy to understand why.

This pristine blue passage and its islands between Australia's mainland and Papua New Guinea was the setting for the RACQ Foundation's 24th community assistance project during NAIDOC Week 2024.

Manager Foundation Bridgette Muller said the aim of the 38 volunteers was to enhance the community's food security through two key projects including restoring the Frog Gully Community Gardens on Thursday Island and building an aquaponics system on Horn Island.

"These projects are important to ensure locals have access to fresh food in the face of growing natural disaster risk, as well as teaching younger generations ways to farm sustainably," Ms Muller said.

"Our team also digitised and catalogued documents and exhibits from the Torres Strait Heritage Museum to safeguard them against potential future weather events."

It wasn't all work for RACQ

Foundation volunteers with the team taking part in a cultural awareness session and NAIDOC Week celebrations, teaching them about the rich and ancient culture of Torres Strait Islanders.

Torres Shire Council Mayor Elsie Seriat said the partnership with RACQ Foundation led to positive and long-lasting outcomes for the community.

"Our current food supply relies on shipments from the mainland, impacting our health and contributing to the high cost of living in our area," Cr Seriat said.

"This project sets a good example for other major non-Indigenous corporate organisations to see and adopt what the RACQ Foundation has fostered in our community."

Throughout NAIDOC Week, RACQ's Education team also toured schools in the Torres Strait teaching students about road and marine safety.

"We know having a driver's licence creates opportunities for work and further education," RACQ Education Specialist Janelle Baker said.

"That's why it's important for us to reach all Queenslanders and travel to far corners of the State."

The Torres Shire Council affectionately nicknamed the volunteers the 'Blue Army' with CEO Dalassa Yorkston thanking them for their work.

"Thank you to the RACQ Foundation for bringing that blue army," Mrs Yorkston said.

"We've been able to see the community gardens transform before our eyes and we will always remember the input and impact the volunteers have had on our community."

Ms Muller said the RACQ Foundation was proud to partner with the Torres Shire Council to help deliver meaningful outcomes for their island communities.

"We came as strangers, and we are leaving as friends," she said. "It's very humbling."

Since the RACQ Foundation's inception in 2011, it has distributed more than \$14 million to assist more than 400 Queensland community groups. ■



ADVERTORIAL

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"Having trialled four different sets of hearing aids from two audiology centres without complete satisfaction, I ordered two Jaspa 3 hearing aids. I could hardly believe how much more natural sounding the Jaspa aids were in comparison to the very expensive aids I had trialled. I'm now wearing them each day as required and find them very good." – Aaron, NSW

"Much better than ones I spent \$7000 on. Much easier to use and maintain and I can adjust them myself." – Danny, QLD

"I Wish I could go back in time and order a pair of your hearing aids before spending so much more money on my last ones, which just weren't as good as yours. I love them! They really do create a very natural hearing amplification and are so easy to use." – Pamela, NSW

"I'm so happy that finally there is now a hearing aid that really solved my hearing difficulty. There is so much clarity in hearing the sound, the words being spoken that I don't feel I am actually wearing one. It is so small that people around me don't even notice I'm wearing a hearing aid." – Rolando, NSW

"These aids are so simple yet effective. In comparison to my government supplied aids, I cannot speak more highly of the comfort and sound quality of the Jaspa 3 hearing aids. The size is also very small in comparison to my other aids, and as a result I feel much more comfortable wearing them. Best of all I can hear very well!" – Henry, QLD

"I only have difficulty on occasions and although hearing aids were recommended by a specialist I haven't been able to justify them until now. These work very well to serve my needs and the clarity of TV is very good in particular (I can turn the volume down to 10 now)." – Doris, WA

"Received this afternoon. Couldn't believe the speed of delivery, well done guys. From first trying, I am sitting here with a smile all over my face. The TV is on, and I can actually hear it very clearly. As a user, until now, of the free Government supplied hearing aids and of having put up with them for four years there is just no comparison, yours leave them for dead." – Peter, WA

"I have been trying to get my husband to wear his hearing aids that we paid a lot of money for, however he never wore them after the first month stating that he didn't get enough benefit. Since I bought him the Jaspa 3 aids he has been wearing them at least every few days and for watching the news etc, and I have noticed a big difference in not having to repeat myself. Regards, Bess." – Bessie, NSW

"My mother was about to spend \$5000+ on a hearing aid so I got a Jaspa 3 after reading some reviews. My mother is delighted with the device and we can now have a decent conversation without having to constantly apologise or guessing whether to say yes or no." – Zoran, NSW

"The small size is marvellous and out of sight. The Spot Mini 6 performance is almost unbelievable for such a small unit. Well done to all involved." – Jim, NSW

"I cannot believe the Jaspa 3 is every bit as good as the \$13,000 hearing aids I am wearing. The difference in value is amazing and I thoroughly recommend a Jaspa 3 to anyone hard of hearing." – Dorothy, WA

"Very happy with the aids. 3 previous sets of aids at about 10 times the price of Jaspa did not perform despite expert advice and assistance. Had endless problems with feedback and fitting. Jaspa 3 are the only aids I have been able to wear daily without any feedback or discomfort." – Bruce, WA

If you've faced difficulties with your current pair of hearing aids, or have been struggling with your hearing in general, look no further than PocketAid for a new groundbreaking solution. A growing community is attesting to the outstanding performance of their new range of direct-to-you hearing aids.

Countless numbers of people with varying levels of hearing loss, ranging from mild to severe, have now reported better results for speech clarity, better speech understanding in noisy settings, and improved comfort, in comparison to their previous set of expensive hearing aids. The PocketAid representative said,

"We're very excited to create this new way of solving your hearing troubles, with a direct-to-you and ready-to-use hearing aid solution. We have now had hundreds of customers reporting significant improvement in their hearing in comparison to their previous set of expensive devices. In many instances these customers had spent up to \$12,000 on their last set of hearing aids."

Designed as broad-prescription hearing aids, suitable for various levels of hearing loss from mild to severe, the PocketAid hearing aid range is ready to use straight out-of-the-box, and does not require a hearing test. Wearers are able to easily adjust the volume and program options via a simple on-board push button.

PocketAid said the real key to building this new type of hearing aid that is ready to use the moment you receive it, was to approach the problem from a completely different angle, by listening to the unsung experts; experienced hearing aid users. The results were extraordinary.

"As a result of gathering insights from over 1,000 experienced hearing aid wearers from Australia, who had been using hearing aids for over 5 years, we were able to overcome common difficulties people experience with

hearing aids, such as tinniness, echo and background noise. Our new range of direct-to-you hearing aids have fully digital microchips and incorporate wide dynamic range compression, to give volume to soft sounds while not increasing the volume of louder sounds in the environment."

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

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

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

All PocketAid orders come with a 30-day money back guarantee, and free delivery Australia wide. No hearing tests or appointments are required to use the devices. The hearing aids can be purchased at

www.PocketAid.com.au or call 1300 903 355 to order over the phone.

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Hidden In-the-Ear

Spot Mini 6



1 for \$565
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HEALTH FUND REBATES NOW AVAILABLE

Those with eligible health fund extras cover often have no out-of-pocket costs when purchasing 2 x hearing aids, as health fund cover averages between \$600 & \$1,200 rebate.* Simply phone 1300 903 355 or email info@PocketAid.com.au to start the claiming process.

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

SAFETY FIRST FOR SENIORS

Deciding if senior drivers should give up their licence can be difficult for all involved, writes RACQ member Paul Reeves.

I am a health professional and have been concerned about the controversial and difficult decision relating to when seniors should surrender their driver licence.

As we age, our reflex responses slow. Some experience sensory deterioration in hearing and vision while others become less environmentally aware of road signage, traffic lights and other drivers.

This can result in anxiety in both the senior driver, other road users, and relatives.

It is hoped that regular examination by the driver's general practitioner would alert motor registration authorities of potential risks of the senior-driver patient.

But this isn't always the case. Some GPs choose not to 'upset their clients' by suggesting that maybe they should consider stopping driving.

Unfortunately, for the senior driver, this means a change of lifestyle; it affects their independence and to some degree their social life.

The thought of not driving terrifies many elderly drivers, especially if they have been driving 50-plus years. It's a significant change of lifestyle to rely on relatives or public transport, to go shopping or to church, or even visit friends.

A friend of mine is currently at the crossroads (no pun intended) with her

elderly mother, who has symptoms of dementia and suffers a serious lack of environmental awareness when driving.

It seems due to sheer luck and the quick evasive actions of other drivers that accidents haven't occurred.

I experienced the same with my late mother who was involved in a motor vehicle accident a decade ago.

She had always been a careful driver as a single mother bringing up three sons on her own.

After her motor vehicle accident, I had noticed that her reaction time and cognitive ability had become impaired; something wasn't right with her mentally and physically.

I started to worry about her driving ability and awareness while driving.

She was physically capable, her sight was fair following cataract surgery and her hearing was sound.

What concerned me was her cognitive functioning. She was due for a licence renewal and with gentle support and conversation about my concerns, I was able to convince her to be assessed

by a qualified driving instructor.

I didn't want my mother to lose her independence and joy of driving, however I didn't want her to cause an accident either, resulting in the death or serious injury of other people.

Having her tested again for her driving ability was difficult for both of us. I didn't want this to affect my relationship with my mother and I didn't want to cause her any embarrassment either.

My mother disappeared down the road with the instructor and after 10 minutes I received a phone call. It was the driving instructor. Unfortunately, my mother failed her test.

She had made several mistakes. These included not keeping within her lane, running through a stop sign, being confused as to who should give way at an intersection and failing to see a pedestrian crossing in front of her.

I informed her general practitioner and she agreed not to drive ever again.

I was content in the fact that my mum was never going to be responsible for causing a motor vehicle accident or injuring or killing herself or other people.

It was evident a few years later she was suffering Alzheimer's which eventually took her life. I am sure many readers can relate to my story. ■

See **Road Rules**, page 58

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DINGO-SAFE MESSAGE FOR K'GARI VISITORS

Visitors attracted to the natural beauty of K'gari are urged to be aware of how to stay safe around the island's dingo population.



Dingos are very comfortable around visitors to K'gari and should be treated with caution.

STORY MATT WATSON

Queensland is home to amazing national parks that attract thousands of local and international visitors each year.

However, one protected area stands out above all others in terms of its splendour, diversity of landscapes, and ongoing geomorphological processes.

The world's largest sand island, K'gari (formerly Fraser Island), lies off the coast of Hervey Bay in Queensland's Wide Bay region.

The island's traditional name of K'gari means 'paradise' to the Butchulla people, who have inhabited the island for thousands of years.

At 122km in length, the island features more than 250km of uninterrupted, white, sandy beaches.

Its natural beauty includes magnificent stands of rainforest adapted to the sand environment, amazing sand cliffs and spectacular sand blows.

Central to the island's attraction are the dingoes with many people visiting the island specifically to see them in the wild.

K'gari is home to up to 200 dingoes, depending on the pupping season.



Known by the Butchulla people as wongari, the dingoes are the island's apex predators and they roam the rugged landscape from the beach to the rainforest.

As with all apex predators, there is a history of human-dingo conflict.

Senior Ranger Dr Linda Behrendorff completed her PhD on the island's dingo population and has been watching and studying them for more than two decades.

"Dingos on K'gari are extremely intelligent and opportunistic," Dr Behrendorff said.

"They are wild animals in their natural environment and that's how they should be treated. Unfortunately, we find some visitors are treating them like domestic dogs."

Dr Behrendorff said there were strict rules to help reduce the interactions and potential risk between people and dingoes.

"It is unlawful to interact with dingoes or deliberately or inadvertently feed them, and there are hefty fines in place for people who break the rules," she said.

"We encourage people to move dingoes on if they are lingering around fishing or camping areas.

"We encourage fishers to keep their bait and catch out of reach and we ask all parents and carers to keep their children within arm's reach.

"Dingos can quickly become habituated if they're fed and they will approach people for food or act aggressively.

"People do get bitten and our analysis of negative interactions shows around 65% of bite victims are children. That is why keeping them within arm's reach is extremely important."

Fenced camping areas cater for families with children and people who prefer to camp with facilities nearby.

QPWS rangers move between camps daily, providing 'Be dingo-safe!' messaging to all campers.

To help manage the risk from habituated dingoes, some are ear-tagged to assist with identification and monitoring.

High-risk animals may be fitted with tracking collars to assist in managing human influences around them.

"In 2023, from an estimated 400,000 visitors, we had 35 high-risk interactions between dingoes and people," Dr Behrendorff said.

"That includes biting, mouthing or lunging at people.

"Many of those interactions resulted in minor injuries and involved dingoes that had become habituated, mainly because they had been fed or had access to food.

"That's why we need all residents and visitors to the island to study the 'Be dingo-safe!' guidelines before they arrive and follow them closely during their stay.

"We want people to enjoy the breathtaking beauty of K'gari, the freedom of beach driving, exceptional fishing and camping under the stars.

"Your safety is our number one priority, but staying safe is your responsibility."

Since 2020, domestic visitation to the island has grown by 29%. In that time, more than 210,000 Vehicle Access Permits (VAPs are required to drive on the beach) were purchased for K'gari.

In the last financial year, more



Fishers are encouraged to keep their bait and catch out of the reach of dingoes.



A freshwater lake on K'gari.

than 30% of all VAPs sold in Queensland were for K'gari. In 2023, 248,000 domestic tourists and 42,000 international visitors stayed at least one night in camping areas on the island.

The figure swells to more than 400,000 annual visitors when the island's resorts and rental accommodation are taken into consideration.

One of Queensland's most popular road trips, K'gari attracts four-wheel driving and camping enthusiasts from across the State and beyond.

K'gari contains half of the world's perched, freshwater dune lakes, which enhance the island's stunning landscape.

The dunes are part of an ongoing geomorphological process, where sand from New South Wales and Queensland's southern beaches drifts north on ocean currents and is deposited on K'gari.

The island falls under the authority of the Department of Environment, Science and Innovation, and is managed collaboratively by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) and Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation (BAC).

The QPWS manages dozens of camping areas where visitors can pitch their tents and enjoy getting back to nature for about \$7 per person per night, while the island's resorts and rental accommodation cater for people who don't want to sleep with sand between their toes. ■

Matt Watson is the Principal Media Officer with the Department of Environment, Science and Innovation.

HOW TO 'BE DINGO-SAFE!'

- Always stay close (within arm's reach) to children and young teenagers.
- Always walk in groups and carry a stick.
- Camp in fenced areas where possible.
- Do not run. Running or jogging can trigger a negative dingo interaction.
- Never feed dingoes.
- Lock up food stores and iceboxes (even on a boat).
- Never store food or food containers in tents.
- Secure all rubbish, fish and bait and fishing tackle.
- Avoid bush toileting.



Author May B. Wild nominated Millstream Chichester National Park in Western Australia as her favourite place to stop for lunch. INSET: Road with a view at Robe, South Australia.



LAPPING UP AN EPIC ROAD TRIP

RACQ member May B. Wild shares tips from the lap of Australia she undertook with husband Chris and their dog Watson.



Watson waiting to exercise at Robe Old Gaol ruins.



May gets friendly with a quokka at Rottneest Island.

The idea of my husband Chris and I going around Australia in a motorhome with our dog Watson was not taken lightly.

Many factors led to the decision to rent our Brisbane home and explore our vast land.

Both our careers came to an abrupt stop in 2021, via unanticipated early retirements. This caused us to rethink our priorities.

Like so many during COVID-19, we asked ourselves, 'What is important to us?'

We decided to explore our big, beautiful country.

However, we had no clue what we were doing and underestimated the logistics of preparation.

First, we had to decide what sort of rig to get. We visited camping and caravanning shows and spent countless hours on the internet looking at options.

Camping in a tent was out. There was no way I was going to crawl in and out as those days were long gone; my knees would never forgive me.



May's husband Chris with Watson at Murphy's Haystacks in South Australia.

We also knew that we did not want to tow anything, so we settled on a 2002 Toyota Coaster motorhome we named the Golden Goose.

It ticked all our boxes for a comfortable ride, good ground clearance, a legendary engine with parts available anywhere

in Australia and all the mod cons, especially a full-length north-south double bed.

We set off in July 2022 and drove 33,280km over 326 days.

The trip's biggest challenge was for the three of us to live in a 14-square-metre 'sardine can'.

Amazingly, we did learn to squeeze into that tight living space and got quite used to it. Our house seems gigantic to us now, although it is relatively small. It shows that we don't need much room to function, live, and be happy.

There were many teething problems, partly because we never got to do a proper shake-down excursion before our departure.

We only managed one night away and that is when the air suspension broke down – one of many delays.

Once on the road, the feeling of freedom took over – we had no plan beyond the first three days. We had embarked on a magic carpet ride, with every day a surprise.

I thought I knew Australia because I had visited all the states and lived in three. I was fooling myself!

I soon found out that I hardly knew anything at all. That road trip taught us so much about our country and its many facets.

We learned even more about ourselves and each other, and yes, we are still married.

The natural beauty of our land Down Under is unarguable.

We saw the most jaw-dropping sights of mountains, coastlines, beaches and forests.

We chased waterfalls, watched shooting stars, explored underground caves, swam with a whale shark, and flew in a vintage plane over vineyards.

We toured a haunted pub at night, tasted great wines and cheeses, and soaked our tired bodies in warm thermal pools.

We camped overnight on the Bunda Cliffs, visited museums and saw way too much rusty old agricultural machinery.

We followed the roads of the bushrangers and stopped at historical cemeteries, including a dog cemetery.

I took more than 10,000 photos and when I look at them now, my heart still skips a beat.

We met many interesting people, incredible Australian characters (and tourists) either doing a lap of their own or just doing their thing in the most unusual settings.

There are some fine people living in this place and we gained some new friends.

We learned a mountain of facts on history, geology, flora and fauna, mining, farming, early pioneers, explorers,

pearling, shipwrecks, war memorials and so much more.

It all came to an end in June 2023 when we returned home.

It was surreal to drive up our street and come back to earth.

It felt like we had

been teleported away for 326 days and suddenly materialised back home.

On our return, my mind kept reviewing the trip. It was not easy to come back to suburbia after such an adventure.

I have written a book about it, *A Lap of Australia for Beginners*, to share the knowledge and cement the learning.

It was also a response to the many questions we have been asked about how we did it and what advice we would give to others considering doing 'the lap'.

If you feel in your bones that you need to do it, then go for it. Listen to your itchy feet. (Unless it's athlete's foot, then see your doctor).

Prepare as much as you can, but eventually you just have to get into your vehicle and cast yourselves adrift on the seas of adventure.

You may feel out of your comfort zone, but it is worth it. ■



A Lap of Australia for Beginners is available at maybwild.com.au

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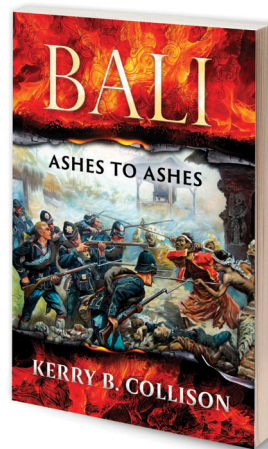
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RECIPE FOR REDUCING FOOD WASTE

A digital platform that creates recipes from suggested ingredients is a useful tool for cutting the amount of food we waste.

STORY RAY ANDERSEN

Kate McHugh has vivid childhood memories of the battle of wills she fought with her parents over food, particularly one involving a bowl of Irish stew.

A very young Kate refused to eat the meal, even more so after it had gone cold. Her parents were not letting her leave the dinner table until she did.

So, she sat in front of an undisturbed bowl of the offending stew for what felt like hours, “but was probably more like half an hour”.

“I was being taught the lesson that we did not waste food,” Kate said.

Her family always placed a premium on not wasting



Kate McHugh

food, which Kate said stemmed from her grandparents being farmers and her father’s work in the beef industry.

She learned to appreciate those family values as she grew up and they have developed into a passion.

Sydney-based Kate is the founder of KitchenHand, a digital platform that aims to help people reduce household food waste through education, advice and a handy recipe creation tool.

Kate’s love of food developed during her time at university and then in her career.

“I have always loved food and cooking,” she said.

“When I was at uni I worked in bars, and I would always be hanging around the kitchen door. Then, when I started in my corporate career, I always had these food gigs on the side; I had a food blog and at one stage I reviewed restaurants for *Gourmet Traveller*.”



Eventually, Kate’s career in sustainability and her appreciation of food intersected.

“While I was working in sustainability, I started to understand food waste on a large-scale level rather than thinking it’s bad because Mum and Dad said so,” Kate said.

Covid was the catalyst for a reassessment of her working life and saw Kate further investigate sustainable food systems, focusing on household food waste. KitchenHand was initially developed to help people better understand the storage of fresh produce and to publish articles on food waste.

The site evolved to include the recipe tool that allows users to have meals created for them using their nominated ingredients.

Users can refine the recipes by answering questions on dietary preferences, what cooking appliances they want to use, the time they want to take preparing

the meal and the number of portions.

You can also access recipes on the site based around seasonal availability of produce.

“We use artificial intelligence (AI) to custom-write recipes using what ingredients people have in ways

that suit them,” Kate said. “It’s free at the moment but we ask people to think about subscribing to help us cover the bills.”

Kate sees the tool as a valuable resource to reduce food waste, which she emphasised with startling statistics.

“In Australia we waste \$40 billion worth of food each year and \$20 billion of that is thrown out at a household level,” she said.

“When people talk about food waste, they are quick to point the finger at supermarkets throwing out food, but supermarkets throw out very little food compared with what Australian families throw out.”

Kate said reasons for the amount of food wasted varied but included poor planning before shopping, cooking too much and not eating leftovers.

“It’s a huge waste of time and effort if you are going shopping every week and putting 20% of those groceries in the bin,” she said.

“People don’t enjoy throwing food out, they feel bad about it, and yet the average Australian household still throws

out about \$2,500 worth of food each year. I think people can save themselves a bit of heartache by just cooking what they have instead of finding a recipe and then doing a shop for new food or ordering takeaway.”

Kate said wasted food also had serious environmental impacts.

“When food is wasted, it is then thrown into a bin and most of that still goes to landfill where it turns into methane,” she said.

“Globally, 8–10% of greenhouse gas emissions come from wasted food.”

Kate said she also felt strongly about the way food was sold and how it contributed to waste.

“The way food is packaged and sold does not correlate to portion sizes in recipes, so we end up with all these little bits and pieces left over and we don’t know what to do with them,” she said.

“That’s where the recipe tool is really valuable.” ■

Go to kitchenhand.io to learn more and to try the recipe tool.

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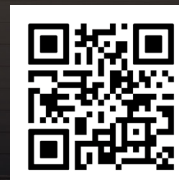
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EMAIL SCAMS ALERT

Emailed invoices can be altered with incorrect information, resulting in payments being redirected to scammers.

RACQ Bank is warning members about Business Email Compromise (BEC) scams in which scammers alter an invoice sent via email.

A BEC scam involves scammers intercepting legitimate business emails, altering payment details, and deceiving recipients into transferring funds to fraudulent accounts.

RACQ Manager Financial Crimes Taleesha Hamilton said a BEC scam typically unfolded when an invoice was received from what appeared to be a genuine email from a known business contact, such as a tradesperson or service provider, requesting payment.

"The recipient will be unaware the email has been tampered with, redirecting funds to accounts controlled by scammers instead of the intended recipient," Ms Hamilton said.

In one recent case, an RACQ member paid over \$7,000 after receiving

an invoice via email. Weeks later, the company contacted the member to advise they had not received payment.

Investigations revealed the email had been compromised.

"It was discovered that the initial email had been intercepted and bank details amended to those of a scammer," Ms Hamilton said.

"This company later discovered that scammers had intercepted multiple emails to their clients."

Ms Hamilton said BEC scams could occur through various methods, including phishing emails that tricked a company's staff into divulging sensitive information or clicking on malicious links, allowing scammers access to alter invoices.

"The consequences can be severe, often resulting in financial losses and legal disputes over liability between the business and the customer," she said.

"As there are no sound rulings

regarding who is liable for the email compromise taking place and due to the civil nature of the dispute, these incidents may need to be resolved in the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT)."

Ms Hamilton said while these incidents were complex and legally ambiguous, members could protect themselves by verifying payment details with the business before transferring any funds.

"Simply contacting the business can confirm the authenticity of the invoice and the correct payment details," she said. "This simple step will prevent you from falling victim to these scams.

"Members are urged to stay informed and exercise caution when conducting financial transactions online."

Ms Hamilton said anyone who suspected they may have fallen victim to a BEC scam should contact their financial institution immediately for assistance. ■

Ford Mustang The Legend Men's Chronograph



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Case back is engraved with the Ford Mustang logo and the watch's unique, engraved number



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IMPORTANT DETAILS

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EACH WATCH IS UNIQUE:

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BLIND AMBITION REMOVES BARRIERS



NV Access founders Mick Curran and Jamie Teh.

A Brisbane-based not-for-profit organisation is behind a global movement removing barriers for blind people.

STORY TORI MAYNE

Sending an email, writing a text, or reading a document is a straightforward task for most of us. For the 285 million blind people in the world, it's impossible without a

screen reader. However, screen readers, which sell for thousands of dollars, prove difficult to access for many people due to financial constraints as well as language and location barriers.

This basic social injustice did not sit well with Queenslanders Mick Curran and Jamie Teh.

They are both blind and their hip pockets have experienced firsthand the costs of a commercial screen reader.

Mick and Jamie, who met as children at a music camp and share a love of

computers, came together in 2006 to design a screen reader that would rewrite this script for blind people.

With the purpose of creating software by the blind for the blind, Mick and Jamie developed a free and open-source screen reader, known as Non-Visual Desktop Access (NVDA) with their not-for-profit organisation, NV Access, launching shortly after.

Now, 17 years on and thanks to partnerships with Microsoft, Google and Adobe, NVDA is used by more than

250,000 people globally.

NV Access General Manager James Boreham said the program was free to download and could be used across a range of platforms.

"NVDA works with any Microsoft computer, Google document or Adobe program as well as with audio and refreshable braille displays," James said.

"It allows users to navigate by keystrokes, choose a voice and customise the speed at which it reads back to you."

James said the software made a difference by breaking down barriers.

"We continue to see blind people overrepresented in global unemployment rates as they face perceived barriers to accessing work and education," he said.

"NV Access was built around the belief that a blind person shouldn't have to fork out thousands of dollars more than the general population to use a computer.

"The screen reader is free so there is no cost barrier, which is especially important for those in lower socio-economic situations.

"We've also been able to partner with blindness agencies and local organisations in developing countries to distribute NVDA into remote communities that might not have access to commercial screen readers."

James said the software had established a global movement.

"The unique aspect of NVDA is that the software is open-source, meaning the code is visible to the public and this allows those in the development community, including those who are blind, to contribute and make improvements to the software," he said. "Whilst NV Access manages and curates the official version of the software, we have roughly 200 contributors who are active in suggesting additional features, identifying bugs and helping to provide more personalised experiences for its users."

With only three software developers in the NV Access team, James emphasised how important the development community had been in expanding NVDA to more than 175 countries.

"We wouldn't have achieved what we have without the support of the NVDA development community," he said.

"While Mick and Jamie created the software in English, it has since been translated into more than 55 languages thanks to people all over the world."

"Jamie has always said that everything we do should be about empowering other people to make the world better and that sentiment is true of the community we have created with NVDA."

James said that while NV Access was only small, they still had big goals.

"Our challenge is making sure we are meeting the needs of people on the ground," he said.

"We want to strengthen this in years to come and continue partnering with schools, local organisations, blindness agencies and government departments so we can grow not only the software, but the community around it."

To learn more about the software or make a donation to NV Access to help them build more capacity to support blind and vision impaired people, go to nvaccess.org.

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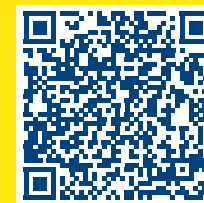
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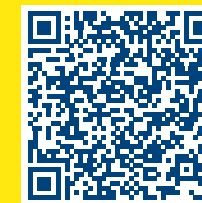
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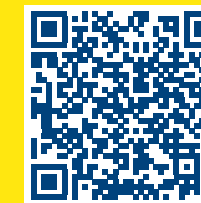
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SAVE MORE EVERY DAY

The Gulflander train ready to leave Normanton. Photos Carolyn Jasinski.

Rock and rail

NORTH WEST QLD ROAD TRIP

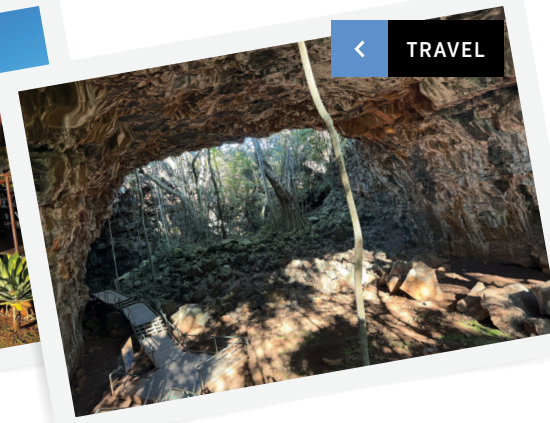
Explore North West Queensland, where old fossils rock and adventure comes wrapped in geological wonders.

STORY CAROLYNE JASINSKI

“I’ve found something,” Rick says, wiping dirt from his prehistoric marine treasure. But we wait for word from our guide, Kevin Petersen. “It’s definitely something,” Kevin confirms, grinning. “It’s coprolite.” Rick’s beaming. For a second. “You found fossilised poo.” That announcement could have put a dampener on our sense of discovery

during this Dig at Dawn tour, but we keep chipping away because we might find whatever it was that did that poo! We’ve come to Richmond in outback Queensland to dig for fossils. The 40m-deep Eromanga Sea once covered this region which is now part of the Dinosaur Trail. Who knew squatting in the dust, chipping away at layers of rock with a chisel and hammer could be so much fun? Kevin is a bit of a rock star when it comes to fossil finds. Like many of us,

he came to Richmond not knowing much about the area but curious about what could be unearthed. His first find, unlike our poo, pipi shells and fish scales, was significant; he dug up a dinosaur bone. It’s now on show, with more of his world-recognised discoveries, at Kronosaurus Korner, Richmond’s museum which boasts Australia’s largest collection of marine fossils. However, fossils are not the only treasure found in Queensland’s interior.



Above from left: The still waters of Cobbold Gorge; The Quamby Pub has been given a refresh; The Archway at Undara Lava Tubes.

We’re on a 3,000km road trip from Cairns through scrubland and grazing country in the State’s North West, north to the Gulf of Carpentaria and back to Cairns.

Cane fields and tropical rainforests quickly give way to avocado and mango plantations across the Atherton Tablelands, then a mixture of scrub and pasture and a few elegant wind farms. Cattle are the one constant – often on the roads – so we’re always on alert.

We’ve already been wowed at Undara Lava Tubes.

Thousands of microbats fly out of the lava tubes around sunset to feed and if it’s warm enough, snakes hang from trees, hoping to catch a bat for dinner.

Thankfully, mid-June proves too cool for the snakes, but the bats don’t disappoint.

I never thought I’d say this, but I really like these thumb-size night dwellers.

Their sheer numbers darken the dusk skyline but thanks to a very sophisticated sonar system, not one bumps into us.

The experience gets a big tick along with the Archway Tour which goes deep into the cathedral-size tunnels carved out by molten lava about 190,000 years ago.

The Kennedy Developmental Road leads to the underrated Porcupine Gorge.

The views from cliff-top lookouts are stunning but if you’re feeling fit enough to tackle the steep, 2.4km walk to the bottom, the reward is a swim in the pristine creek at the base of the Pyramid.

Once we hit Hughenden, The Overlanders Way takes us west to Richmond and Julia Creek Caravan Park for a soak in their famous artesian baths.

Picture lying back in clawfoot baths, soaking in salts (and sipping bubbles if you like) while the sunset creates a

kaleidoscope of colours across the sky.

Cloncurry is next with the John Flynn Museum paying tribute to the man responsible for the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Then it’s onto Mt Isa, the commercial hub of the North West, still thriving thanks to mining operations.

Two experiences you shouldn’t miss here are the Bush Tucker Tour, where Matthew Ned shows how the Aussie bush is also a pantry and a pharmacy, and the Hard Times Mine Tour, which offers a glimpse into the lives of underground miners.

Our journey backtracks to Cloncurry, detouring to the former Mary Kathleen Uranium Mine and Clem Walton Park with waterfront camping on Corella Dam, before turning north along the Matilda Way towards the Gulf of Carpentaria.

If you’ve been this way before, you’ll get a shock at Quamby Pub.

Built in 1860 as a customs house, the pub was at the heart of a bustling railway village between Cloncurry and Normanton, catering to cattle and mining operators.

Three years ago, it was in ruins.

Now, thanks to Nigel and Karen Sheiles, and the help of locals and tourists, it’s full of life again and a great place to stay.

Normanton is famous for the Purple Pub and Krys, the life-size model of the biggest crocodile ever caught in the Top End. It’s scary how big it is.

It’s also the gateway to the Gulf and the sleepy coastal town of Karumba where relaxing, fishing and blazing sunsets are legendary.

Normanton is also home to the

historic Gulflander train, which winds its way across the flood plains to the old goldfields of Croydon.

Train fans will love the five-hour trek, or you can share a ticket and swap places at Blackbull where they serve morning tea.

From Croydon, we pick up National Highway 1 turning off to Georgetown and Forsayth and Cobbold Gorge – the ‘baby’ of the North West geological wonders.

Just 10,000 years old, she’s young, curvy, and stunningly beautiful with the smoothest ‘skins’ thanks to a silica layer that hides any erosive blemishes.

Stand-up paddle boarding offers a serene glide down the waterway... if you’re blessed with the balance gene.

If not, it’s a constant giggle and a cool dip.

If you’re like me and must focus so hard on not falling in that you miss the scenery, there is also a gentle boat tour and easy hike around the gorge.

Talaroo Hot Springs is a relaxing last stop. It’s a caravan park and natural healing centre.

An Indigenous guide leads you to the springs, explaining how they were found and named. Then, you can soak in the soothing hot waters.

You can also book a private hot tub.

It’s the perfect time to reflect on all the ‘ways’ we’ve seen outback Queensland from the Great Inland Way and Overlanders Way to the Matilda Way, plus the highways, developmental roads and dirt tracks.

We’ve been over, around, through and even into the heart of some of the most beautiful landscapes.

And we’ve found a place where old things rock.

This old fossil feels right at home! ■

The writer was a guest of Tourism and Events Queensland.



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One-way airfare from Melbourne ✈️

DEPARTS > DIAMOND: 8 APR 2025; GOLD: 15 OCT 2025

★ Opulent 'Diamond Class' or luxury 'Gold Class' coach travel ★ 1 night St George ★ Riversands Wines ★ 2 nights Lightning Ridge ★ Australian Opal Centre ★ Thermal baths ★ Taronga Western Plains Zoo ★ 1 night Dubbo ★ 1 night Cobar ★ 2 nights Broken Hill ★ 'Living Desert Sculptures' ★ Old Wentworth Gaol ★ 1 night Mildura ★ 1 night Echuca ★ Pioneer Settlement Swan Hill ★ Murray River Paddle Steamer ★ 1 night Melbourne CBD ★ Flight from Melbourne to Brisbane ★ 30 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$5,500***
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Per person twin share **FROM \$4,275***

ICONS OF OUTBACK QUEENSLAND **8 DAYS**

DEPARTS > 3 JUN 2025

★ Overnight rail journey in Sleeper Cabins aboard the Spirit of the Outback ★ Luxury 'Gold Class' coach travel ★ 3 nights Longreach ★ Qantas Founders Museum ★ Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame live show ★ Thomson River Sunset Cruise with dinner & live show ★ Winton ★ Australian Age of Dinosaurs ★ Waltzing Matilda Centre ★ 2 night stay at Toogunna Plains Station ★ Quilpie ★ Bilby encounter ★ 1 night Roma ★ 21 meals

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QPCV RATES

TASMANIA GRAND TOUR **11 DAYS**

Return airfares included ✈️

DEPARTS > 26 OCT 2024

★ Return flights from Brisbane to Hobart ★ Opulent 'Diamond Class' coach travel ★ 4 nights in Hobart with specialty seafood dinner ★ Wall in the Wilderness ★ 2 nights in Strahan Village with Gordon River cruise & West Coast Wilderness Railway ★ 2 nights West Coast visiting Cradle Mountain & see the Tassie Devil ★ Chairlift ride at Cataract Gorge, 1 night Launceston ★ 1 night St Helens with a scenic flight ★ Guided tour of Port Arthur and harbour cruise ★ 28 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$6,525***

NORFOLK ISLAND INDULGENCE **8 DAYS**

EARLY BIRD DEAL!
SAVE UP TO \$100pp*
March date; Book by 31 Oct

Return airfares included ✈️

DEPARTS > 29 MAR 2025

★ Return flights from Brisbane to Norfolk Island ★ 7 nights Norfolk Island ★ Local markets ★ Emily Bay Convict Kingston ★ Tour Fletchers Mutiny Cyclorama ★ Progressive dinner ★ Nature Wonders of Norfolk tour ★ Pitcairn Settlers Village ★ Clifftop breakfast bushwalk ★ Wonderland by Night ★ Emily Bay Glass Bottom Boat cruise ★ Taste of Norfolk tour ★ Sunset Island Fish Fry dinner ★ Lavender Farm Tour ★ Night as a Convict dinner ★ 21 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$5,675***

NEW ZEALAND NATURAL WONDERS **19 DAYS**

EARLY BIRD DEAL!
SAVE UP TO \$100pp*
April date; Book by 31 Oct

Return airfares included ✈️

DEPARTS > 16 APR 2025

★ Return flights to New Zealand ex Brisbane ★ 3 nights Auckland ★ 2 nights Bay of Islands ★ Rotorua ★ Wellington ★ Queenstown ★ Dunedin ★ Traditional Maori Village experience and Hangi dinner ★ Lake Taupo ★ Coastal Pacific rail journey ★ 3 nights Christchurch ★ TranzAlpine rail journey ★ 1 night Franz Josef ★ 1 night aboard the Milford Mariner ★ 1 night Te Anau ★ Larnach Castle Wildlife cruise to Taiaroa Head ★ 52 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$11,975***

EASTER FESTIVAL AT LIGHTNING RIDGE **6 DAYS**

EARLY BIRD DEAL!
SAVE UP TO \$50pp*
April date; Book by 31 Oct

DEPARTS > 16 APR 2025

★ Luxury 'Gold Class' coach travel ★ 1 night St George ★ Anchorage Homestead ★ Riversands Wines tour, wine tasting & lunch ★ Australian Opal Centre ★ 3 nights Lightning Ridge & guided tour ★ Opal cutting demonstration ★ Amigo's Castle ★ Chambers of the Black Hand ★ Lightning Ridge Festiva ★ Black Opal Bull & Bronc Ride ★ Easter Festival Horse Races ★ SPARK cinematic experience ★ 1 night Moree ★ Summerland Camels guided tour & lunch ★ 13 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$2,925***

TURTLE HATCHING ON HERON ISLAND **6 DAYS**

DEPARTS > 2 MAR 2025

★ Luxury 'Gold Class' coach travel ★ 1 night Gladstone ★ 2 nights Heron Island Resort to witness the lifecycle of the turtles & their hatchlings ★ Join Naturalist guides on educational tours ★ Eco excursions to learn about the Great Barrier Reef ecosystem ★ Private guided island tour ★ Research station visit ★ 2 nights Town of 1770 ★ Full day LARC eco tour to Bustard Bay Lighthouse and Middle Island ★ Historic Childers ★ Gympie ★ 16 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$3,125***

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

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

DEPARTS > DIAMOND: 7 APR 2025; GOLD: 28 JUL 2025

★ Opulent 'Diamond Class' or luxury 'Gold Class' coach travel ★ 1 night Roma ★ 1 night Charleville ★ Charleville Bilby Experience ★ Big Sky Observatory ★ Nullawokka Cultural Tour ★ 2 nights St George ★ Riversands Wines ★ Australian Opal Centre ★ 2 nights Lightning Ridge ★ Thermal baths ★ Amigo's Castle ★ SPARK cinematic experience under the stars ★ Moree Cotton Farm Tour ★ 1 night Goondiwindi ★ Albert River Wines lunch ★ 22 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$3,875***
GOLD DEPARTURE

BELLINGEN VALLEY BEAUTY **6 DAYS**

EARLY BIRD DEAL!
SAVE UP TO \$100pp*
April date; Book by 31 Oct

DEPARTS > 1 APR 2025

★ Luxury 'Gold Class' coach travel ★ Tropical Fruit World ★ New Italy for lunch ★ 3 nights Bellingen Valley ★ Mary Boulton Pioneer Cottage ★ Trial Bay Gaol tour ★ 'Pub with No Beer' ★ Butterfly House ★ Solitary Islands Aquarium ★ Dorrigo National Park rainforest ★ Skywalk at Dorrigo ★ Duttons Trout Hatchery ★ 2 nights Armidale ★ Petersons Armidale Winery ★ Bestbrook Mountain Farmstay lunch ★ 16 meals

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7 DAYS
PARKES ELVIS™ FESTIVAL



DEPARTS > 8 JAN 2025

★ Opulent 'Diamond Class' coach travel ★ Bestbrook Mountain Farmstay ★ 1 night Goondiwindi ★ Siding Spring Observatory ★ 1 night Coonabarabran ★ Wellington Caves Cathedral Cave tour ★ 3 nights Orange spending 2 days at the Parkes Elvis™ Festival ★ Tickets to the Feature Artist Show ★ Elvis Gospel Service ★ Big Golden Guitar, Tamworth ★ 1 night Armidale ★ Glen Innes Standing Stones ★ Lunch with paired wines at Stanthorpe ★ 17 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$3,210***

6 DAYS
TAMWORTH COUNTRY MUSIC FESTIVAL



DEPARTS > DIAMOND: 17 JAN 2025; GOLD: 22 JAN 2025

★ Opulent 'Diamond Class' or luxury 'Gold Class' coach travel ★ Tropical Fruit World ★ 1 night Coffs Harbour ★ 3 nights Tamworth ★ 2 ½ days Tamworth Country Music Festival including 2 surprise shows ★ Big Golden Guitar ★ National Guitar Museum ★ Country Music Hall of Fame ★ McCrossin's Mill Museum tour ★ Uralla ★ 1 night Armidale ★ Celtic Standing Stones at Glen Innes ★ Tenterfield ★ Kent's Saddlery ★ Lunch with paired wines at Stanthorpe ★ 11 meals

Per person twin share **FROM \$3,020***
GOLD DEPARTURE

6 DAYS
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The Elysian Rock Lookout, offering views of Jamison Valley. Photos Briar Jensen

Experience the best of the Blue Mountains' trails and towns along the Grand Cliff Top Walk

STORY BRIAR JENSEN

Hearing a rustle in the undergrowth, we pause to investigate.

It's a male lyrebird on a branch, barred tail feathers dangling. Undeterred by our presence it bursts into song, trilling through a repertoire of mimicry, like a DJ through a compilation of tracks.

It's another pinch-me moment on the Grand Cliff Top Walk (GCTW).

Like a forest version of Italy's Cinque Terre trail, the GCTW in New South Wales' Blue Mountains National Park is

a two-day, self-guided, village-to-village walk that's accessible by public transport.

It links the villages of Wentworth Falls, Leura and Katoomba, meaning you can enjoy a delicious restaurant meal and comfy bed at the end of each day's walk.

Launched in March 2024, following a four-year project between NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service and Blue Mountains City Council, that involved more than 4,000 helicopter lifts of sandstone blocks and equipment, it seamlessly connects refurbished historic tracks with new sections into a continuous 19km trail.

It's easy to follow, thanks to stylish yellow-tailed black cockatoo way-markers, like the Camino de Santiago's scallop shell symbol.

Designed by Gundungurra artist Kelsie King, the black cockatoo, known as wumbarrung, holds special significance for her people.

The Grade 3 track is walkable year-round, whatever the weather. Cool off in natural swimming holes in summer, witness thundering waterfalls in wet weather, and expect ethereal fog to swirl through at anytime.

The track follows the edge of the plateau, with the valley on our left, undulating over and under the clifftops, popping out periodically onto rocky outcrops to look out over waterfalls, cliffs and canyons.

DAY 1: 11KM

WENTWORTH FALLS IS the smallest of the three villages, named after William Wentworth, who with Gregory Blaxland and William Lawson, were the first Europeans to cross the Blue Mountains in 1813. Exiting the train station with a girlfriend, we grab a coffee and takeaway lunch from Fed Blue Mountains cafe.



Some of the treats on offer at Fed cafe.

The walk starts across the Great Western Highway in Wilson Park.

The first section of track follows Darwins Walk, named after naturalist Charles Darwin who explored here when visiting the mountains in 1836 during his voyage on HMS Beagle.

It leads from suburbia into the national park as it follows Jamison Creek, flanked by bottlebrush, banksia and boronia.

The creek tumbles over cascades at Weeping Rock then plummets over a precipice, becoming Wentworth Falls.

We're at the top of the escarpment, no climbing involved, and the views are epic.

Sheer-faced sandstone cliffs drop sharply into the Jamison Valley.

A carpet of dense forest below extends to the horizon, part of the one-million-hectare Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

The track follows the edge of the plateau, with the valley on our left, undulating over and under the clifftops, popping out periodically onto rocky outcrops to look out over waterfalls, cliffs and canyons.



An under-cliff section of the walk.

We walk beneath rock overhangs, climb up and down sandstone steps built 150 years ago, and traverse hanging swamps, heath, woodland and rainforest.

There are optional side tracks, like the descent at Den Fenella into a ferny fairyland, and up to the Conservation Hut cafe for coffee and cake.

Today's track ends at Gordon Falls. We've missed the bus, so walk into Leura. First stop is Blue Mountains Sauna for a reviving session of infusion saunas and ice baths, then on to our Edwardian B&B, Varena by Mountain Whispers.

After freshening up we head to dinner at Korean BBQ restaurant Jiggle.

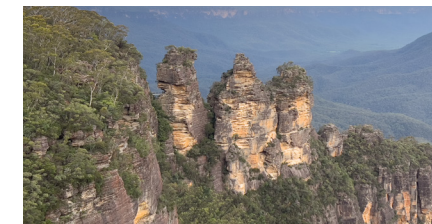
DAY 2: 8KM

WE HAVE BREAKFAST at Sparrows cafe, collect our pre-ordered lunch boxes from The Bunker, and rejoin the track.

Metal stairs lead down to Gordon Falls Lookout over the valley to Mount Solitary, the first in a series of panoramic pitstops.

Elysian Rock's twin precipitous promontories are connected by Buttenshaw Bridge, while nearby Tarpeian Rock is a geologist's dream of rippled ironstone, like accordion pleats.

My favourite is Bridal Veil View Lookout where we get a cockatoo-eye's perspective of the waterfall opposite, fanning out as it falls.



The Three Sisters.

Following our lyrebird encounter we catch sight of Katoomba's famous Three Sisters. According to Aboriginal legend, the weathered sandstone outcrops are believed to be three sisters who were turned to stone for protection during a battle.

We join tourists at Echo Point for a coffee, then carry on.

Now it's the Kedumba Valley and Narrow Neck Plateau on our left. Stepping stones keep our feet dry at Katoomba Cascades and before long we've reached Scenic World, the end of the GCTP.

We're too late for a drink at Scenic World's Terrace Bar and the bus into Katoomba, so we catch a taxi to our historic guesthouse, 14 Lovel Street.



Unique Blue Mountains accommodation, 14 Lovel Street.

Swapping hiking shoes for heels we celebrate our walk with cocktails at The Gin Parlour, dinner at the Old City Bank Bar & Brasserie, and finish with bubbles at Champagne Charlie's in the Carrington Hotel. Hiking and hospitality – it's what the Blue Mountains do best. ■



The tranquil Pool of Siloam, near Gordon Falls Reserve.

TRAIL INFORMATION

- **Location:** Blue Mountains National Park
- **Getting there:** Two-hour drive from Sydney; Trains travel between Sydney and the three mountain villages.
- **Starts:** Wentworth Falls
- **Ends:** Katoomba
- **Walk distance:** 19km
- **Before you go:** Check for alerts and closures with the NSW Parks and Wildlife Service (nationalparks.nsw.gov.au) to ensure the walk is open.

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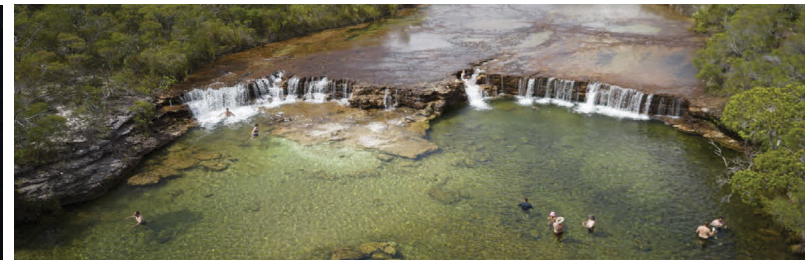


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MODENA DELIGHTS

STORY AND PHOTOS JIM MATHERS

From a sedate historic World Heritage site to museums in motoring's fast lane, this Italian city is sure to get your heart racing.

A market in Piazza Grande with the Modena Cathedral in the background. Photos Jim Mathers.

Modena, in the heart of Italy's Emilia-Romagna region, between Milan and Florence, is a beautiful city to include on your travel itinerary.

The city began as a Roman colony in 183 BC and provides an experience rich in history, culture, food and wine.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

MODENA'S CENTRE REVOLVES

around a UNESCO World Heritage site, including the stunning cathedral, Piazza Grande and Ghirlandina Tower.

The Modena Cathedral is one of the most beautiful churches I've seen. We spent ages there, soaking up this striking example of Romanesque art.

Construction began in 1099, and the cathedral is covered with ancient Roman stones.

Its main doors open onto Piazza Grande (12th century) and adjoining the cathedral is the imposing Ghirlandina Tower (the bell tower). Nearby is the



A statue of Pavarotti, one of Modena's most famous cultural exports.

beautiful Town Hall and clock tower, and it's a short walk to Ducal Palace, a fine example of baroque architecture and home to the Military Academy.

A little further west, you'll find one of Italy's oldest art collections at

Galleria Estense. Modena's cultural heritage also includes opera singers, such as the late Luciano Pavarotti, who was born there.

The city's exquisite municipal theatre is named after him. You can learn about his life at the Pavarotti Home Museum, just outside town.

AUTOMOTIVE FINESSE

IF ROARING ENGINES are music to your ears, there's much to see here.

There are two Ferrari museums, a Maserati museum, a Lamborghini museum and other car collections. Motorcycle enthusiasts can explore the Ducati museum near Bologna.

It's hard to ignore the famous Prancing Horse marque in Modena, as this is where Enzo Ferrari founded his eponymous sports car brand.

The stylish Enzo Ferrari Museum, near the railway station, is dedicated to the company's founder.



A Michael Schumacher championship car.

The displays change seasonally and the facility includes a Ferrari apparel store, cafe and Ferrari GT simulators, which you can book.

From there, catch a shuttle to the Ferrari Museum at Maranello, 30 minutes away.

The Maranello museum is tilted more towards racing, with a terrific display covering Scuderia-Ferrari's 90 years in Formula 1, including Michael Schumacher's and Kimi Raikkonen's championship-winning cars.

Also, you can wander among the fine red and yellow Ferrari supercars, including the GTO, F40, and F50.

Ninety minutes is enough for the museum but you can add a 10-minute session on an F1 simulator (other visitors will watch your perfectly executed, high-speed crashes).

The museum features a cafe and 'merch' shop, where you can buy a Ferrari T-shirt for €80 (about A\$130) or a leather jacket for much more. Near the museum, you can book Ferrari drive experiences.



A Ferrari F50 in the Maranello museum.

CULINARY FLAIR

ON THE RECOMMENDATION of an Australian friend who has lived in Modena, we tried the traditional Restaurant Danilo (ristorantedadanilomodena.it).

It was so brilliant that we returned two nights later for another meal.

Founded in 1934 (originally Trattoria Belvedere) and located in the historic centre, Danilo specialises in authentic Emilian cuisine and is passionate about food and service.

This shows in the quality of its dishes and the professionalism of its staff.

Among the delights are tortellini in broth, handmade lasagna and tagliatelle, risotto with porcini mushrooms, and beef fillet with balsamic vinegar.

Danilo offers great food at reasonable prices. Don't miss it.

The city is also home to the famed Osteria Francescana, run by Modena-born Massimo Bottura.

With three Michelin stars, this small restaurant releases available dates six months in advance and books quickly. The tasting menu costs €350 (about A\$560), with the wine pairing €240 (about A\$385).

Modena is also known for the best balsamic vinegar, made with a painstaking process, and certified for its origin and production.

We opted for the inexpensive tour and tasting at the Municipal Balsamic Vinegar Factory. We were warned that it was in Italian, but we decided to try it with the help of Google Translate.

It was an amusing 45 minutes as my wife and I got different and, at times, unusual translations on our phones while trying to follow the guide.



Coffee and biscotti in Modena.

We got the gist of it, though, and enjoyed the tasting.

Food culture is a big part of life in Modena and tortellini is another local culinary treasure. You'll find this delicate, handmade pasta in many establishments.

Other hometown heroes include Parmigiano-Reggiano (the 'king of cheeses') and Prosciutto di Modena.

The area is also known for its Lambrusco, a light, fruity style of red wine.

On your food journey here, you'll also learn about the 'protected origin' designations, which guarantee authenticity and quality.

Don't miss the historic central market, Mercato Albinelli (closed on Sunday). It dates back to 1931 and has a fun, bustling vibe.

You can pick up fresh fruit, vegetables, cheese, fish, meat or pastries, or grab a coffee or a glass of wine. A visit here is a great way to start the day.

GETTING AROUND

THERE ARE MANY galleries, museums, historic buildings, trattorias, cafes, bars and other attractions across the city, so allow time to explore.

Modena is very walkable. Download the useful 'metrominuto Modena' map, which lists walking times between key locations.

It's also an easy place to tackle by bike. You can access a free bike-share service at the Tourist Information Office.

Modena is an hour from Milan and 30 minutes from Bologna by train.

It is an easy place to get around and a delight to explore. ■

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Hinterland HOTSPOTS

Enjoying the natural beauty of Kondalilla National Park. Photo Tourism and Events Queensland (TEQ).

Savour vineyard views and waterfall wonders in the Sunshine Coast's gorgeous hinterland.

STORY DENISE CULLEN

It's after dark, and almost every seat and high stool at Maleny's new Spill Wine shop and bar is taken.

This narrow 30-seater is always packed on Wednesday Wine-Down night, a waiter explains, when owner Jamie Fleming offers an ever-changing 'one and done' option for dinner, accompanied by cheap corkage on a matching wine.

Tonight, it's duck à l'orange, paired with 2022 Applecross chardonnay from Victoria's Yarra Valley.

Fortunately, there's one spot at the high bench left for me.

With a single dish leaving no room for decision fatigue, I order the duck and drink in the atmosphere.

It's positively humming with food, conversation and laughter.

Around 300 bottles of wine line one wall, all curated by Fleming who tilts towards natural, organic and biodynamic wines from around Australia and the world.

Spill Wine is just one of several new ventures that are supercharging the Sunshine Coast hinterland's down-to-earth epicurean charms.

Located 100km north of Brisbane, this region of dramatic peaks and valleys formed by ancient volcanic activity sustained the traditional custodians, the Kabi Kabi and Jinibara Peoples, for tens of thousands of years. Its lush forests and fertile soils later attracted European settlers who carved out their livings as farmers or timber-getters and spurred the growth of small towns including Maleny, Montville and Mapleton.

Today, the hinterland is celebrated for its cultural heritage, natural beauty and artisanal food and drinks scene.

Yet the past and present remain intimately intertwined.

This is most apparent at Montville Estate, comprised of two historic buildings on a manicured 6,000sq.m block, located within easy walking distance of the village of Montville.

Both buildings have recently

opened as holiday rentals after being painstakingly restored by Nichola Spain and her partner Jordan Potts.

Eastnor House, the larger building of the two, was the original Queenslander built in 1895 by Henry and Jane Smith, who raised 12 children within its walls.

It's painted almost the same shade of pink as the flowering camellias surrounding it.

"I never wanted to modernise it in a way that took it away from its original state," Nichola said. "I just wanted to bring it back to life a little bit."

The other building is an old railway house brought from nearby Palmwoods, called The Postman's Cottage – named because the Smiths ran the area's first post office from this site from 1897-1910.

For a blissful two nights, The Postman's Cottage is the base from which I explore the region.

My first stop is the Kondalilla Falls Circuit, which features cascading 90m falls and pretty rock pools, set within the 1,591ha Kondalilla National Park.

Though this well-marked trail is barely 5km, there are more than 300 stairs along the route, so I'm huffing, puffing and hungry by the time I get back to the carpark.

Fortunately, Mapleton Public House is only a short drive away. First opened in 1910, this long-established watering hole



The village charm of Montville. Photos TEQ, Hannah Puechmarin, Visit Sunshine Coast



A spot to relax at Montville Estate.



Picking fresh produce at The Falls Farm, Mapleton.



Dining at Mapleton Public House.

used to be called the Mapleton Tavern.

Painted a slightly deeper shade of dusty pink than Eastnor House, the Mapleton Public House has had its own makeover at the hands of Ben Johnston and Jess Huddart.

The couple also owns The Falls Farm nearby, which cultivates and sells fruit and vegetables you won't usually find at the supermarket – deep purple carrots, baby watermelon radishes, tangy nagami cumquats, and bronze fennel fronds.

On a rare tour of the 16ha regenerative farm, Jess said the first few years tested them.

"When we first arrived here, it was 80% covered in lantana," she said.

"We've done a lot of work to get it to what it is today."

The Falls Farm also supplies much of the produce for the Mapleton Public House's kitchen, which is helmed by ex-Spicers chef Cameron Matthews.

As I savour distant ocean views, Cameron sends out a series of dishes which cast vegetables in a starring role – from roasted red cabbage to stumpy Kuroda carrots with njuda, smoked coconut and dried mushroom garum.

Afterwards, I head to the cellar door of Montville's Flame Hill Vineyard, where I sip on tasting glasses of fiano, verdelho and chardonnay. There are many other

places to enjoy a tippie in these green hills, from the Brouhaha Brewery to Clouds Vineyard at the Barrel, both in Maleny.

You can explore the hinterland's wineries, breweries and distilleries, by climbing aboard a Creative Tours mini-bus. Joining a scheduled group tour gives access to private tastings and behind-the-scenes tours which aren't accessible to the general public.

Another way to further your foodie passion is by signing up to a half-day group cooking class at Spicers Tamarind Retreat.

Under the tutelage of chef Paul Blain, I pound chillis, chop lemongrass and slice makrut leaves, as part of the preparations for making a Thai green curry.

In one of the old-meets-new twists that characterise this region, it turns out that Blain, before selling to Spicers Retreats, had purchased this property back in 1998, building five rooms in the style of Asian longhouses and planting more than 8,500 endemic rainforest trees.

After a marathon cooking session, we dine on the fruits of our labours, sip supplied glasses of wine, and package the leftovers into sustainable takeaway containers. The only thing left to do from there is to start planning the next meal. ■

The writer was a guest of Montville Estate, Visit Sunshine Coast and Spicers Tamarind Retreat.

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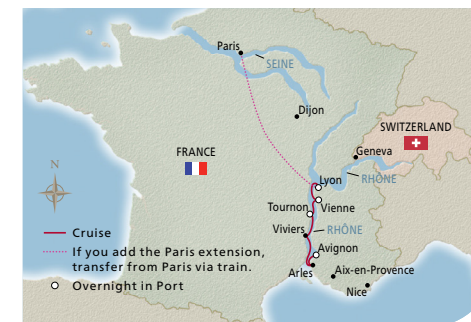
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TESTING TIMES



Testing Automated Emergency Braking (AEB) at the Australian Automotive Research Centre.

RACQ visited Australia's largest privately owned and independently operated automotive test facility to gather insights into domestic testing of vehicle fuel consumption, emissions and Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS).

STORY GED BULMER

Tucked away in dense bushland 45km inland from Victoria's iconic Bells Beach, the Australian Automotive Research Centre (AARC) is possibly one of the country's best-kept secrets.

Accessed via a series of inconspicuous gravel roads and with little signage, the AARC offers a deliberately nondescript frontage to sparse passing traffic on dusty Gum Flats Road.

We've driven the 90 minutes from Melbourne to an industry open day at the AARC hosted by ABMARC, one of Australia's leading transport engineering consultancies and a regular client of the facility.

ABMARC, which stands for Automotive Benchmark Reporting and Consulting, is the organisation commissioned by the Australian Automobile Association (AAA) to conduct the nation's first independent Real-World Testing Program.

The four-year \$14 million program, funded by the Australian Government, is designed to provide consumers with more information on new vehicle fuel consumption and emissions.

We're meeting some of the specialist engineers who conduct the testing to better understand the protocols and processes involved.

We were also promised a look at other test programs at the busy facility, including ANCAP safety tests and a new driver distraction study.

Over coffee, we were introduced to ABMARC Managing Director Natalie Roberts, who explained that the open-road test component of the Real-World Testing Program occurred around Geelong, some 50km away.

However, the AARC plays a crucial role in ABMARC's other work, including testing Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS).

A qualified aerospace engineer, Ms Roberts previously worked for Holden in powertrain calibration and Toyota where she led strategic planning and research for the Australian and Middle Eastern vehicle markets, before establishing ABMARC in 2010.

"ABMARC now has more than a decade of experience in vehicle testing, engineering, research and a range of other services across the automotive sector," Ms Roberts said.

"Our emphasis is on providing the



A RAV4 with emissions testing equipment.

best evidence-based and client-focused solutions, catering to light and heavy vehicle applications."

We're soon ushered into an adjacent warehouse where ABMARC Director of Engineering Andrea Winkelmann provides a detailed overview of the Real-World Testing program, including a display of a Toyota RAV4 equipped with the elaborate PEMS (Portable Emissions Measuring System), essential to capturing emissions and analysing the energy consumption of test cars.

Also on hand was AAA's Real-World Testing Program Director Jason Smith, who told us the initiative had so far released results for 58 light vehicles. Twenty of these had on-road fuel consumption results that were between 6% and 31% higher than their mandated laboratory tests.

He said this was valuable information for people purchasing a new vehicle.

Elsewhere, Jon-Paul Cavallaro, a senior researcher at the University of Newcastle, discussed his research into how the rapidly evolving Human Machine Interfaces (HMIs) in modern vehicles may be contributing to driver distraction.

Many modern vehicles have several methods, such as touchscreens, steering wheel controls, or voice control for drivers to operate entertainment, navigation, telecommunications, cabin temperature and other non-driving functions.

These touchscreens and other technologies often demand more precise attention than conventional physical controls such as buttons, with some experts warning this may pose similar distraction risks to using a mobile phone while driving.

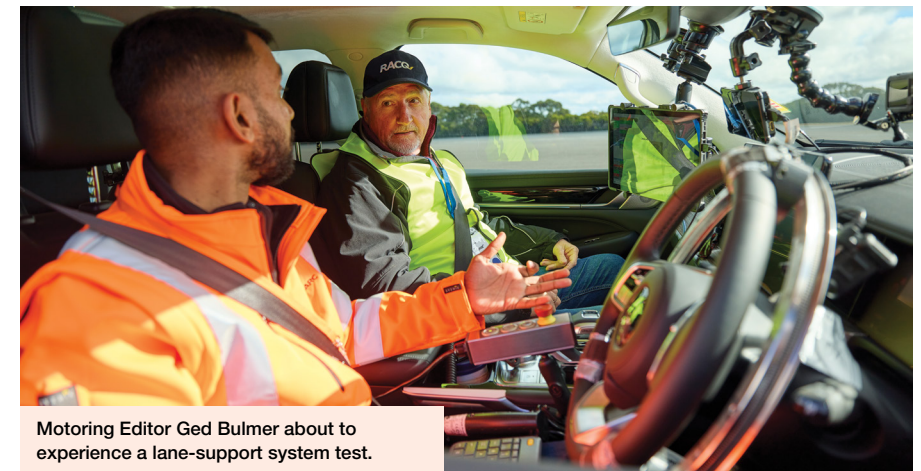
Mr Cavallaro's research is part of the AAA's Road Safety Research Program.

It aims to develop a scientifically validated mechanism for evaluating and comparing the extent to which vehicle HMIs affect distractibility.

A bus tour of the expansive AARC facility followed, with Operations Manager Scott Martella explaining that the 1000ha site was first established in the 1960s by International Harvester to test and develop its trucks, tractors and agricultural equipment.

It's been owned by Australian transport, logistics and supply-chain heavyweight Linfox since 1991 and has been extensively upgraded to accommodate testing of passenger cars, four-wheel drives, heavy trucks and mining equipment.

The facility has a complex network of roads and tracks for vehicle testing, but we're headed for a skidpan inside one of the durability circuits. Our final exercise for the day involved sitting in a vehicle to experience two different ADAS tests.



Motoring Editor Ged Bulmer about to experience a lane-support system test.

The first involved an Automated Emergency Braking (AEB) test designed to demonstrate the vehicle's response to a target vehicle and a pedestrian without driver intervention.

Despite being conducted at a relatively modest 40km/h and 20km/h respectively, the experience of sitting in a vehicle being driven directly at an object and knowing the driver won't brake proves suitably attention-grabbing.

The second ADAS test involved demonstrating a lane-support system test to show how a vehicle responds when it begins to move out of its lane.

The test vehicle had a human driver but was also fitted with a complex robotic driving device which, upon command, took control of the car and automatically steered towards the road edge.

GPS equipment on the car roof and a bank of onboard computers in the

back seat record how the lane support technologies respond to the sudden steering input.

Thankfully, in this instance, the car detected the rogue steering input and correctly returned to its lane without taking us on an off-road adventure.

A new ANCAP pilot research program is investigating the real-world driver experience and usability of such systems.

While it may be tempting to believe that significant Australian automotive product development ended when our last domestic car maker closed its doors in 2017, our visit to the AARC showed how organisations such as ABMARC, ANCAP, the AAA and others continue to conduct extensive local testing resulting in positive contributions to the safety and environmental credentials of new vehicles sold here. ■



Motoring clubs that support the Real-World Testing Program.

6

OF THE BEST AFFORDABLE HYBRID VEHICLES



MG
MG3 HYBRID+ EXCITE



TOYOTA
YARIS CROSS SX HYBRID



HAVAL
JOLION HYBRID ULTRA

MG MOTOR'S RECENTLY released a third-generation MG3 hatch introduces a hybrid variant for the first time, along with a raft of styling, technical and features enhancements. Pricing for Australia's best-selling small car starts at \$23,990, rising to \$29,990 for the top-of-the-line hybrid model. Boasting a new platform, new interior and exterior design, plus improvements to performance and fuel economy, the MG3 is available in four model grades, comprising two petrol and two petrol-hybrids. Pricing for the hybrids starts at \$27,990 (MRLP) for the Hybrid+ Excite, and tops out with the Hybrid+ Essence costing \$29,990 (MRLP). Power comes from a 1.5-litre four-cylinder Atkinson-cycle petrol-hybrid delivering combined-cycle fuel consumption of 4.3L/100km. The engine requires 95RON to produce its 75kW/128Nm, and with a 100kW electric motor and 1.83kWh battery delivers combined outputs of 155kW and 0-100km/h acceleration in 8.0 seconds. Standard features of the Hybrid+ Excite include halogen headlights, 16-inch alloy wheels, Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, and 10.25-inch infotainment display. ■

PRICE: \$27,990 (MRLP)
ENGINE: 1.5-litre four-cylinder petrol engine (75kW/128Nm), electric motor (100kW/250Nm), 1.83kWh battery (combined 155kW)
TRANSMISSION: Three-speed hybrid automatic
FUEL CONSUMPTION: 4.3L/100km (100gCO2/km)
ANCAP SAFETY RATING: Not rated
WARRANTY: Seven years/unlimited km

THERE AREN'T MANY categories where Toyota competes that its lead contender doesn't hold a step on the sales podium, but in the light car class the diminutive Yaris is outsold by MG's MG3, Suzuki's Swift and the Mazda2. Sales aren't necessarily a barometer of quality, however, and the Yaris is a top-notch small car wearing a slightly higher price tag in a fiercely price-sensitive segment. Part of the reason for this is the Yaris is among a growing number of Toyota passenger models available exclusively as a hybrid. In this case that means a 67kW/120Nm 1.5-litre three-cylinder petrol engine combined with a 59kW/141Nm front motor generator and 4.3Ahr lithium-ion battery to produce a maximum combined power output of 85kW. In concert with the four-door hatch's 1,085kg kerb weight and CVT automatic the Yaris sips a miserly 3.3L/100km. Recommended retail pricing starts at \$28,500 for the Ascent Sport, rising to \$34,530 for the ZR Hybrid, with the mid-spec \$31,960 Yaris SX hitting the sweet spot in terms of price and features. Standard kit includes 15-inch alloy wheels, smart key entry and start, and an 8.0-inch touchscreen display. ■

PRICE: \$31,960 (MRLP)
ENGINE: 1.5-litre three-cylinder petrol engine (67kW/120Nm), front motor generator (59kW/141Nm), 4.3Ahr lithium-ion battery (combined 85kW)
TRANSMISSION: CVT Automatic
FUEL CONSUMPTION: 3.3L/100km (76gCO2/km)
ANCAP SAFETY RATING: Five stars (2020)
WARRANTY: Five years/unlimited km

HAVAL IS THE SUV-focused offshoot of GWM (formerly Great Wall Motors), with the Jolion competing in the Small SUV class against the likes of the MG ZS and Hyundai Kona. The Chinese-made SUV enjoys a handy price advantage over its Japanese and Korean rivals, with prices starting at \$26,990 drive-away for the base petrol model, rising through five variants to top out at the Jolion Hybrid Ultra at \$38,990 drive-away. At this price buyers can afford to spoil themselves with the Ultra, but there are less-expensive hybrid variants including the Premium (\$32,990) and Lux (\$35,990). Recent design changes have clearly differentiated petrol from hybrid variants, with the latter boasting sleek new bodywork that adds to its appeal. The 1.5-litre hybrid sends its 139kW/375Nm to the front wheels, delivering fuel consumption of 5.1L/100km which is better than the petrol engine, but no match for rivals like the Kona. Likewise, the Jolion's dynamics and its driver assistance systems lack polish compared to established rivals, but it compensates with its keen pricing generous standard equipment and long warranty. ■

PRICE: \$38,990 (drive-away)
ENGINE: 1.5-litre hybrid four-cylinder petrol engine (70kW/125Nm), electric motor (115kW/250Nm) (combined 140kW/375Nm)
TRANSMISSION: CVT Automatic
FUEL CONSUMPTION: 5.1L/100km (118gCO2/km)
ANCAP SAFETY RATING: Five stars (2022)
WARRANTY: Seven years/unlimited km vehicle; eight years/unlimited km battery

With petrol prices taking bigger bites of our household budgets, here are Motoring Editor Ged Bulmer's picks for the best affordable fuel-saving hybrid electric vehicles.



TOYOTA
YARIS CROSS GXL HYBRID AWD



TOYOTA
COROLLA SX HYBRID HATCH



HYUNDAI
KONA HYBRID

LAUNCHED IN 2021, the Yaris Cross was Toyota's first foray into the light SUV segment and the first in its class to offer a hybrid powertrain. What started out as a petrol and petrol-hybrid range was earlier this year trimmed to hybrid-only, divided into 2WD and AWD in GX, GXL, and Urban grades, plus the 2WD Yaris GR Sport. Prices start at \$30,900 (MRLP) for the GX FWD and rise to \$39,880 for the Urban AWD. Underpinning the Yaris Cross is the Yaris hatch platform, albeit with a widened track, stretched wheelbase and 20mm higher ride height. The AWD models boast switchable drive modes including Normal, Snow and Trail, plus a hill descent control system. They also get a more sophisticated two-link double-wishbone rear suspension versus the torsion-beam of the 2WD models. The drivetrain features a 1.5-litre three-cylinder petrol engine, a pair of electric motor generators, plus an electric motor at the rear axle. Peak combined outputs of 85kW/120Nm are identical between 2WD and AWD models, but AWD fuel consumption is 4.0L/100km versus 3.8L/100km for the 2WD. ■

PRICE: \$36,950
ENGINE: 1.5-litre Atkinson cycle three-cylinder petrol engine, (67kW/120Nm), front motor generator (59kW/141Nm), rear (59kW/141Nm), 4.3Ahr lithium-ion battery (combined 85kW)
TRANSMISSION: CVT Automatic
FUEL CONSUMPTION: 4.0L/100km (90g/km CO2)
ANCAP SAFETY RATING: Five stars (2021)
WARRANTY: Five years/unlimited km

IT SHOULD COME as no surprise that Toyota dominates this list of affordable hybrids, given the Japanese car maker started down the hybrid path more than two decades ago. Like other Toyota passenger models, the Corolla has moved to a hybrid-only strategy for both hatch and sedan. A November 2022 update introduced Toyota's fifth-generation hybrid technology, which mates a 1.8-litre four-cylinder petrol with a newly developed high-output motor generator, power control unit and downsized hybrid transaxle. The changes boosted power over the previous setup by 13kW to a handy 103kW with other updates including standard blind-spot monitoring, updated active cruise control, a new multimedia system with 8.0-inch touchscreen, and the introduction of Toyota Connected Services. Available in Ascent Sport, SX and ZR model grades in both body styles and with prices ranging between \$32,110 and \$40,260, we're partial to the SX hybrid hatch for its combination of looks, value and features. The latter includes 16-inch alloy wheels, keyless entry and start, rain-sensing wipers, and parking sensors front and rear. ■

PRICE: \$35,260 (MRLP)
ENGINE: 1.8-litre four-cylinder petrol engine (72kW/142Nm), front motor generator (70kW/185Nm), 4.3Ahr lithium-ion battery (combined 103kW)
TRANSMISSION: CVT Automatic
FUEL CONSUMPTION: 5.1L/100km (118gCO2/km)
ANCAP SAFETY RATING: Five stars (2018)
WARRANTY: Five years/unlimited km

HYUNDAI'S KONA HAS been a popular small SUV staple since the first-generation model launched here in 2019, with the second-generation launched in 2023 featuring turbocharged and atmospheric petrol four-cylinder engines, as well as hybrid-electric (HEV) and battery-electric (BEV) models. The hybrid utilises a 1.6-litre petrol four-cylinder delivering 77kW/144Nm, plus an additional 32kW/170Nm from the electric drive motor, for combined system outputs of 104kW/265Nm. Drive goes to the front hoops via a six-speed dual clutch with e-motor, a combination that ensures more engaging driving dynamics than the usual CVT. It comes in two grades including the entry-level Kona Hybrid (\$36,000), and top-grade Kona Premium Hybrid (\$43,500), representing a premium of \$4,000 over a comparable 2.0-litre petrol. The payoff is a thrifter 3.9L/100km combined cycle fuel consumption and identical peak torque to the turbo model. The Kona Hybrid delivers quality driving dynamics thanks to multilink rear suspension and Hyundai's electric dynamic torque vectoring control system (e-DTVC). ■

PRICE: \$36,000 (MRLP)
ENGINE: 1.6-litre four-cylinder petrol engine (77kW/144Nm), electric motor (32kW/170Nm), 1.32kWh battery, (combined 104kW/265Nm)
TRANSMISSION: Six-speed dual clutch
FUEL CONSUMPTION: 3.9L/100km (89g/km CO2)
ANCAP SAFETY RATING: Four stars (2023)
WARRANTY: Five years/unlimited km

JAPAN'S VEHICLE INDUSTRY EMERGES

Rear View looks back at the history of motoring through the pages of RACQ publications.

The January 1950 edition of *The Road Ahead* featured a story on the state of Japan's automobile industry and its recovery from the impacts of World War 2.

"Information about motoring in Japan is usually slight and ill-informed, but the picture is now clearer than it has been for some time," the story began.

At the time, the fledgling GM-backed Holden was the only car maker building a truly Australian car, with Ford producing the partly imported Zephyr at its plant in Geelong and the Falcon still a decade away. Several other companies including Chrysler and the Nuffield Group, which manufactured the British marques MG, Morris, Riley and Wolseley, were also preparing to establish factories here.

Despite the outstanding success of the new 48-215 Holden, also known as the FX, which claimed around 18% of sales, the majority of the 205,269 vehicles sold in Australia that year were still imported from Britain and Europe, with

North American cars mainly imported from Canada garnering around 8% of the market. However, Japanese car makers, including Toyota, were earmarking Australia as a potential market with *The Road Ahead* story identifying Toyota, Nissan and Ohta as the three leading Japanese vehicle manufacturers.

The trend in design among these Japanese manufacturers was toward small, highly economical cars. This was "evidently affected by economic conditions", with post-war petrol restrictions in place.

We are familiar with the global success stories of Toyota and Nissan, but what about Ohta?

Established in 1922, Ohta was one of the largest Japanese automotive manufacturing companies by the 1930s.

It produced cars from 1934 until 1957 when it was acquired by rival car maker Tokyu Kurogane Kogyo, which in turn was taken over by Nissan in 1963.

BOOM TIMES AHEAD

Motels, positioned on or near major highways, have been common around Australia for decades, offering a convenient short-term stay for travellers. However, in the 1950s motels were only just starting to pop up in the United States and yet to make an appearance here.

The January 1950 edition of *The Road Ahead* featured a story on this emerging accommodation option with the heading, "The Motel – America's answer to the tourist accommodation problem".

The story explained that motels, short for 'motor hotels', were becoming big business in the US.

The same edition of *The Road Ahead* revealed that a motel was being established on the outskirts of Sydney and accurately predicted this would be the first of a "chain of these tourist hotels which will ultimately stretch from Sydney to Cairns".



Toyopet is a small four-wheeler, with backbone chassis and independent front suspension.

Information about motoring in Japan is usually slight and ill-informed, but the picture is now clearer than it has been for some time. Some years ago there was a 'Tokio Motorists' club with members owning such as Bentley, Delahaye, Duesenberg, Isotta-Fraschini, Jaguar, MG, Morris, Riley and Wolseley, were also preparing to establish factories here.

SLOW RECOVERY

Japanese opinion suggests that the recovery and progress of car manufacture has been exceedingly slow. The few new models now appearing embody many of the typically modern features, such as independent front suspension and steering

JAPAN PRODUCES NEW SMALL CAR



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REVIEW GED BULMER

➦ SUZUKI SWIFT HYBRID PLUS MY24

NOW INTO ITS 41st year, the diminutive Suzuki Swift has long been one of Australia's most popular light cars, boasting an appealing combination of compact dimensions, affordable purchase price and low running costs.

Fuel efficiency has long been a central pillar of the Swift's appeal and further efficiency gains are a key aspect of this fourth-generation model, which introduces mild-hybrid technology to the singular powertrain.

The new three-cylinder Z12E engine is the same capacity as the outgoing engine but features fuel-saving Idle Stop and Go technology, courtesy of a mild-hybrid system with integrated starter generator (ISG). The ISG drives a belt that restarts the engine after engine stop, with the electric motor kicking in to lessen the demand on the fuel supply when the Swift is moving away from standstill or under hard acceleration.

The result is combined cycle fuel consumption for the manual of 3.8L/100, while the CVT auto sips a slightly higher 4.0L/100km. These efficiency improvements will be important to budget-conscious owners, not least because the new engine requires more expensive 95RON fuel.

Stylistically, the new Swift styling is a subtle evolution of the previous model. It sits on the same wheelbase as its predecessor and is identical in width and height, but the body is 15mm longer due to design tweaks that push back the rear hatch. That change has resulted in slightly more luggage space and a lower luggage load height.

The Swift is not a car designed to wow with its zippy performance or characterful engine note, but one that goes about its business in a polished, competent and fuss-free manner.

The little hatch easily kept pace with urban traffic during our test drive which included some 80 and 100km/h freeway driving.

The steering is pleasantly weighted and the chassis feels competent and secure, although the brake pedal feel is a touch spongy – a common trait of vehicles with regenerative braking.

The interior is attractively designed and logically laid out, with plastics that look durable and hard-wearing.

Ahead of the driver is a large and easily read digital speedo with an LCD centre screen, plus a new 9.0-inch infotainment display at dash centre featuring Apple CarPlay and Android Auto connectivity.

The driving position offers enough adjustment for most physiques and good all-round visibility.

The rear seat is also surprisingly roomy, with a 183cm driver able to sit behind their driving position, with adequate head, leg and knee room.

On the safety front, the Swift was recently awarded a three-star Euro NCAP safety rating but has no ANCAP rating yet. Nevertheless, the car features an impressive array of the latest ADAS (Advanced Driver Assistance Systems), including Traffic Sign Recognition and Speed Warning, Adaptive Cruise Control, Lane Keep Assist, Lane Departure Prevention, Blind-Spot Monitor, Rear Cross-Traffic Alert and High Beam Assist.

Finding a quality Japanese-built car with a price tag below \$30,000 is becoming increasingly difficult and the Swift is a trusted nameplate. This updated model continues the legacy of affordable and efficient small car motoring, with the added advantage of reduced fuel consumption and additional safety and convenience features. ■

▶ KEY STATS



PRICE:
\$26,990 (MRLP)

POWERTRAIN:
1.2-litre inline three-cylinder petrol, mild hybrid (61kW/112Nm), CVT transmission.

ANCAP CRASH RATING:
Not rated

WARRANTY:
Five years unlimited km (includes lithium-ion battery).

FUEL CONSUMPTION (COMBINED CYCLE):
4.0L/100km CVT auto (90g/km CO2)

FOR:
Affordably priced, quality build and finishes, proven reliability, low running costs.

AGAINST:
Modest performance, small boot, no full spare wheel (tyre repair kit).

REVIEW GED BULMER

➦ GWM TANK 500 ULTRA HYBRID

VEHICLES WEARING GWM and Haval badges are becoming increasingly familiar sights on our roads as the Chinese car maker expands its local presence and offerings.

Best known today for its Cannon and Cannon Alpha dual-cab 4x4 utes, GWM also sells the Tank 300 mid-sized 4x4 wagon and has just released the all-new Tank 500 large 4x4 wagon.

A generously equipped seven-seater based on the same ladder-frame chassis as the Cannon Alpha ute, the Tank 500 is offered in two grades comprising the Lux Hybrid (\$66,490 driveaway) and Ultra Hybrid (\$73,990 driveaway).

Stylistically, the Tank channels elements of both the Y62 Nissan Patrol and the Toyota LandCruiser 300 Series, with its bold chrome grille flanked by dusk-sensing LED headlamps.

Its key dimensions, including wheelbase, mirror those of the 300 Series, ensuring a generously proportioned seven-seat interior including an electrically operated third row.

Boot space is 1,459 litres with both rows folded, 795 litres with the second row in the upright position and 98 litres with the third row in use.

The cabin is accessed via power-operated side steps and features a luxurious fitout including lashings of faux chrome and timber, plus prestige Nappa leather-accented seats. A 14.6-inch LED colour touchscreen incorporates embedded satellite navigation, AM/FM radio, DAB+, Bluetooth connectivity, wired and wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, plus a 360-degree monitor.

Rear-seat passengers are treated to plenty of head and leg room with rear window blinds,

privacy glass and ventilated outer seats. Third-row passengers aren't so generously accommodated but it isn't notably better or worse than key rivals.

The powertrain consists of a 2.0-litre turbocharged petrol four-cylinder mated to an electric motor and 1.76kWh lithium-ion battery, combining to deliver an impressive 255kW/648Nm.

All that grunt ensures the Tank 500 shifts its 2,605kg kerb mass in a spirited manner with GWM claiming 8.3 seconds for the benchmark 0-100km/h dash. Despite this, the Tank 500 never 'feels' as muscular or responsive as a 300 Series or a Patrol V8. This is due no doubt to its hefty kerb weight and the fact you need to press the accelerator hard to engage the hybrid system's full power and torque.

Drive is channelled through a nine-speed automatic and a Borg-Warner transfer case providing a 2.64:1 low-range ratio.

A live rear axle ensures good off-road articulation, along with a handy 224mm of ground clearance, 800mm wading depth and nine selectable off-road drive modes.

A 2024 five-star ANCAP safety rating puts the Tank 500 on the top step of the safety podium with its standard safety kit including seven airbags and the latest autonomous driver-assist systems.

A modest 3,000kg maximum braked towing capacity will deter some buyers, but others will look past this to the low purchase price, generous equipment list and impressive aftersales package.

The latter includes a seven-year unlimited-kilometre warranty, seven years of roadside assistance and seven years of capped-priced servicing. ■

▶ KEY STATS



PRICE:
\$73,990 (drive-away)

POWERTRAIN:
2.0-litre four-cylinder turbo petrol (180kW/380Nm), electric motor (78kW/268Nm), 1.76kWh lithium-ion battery, (Combined 255kW/648Nm), nine-speed automatic transmission.

ANCAP CRASH RATING:
★★★★★ (2024)

WARRANTY:
Seven years unlimited km (vehicle), eight years unlimited km (lithium-ion battery)

FUEL CONSUMPTION (COMBINED CYCLE):
8.5L/100km (197gCO2/km)

FOR:
Well-priced, generously equipped, roomy interior, strong off-road capability, appears well-built and nicely finished, excellent warranty.

AGAINST:
Low (3,000kg) braked towing capacity, suspension feels stiff-legged over potholes and bumps.



QUEENSLAND'S LARGEST CLUB

SPRING 2024 THE ROAD AHEAD 59

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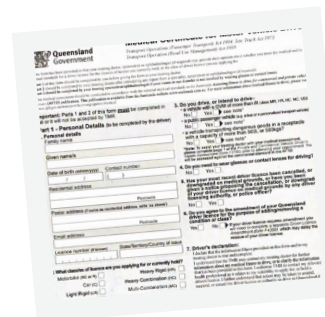
ALL DRIVERS IN Queensland (whether licensed in Queensland or elsewhere) must notify the Department of Transport and Main Roads about any medical condition that is likely to adversely affect their ability to drive safely.

This can be done online on the tmr.qld.gov.au website, by mail or at a customer service centre. Aggravation of existing medical conditions that are likely to affect a driver's ability to drive safely must also be reported.

TMR can legally require you to give medical evidence relating to whether you meet the medical criteria for the class of driver licence you hold.

Failing to report medical conditions can result in a maximum court-imposed fine of more than \$9,600 and your driver licence may be cancelled.

Health professionals are legally allowed to notify the Department of Transport and Main Roads about your medical conditions.



WHEN YOU SHOULD GET ASSESSED

IF YOU ARE uncertain about your medical condition/s, and the impact on your ability to drive safely, we recommend that you consult your relevant health professional so that your medical fitness to drive can be assessed.

When you attend your appointment, take with you a Medical Certificate for Motor Vehicle Driver form (F3712).

This form includes more information to help you prepare for your assessment. You can get a hard copy of this form at a transport and motoring customer service centre.

Everyone 75 years of age and above who holds a Queensland driver licence must carry a current Medical Certificate for Motor Vehicle Driver form at all times when driving and comply with any stated conditions.

You can be fined if you don't. ■

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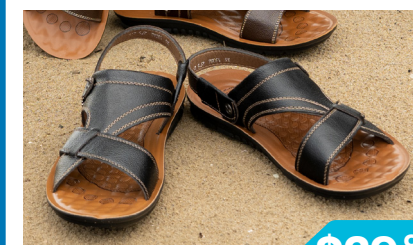
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