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Cutting waste from cars gathering pace

Electric-vehicle batteries next goal after nationwide scheme to manage millions of end-of-life tyres finally reaches fruition

A stewardship scheme for EV batteries is being planned

A product stewardship scheme to recycle and reuse batteries from electric vehicles (EVs) could be up and running in about 18 months if the government keeps them among its priorities for reducing waste.

Creating a circular economy for large batteries is the next focus for the automotive industry after the official launch this month of Tyrewise, which aims to tackle the 6.5 million tyres that reach their end of life in New Zealand every year.

Regulations for the government-accredited scheme came into force on March 1 and the programme to recycle them rather than seeing them being dumped or stockpiled will become fully operational on September 1.

The 3R Group has been implementation project manager for Tyrewise, which has taken more than a decade to come to fruition and, along with Auto Stewardship New Zealand (ASNZ), it now wants to create a similar scheme for EV batteries.

Adele Rose, 3R's chief executive, updated members of the industry on its plans during a webinar hosted by the Imported Motor Vehicle Industry Association (VIA) last month.

She says creating a large battery stewardship scheme aims to maintain the value of EV batteries for as long as possible. This would include maximising second-life uses and the value extracted from them at end of life.

The system will be designed so consumers are not left with the cost of disposing of a battery when it's no longer useful, with up to 84,000 large batteries in New Zealand expected to have reached their end of use by 2030.

The figure was only about 1,000 in 2020 and the forecasted increase is mainly attributed to the uptake of EVs.

Rose notes the data on battery numbers is hard to evidence without direct declarations or

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GUEST EDITORIAL

Reviewing future of clean car standard

Aimee Wiley says targets set for 2025-27 are largely considered 'too steep, too soon'

AIMEE WILEY
Chief executive officer
Motor Industry Association

The MIA welcomes the Minister of Transport Simeon Brown's directive to pull forward the review of clean car standard (CCS) targets ahead of the June mandated deadline.

Completing this review and understanding cabinet decisions earlier in the year creates win-win outcomes all around.

Both government and officials will no doubt welcome any legislative changes that don't need to be rushed through under urgency, while industry – with the benefit of at least six months' notice – will be better positioned to adapt and refine its product orders before it's too late and they are locked in for 2025.

A comprehensive review of the CCS targets is both critical and timely. Critical because the targets set for 2025-27 have largely been considered unachievable by becoming "too steep, too soon" and are the most extreme of anywhere in the world.

They seek to achieve in four years what others have had 20-plus years to work towards, even though those other jurisdictions are failing to meet said targets.

New Zealand's 2027 targets for both vehicle classes exceed the 2030 EU targets, hitherto the toughest in the world.

If a jurisdiction that manufactures cars has a higher target, then how is our country – as a technology taker and destination market – expected to achieve lower targets?

The review is timely, directly following completion of the first year for CCS importer carbon dioxide (CO_2) target achievement, so the results can now be analysed and compared.

The 2023 industry result for new passenger vehicles was lower than both the 2023 and 2024 targets with the full effect of the clean car discount incentivising demand for low or zero-emissions vehicles.

What 2024 will bring, without such incentives, remains to be seen but undoubtedly the absence of attractive rebates will have considerable impact.

The 2023 industry result for light commercial vehicles exceeded its target. Considering that light commercials remain popular in New Zealand, no longer attract fees, are still some years away from electrification and with no imminent volume low-emissions models currently expected, it is highly unlikely they'll meet the CCS' 2024 target.

So, what would the MIA like to see with the upcoming review? It goes without saying that we'd like the targets for 2025-27 to be adjusted. Targets should be a stretch to achieve, but not so difficult they set up industry to fail.

Instead, targets need to consider and balance the urgent need to decarbonise as quickly as technologically possible for the unique mix of vehicles that our market needs and demands.

While New Zealand's new-vehicle product mix has changed

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tracking batteries via digital passports, although the latter is in the process of being developed by the Global Battery Alliance (GBA).

However, she adds keeping tabs on power packs is easier when they are fitted in vehicles.

Regardless of the number, there will be problems if they end up in a landfill or are dumped and it will also be a wasted opportunity because the batteries still have value after being used in EVs.

"We have more processing available in New Zealand right now than we have batteries available and that removes a big issue we thought we had going into the initial design," Rose explains.

"We hope to have a flow of batteries into the second-life market, but at the moment we're focusing on obligations of digital passports for batteries and making sure New Zealand can meet its international obligations."

There are concurrent external influences on the New Zealand market such as EU regulations on


Technicians dismantle a battery pack at VW Group's first pilot plant for EV battery recycling in Salzgitter, Germany

battery passports, China producing 77 per cent of the world's EV batteries and high demand from original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) for recovered materials.

Then there's the unknown impact on material demand as technological advances in EV batteries occur.

Some of the key points being considered for setting up a battery stewardship scheme include that it fits in with domestic collection and processing services for repair and reuse, repurpose and recycling of large batteries.

Other points being explored are that the battery fee is fixed and funds the scheme's framework, and that any programme will facilitate arrangements between OEMs and service providers should no arrangement exist.

Rose told the webinar the next steps in developing the system will include VIA and other industry organisations remaining at the table.

Application for accreditation as a regulated product stewardship scheme was submitted to the government in late 2023 and the likely start of an internal review is due to happen this month.

An external auditor will be appointed to review the application, business plan and financial model. An outcome from that is expected six months from commencement.

Next would be the government drafting regulations to support the scheme and then the implementation phase would begin to take the scheme through to operational launch.

Rose says the potential start of any large battery stewardship scheme could be 18 months away, "subject to the Minister for the Environment continuing with this product being a priority product".

In the meantime, the 3R Group is maintaining its communications with industry and remaining in contact with the GBA digital-passport team.

"We're also ensuring we remain on top of emerging technology for recycling and repurposing large batteries in New Zealand."

TYRE REGULATIONS

More than 50 people attended last month's VIA-hosted webinar when Rose provided the latest details on Tyrewise, and what dealers and vehicle importers need to know about it.

Tyres, whether loose or on vehicles, must now be sold in accordance with the accredited scheme and a stewardship fee is collected on all regulated tyres when they enter the New Zealand market. Regulated products are all pneumatic and solid tyres for use on motorised vehicles including cars, trucks, buses, motorcycles, aircraft and off-road vehicles, and can be loose or attached to a vehicle.

Fees on loose tyres and vehicles not for use on roads are collected from the importer by the Ministry for the Environment, while charges ▶

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in the past couple of years, a consistent theme of MIA submissions on government policy is not to get ahead of our supply markets.

In our submission on the Clean Vehicles Bill, we recommended adopting CO2 targets that lagged those in Europe by two years.

We also recommended that class MC vehicles – 4x4 SUVs – should be included in the type-B category on the basis they share the same platforms.

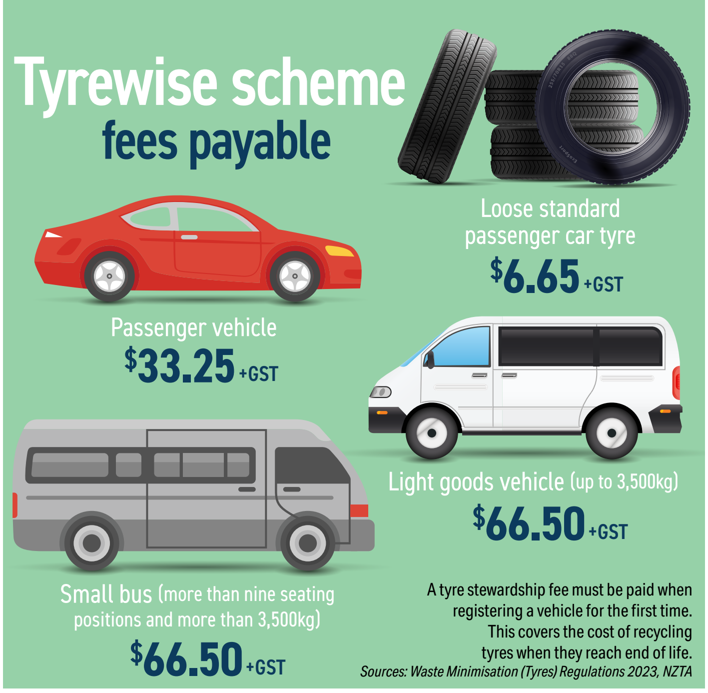
Now that New Zealand has only supply-side policy to rely on for CCS target achievement, perhaps it's time to review a bit more of the clean car standard than just its targets.

It will no doubt be more difficult for importers to achieve their targets now demand-side policy incentives have been removed.

Other small changes to the CCS could possibly lead to better outcomes. The MIA favours the inclusion of super-credits and off-cycle credits because they are included in other country's fuel-economy standards.

We suggested a vehicle with less than 20gCO2/km could earn two credits per unit, for example. Similarly, off-cycle credits could be earnt for vehicles with modest changes to technology during their model cycle which reduce emissions.

Lastly, Australia is currently planning its own fuel-economy standard. We should be looking towards its chosen approach to targets and conditions to help further refine ours.



for vehicles registered for on-road use are collected by the NZTA as part of the on-road costs at the first point of registration.

Rose says that with the charge included as part of on-road costs, importers must transparently declare it to customers on any invoice or sale agreement.

"When the stewardship fee is paid by the consumer, responsibility still very much sits with the industry that imports tyres and vehicles with tyres on them," she adds.

"The fee must be transparent and not just wrapped up as part of a homogenous fee and dealers will already be used to doing this with the refrigerant gases levy."

Tyre stewardship fees are $6.65 plus GST per equivalent passenger unit (EPU), which is based on the average new standard passenger car tyre weighing 9.5kg.

All types have been grouped according to factors such as their size and function and assigned an average EPU value, with a motorbike tyre having a 0.5 EPU.

Industry members attending the webinar heard how the charges have been set with attached tyres identified by the vehicle class or type as defined by the transport agency, or by the vehicle's weight.

"A series of bands have been developed with the NZTA and industry to determine the most appropriate and fair fee to apply in those bands," notes Rose.

For cars and SUVs the cost is $33.25 plus GST per vehicle, with the figure based on cars having four attached tyres and a spare. For vans and utes the fee is $66.50 plus GST.

A typical passenger vehicle is counted as having five tyres because, on average, most cars come with one spare wheel.

Questions were raised during the webinar about whether the fee should be reduced for vehicles that instead of a full-size spare only carry a space-saver or tyre-inflation kit.

Rose says the scheme relies on averages for calculating fees, but notes there may eventually be scope to make a variation to the regulations if enough vehicles are coming in with only four tyres. Making such a change would likely need to be backed up by a year of retrospective data.

Dealers and importers are being encouraged to provide feedback about the scheme to Tyrewise and ASNZ through newly formed technical advisory groups (TAGs), which replaced the Tyrewise Working Group at the start of the month. There are a number of TAGs representing different sectors, including one for tyre and vehicle importers that includes VIA and the Motor Industry Association among its members.

While the rules came into effect at the start of March, the system will not be fully operational until September 1 when used tyres taken off vehicles must be retained and booked for free collection by phoning Tyrewise or via its web app.

Warrant regime needs fixing

Vehicles more than 15 years old should be required to undergo six-monthly warrant of fitness (WOF) inspections, says the Motor Trade Association (MTA).

The organisation is also calling for a review into the testing regime to ensure it is fit for purpose and for in-service emissions to be assessed.

The MTA describes the requirement that only vehicles registered before 2000 require six-monthly warrants as "dangerously outdated" because older vehicles lack modern technology that keeps passengers safe, and they deteriorate through age and use.

"Vehicles that are 22 years old are undergoing the essential safety check only once a year," it says.

"This increases the window and likelihood of unsafe vehicles on our roads. More than 50 per cent of vehicles over 15 years old fail their warrant at the first inspection.


The MTA says the WOF regime should be urgently reviewed and updated

> **We apply the same test to a vehicle that's five years old as we do to one that is 25** – MTA

"As a matter of priority, the regime must be reviewed and updated.

"We apply the same test to a vehicle that's five years old as we do to one that is 25. More New Zealanders will die on our roads if the WOF isn't changed."

In addition, the MTA is lobbying the government to ensure all cars on our roads have a current WOF and for it to enable the Ministry of Social Development to financially support low-income families to obtain one.

"All New Zealanders have the right to travel safely on our roads," the association adds.

"No family should ever lose a loved one in a crash. Ensuring vehicles on our roads are safe, reliable and maintained is an important component in making sure we all get home in one piece.

"Safety also means reducing harmful emissions that contribute to the deaths of thousands of New Zealanders every year and threaten the health of future generations."

In a bid to tackle emissions, the MTA wants vehicles to automatically fail their WOFs if their engine-warning lights are on when inspected.

As a first option, it's calling for mandatory emissions testing for all vehicles more than 10 years old to ensure they travel further on a full tank, which would effectively reduce emissions.

In addition, increasing awareness and education around emissions testing will enable policy for their reduction to be informed, and ensure motorists are better educated about emissions profiles and environmental impacts.

The MTA stresses that pollution produced by many inefficient, older vehicles has been linked to the deaths of thousands of Kiwis.

A Health and Air Pollution in NZ study concluded in 2022 that 3,300 people are dying prematurely

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Call for green schemes

The MTA says scrappage and recycling schemes have important roles in transitioning our fleet to a more sustainable future.

It is continuing to lobby for a scrappage scheme to get older, harmful or unsafe vehicles off our roads and help Kiwis buy low-emissions vehicles.

The association is calling for a scrappage scheme that's fair and based on science rather than social evidence and aspirations.

"Recycling must also be given priority," it says. "Most automotive businesses want to do the 'right thing' in disposing of harmful waste. That includes recycling parts that would otherwise end up in landfills."

While the industry has taken the lead and is willing to continue developing programmes to aid with recycling and product stewardship, the government can do much to support this.

The MTA would now like to see consultation with it and other industry groups to ensure there are complete recycling programmes for all components, such as batteries, cooling systems and bumpers, and end-of-life strategies to encourage a circular economy.

The association emphasises the aim of any future scrappage scheme should be to replace older polluting and unsafe vehicles with cleaner and safer modern alternatives.

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Plates decision delayed

Changes to vehicle inspections have taken place over the past 12 months, but plans for registration plates to become included in WOFs and COFs from March 1 have been shelved for now.

The NZTA says plates are important for enforcement officers to identify and tackle bad driving. Hard to read or missing plates affect information gathered by police patrols and CCTV systems.

However, following industry feedback, the agency recognises "there are a lot of questions relating to this change".

A spokesman adds: "As a result, we're delaying registration plate inspection. We'll be addressing questions raised and providing better clarity around how vehicles can comply – primarily trailers.

"We will consider the option of a staged or longer implementation timeframe to make it easier to comply."

Meanwhile, new requests for temporary coronavirus exemptions have ended. After the first lockdown in 2020, the government asked the NZTA to consider changes to inspection processes.

Because people couldn't renew WOFs and COFs during lockdown, the industry expected difficulties due to isolation requirements, staff shortages and unknown inspection volumes afterwards.

"We agreed on a 'stop clock' system, which allowed an added grace period for rechecks," says the agency. "This helped during the later stages of the Covid response as different areas had different lockdown levels."

Inspecting organisations could apply for exemptions to complete extended activities, which helped relieve pressure on the industry.

The NZTA will no longer grant new exemption requests. It adds: "We wish to acknowledge the success of this united approach between the regulator and industry during a difficult time."

On the WOF front, new images were released in April 2023 to show when tyre cracks should result in failures. Other changes included then simplified wording around repairs inside the critical vision area of windscreens.

Matt Greene, service manager at Dunedin City Motors, describes the current WOF emissions-testing rules as a joke

every year because of air pollution, mostly from the nitrogen dioxide produced by cars.

In addition, carbon-dioxide emissions damage the environment and contribute to climate change.

"Harmful emissions also hurt New Zealanders financially – poorly serviced vehicles cost more in fuel to run and are more likely to need expensive repairs.

"A well-serviced vehicle will travel further on the same amount of fuel than a poorly serviced one. A warning light commonly indicates a poorly maintained engine that's likely to be causing harmful emissions. This should be addressed in the WOF check.

"Zero-emissions cars on our roads are only part of the solution. With the vast majority of our ageing fleet running on fossil fuels, vehicle-emissions testing is vital for the health of everyone.

"Many countries in the OECD conduct rigorous testing. We must follow suit. Emissions testing and regular servicing, especially of older vehicles, will make a significant difference to reducing emissions that harm communities."

WHAT INDUSTRY SAYS

"The emissions testing rules in the WOF are a joke," says Matt Greene, service manager at Dunedin City Motors, which holds franchises for Ford and Mazda. "The whole regime needs to be looked at.

"When it comes to second-hand vehicles, New Zealand has a history of taking other countries' rubbish. We've got cars that are 22 years old on our roads that only need a warrant every 12 months. That makes no sense."

Greene adds that it's important ▶

to not peg the warrant to a date, but make it a sliding scale.

"Every vehicle over 15 years should be made to get a warrant every six months. It's only another $70 a year to the consumer, but the price of not doing it is much higher.

"The new government needs to put a greater emphasis on vehicle safety. Reviewing warrants is something it could do in a short space of time. We need to remove some of the ambiguities in the warrant – there's too much interpretation in there.

"Unsafe tyres are one thing that's a major issue. You see old cars on bald tyres, bouncing around on dodgy suspensions. It's an accident waiting to happen."

When it comes to emissions testing, Glenn Thorley, owner and director of Grimmer Motors, an automotive repair and service provider in Hamilton, also describes the current WOF rules as a joke.

"Basically, you're just meant to rev the engine and look at how much smoke comes out," he says.

"If you did that, you've already polluted the environment. You don't even fail your warrant if your engine-warning light is on. That should be an automatic fail, the same as if the airbag or ABS light is on.

Glenn Thorley, owner and director of Grimmer Motors in Hamilton

"Thousands of people are dying every year from air pollution. Imagine if thousands were dying every year because of airbag or ABS failures – the government would be all over it.

"Servicing the vehicle makes a huge difference, especially to older cars. The number-one cause of high emissions is a misfiring engine, pumping raw fuel into the air basically. If you don't service your car, you get misfires."

Thorley believes the government needs to lead in this space and look at the realities of our fleet. For example, a campaign to encourage people to get their vehicles tested would be useful.

"It is understandable people put off getting a service because money's tight at the moment. But if you don't do preventive maintenance, it'll cost – cost lives, cost the environment and cost you money."

SAFETY ON OUR ROADS

Vehicle safety must be prioritised with driver behaviour and road improvements, insists the MTA.

It broadly supports the government's Road To Zero vision where no one is killed or seriously injured on our roads.

"There are simply too many unsafe vehicles on our roads. Forty per cent of vehicles now fail their warrant at first inspection and, in some regions, the failure rate is as high as 46 per cent.

"Seventy per cent of these failures are due to non-compliant lights, tyres, brakes, suspension and steering – all critical safety features.

"Data from the Ministry of Transport shows that between 2015 and 2019 around 10 per cent of fatal crashes involved a vehicle factor. That was up from around five per cent in the previous few years."

The MTA adds every community must have enough qualified WOF inspectors to ensure vehicles are being checked thoroughly and promptly.

"Most importantly, there must be enough skilled workers to carry out important safety repairs detected during a WOF. If workshops are short-staffed, unsafe vehicles are more likely to be on our roads as owners delay or defer important maintenance."

Charges pose risk to electric sales

An industry lobby group warns the government imposing road-user charges (RUC) from next month could affect sales of electric cars.

Drive Electric says the decision to put RUC on battery electric vehicles (BEVs) and plug-in hybrids (PHEVs) will factor in consumers' purchase decisions, particularly following the scrapping of the clean car discount (CCD) at the end of December.

"We expect the combined effect will slow down the uptake of EVs in the near term," says chairperson Kirsten Corson.

"Research that Drive Electric commissioned from Concept Consulting on the removal of the CCD shows that between 100,000 and 350,000 fewer EVs may be purchased between now and 2030.

"Drive Electric has made some initial comments suggesting the RUC changes could impact EV uptake. We're concerned the quantum of RUC may be unfair on EV drivers, and we are consulting with our members about the settings and their impacts."

BEV and PHEV owners will be required to purchase RUC on or after April 1, although there will be a two-month transition period to give time for EV drivers or owners to buy them before enforcement begins.

All EV owners will receive a letter from the NZTA by the end of March explaining the system.

From the start of next month, the fees will be $76 per 1,000km for BEVs and $53 per 1,000km for PHEVs with administration charges on top.

Exemptions apply to traditional petrol hybrids. E-scooters, e-bikes and electric mopeds and motorbikes are also exempt. Heavy EVs of 3,500kg-plus are excluded until December 31, 2025.

The RUC exemption for EVs has applied since 2009. It was put in place until they reached around two per cent of the light-vehicle fleet, which the government says has been reached.

Fully electric cars and plug-in hybrids join the RUC scheme on April 1

Kirsten Corson, of Drive Electric

It adds there are about 100,000 light EVs on our roads and now is the time for owners of such vehicles to contribute to transport system costs in the same way as other motorists.

Corson notes the end of the exemption "had to happen at some point", although the timing may impact on purchasing decisions.

"The scale of the RUC has also raised concerns for EV drivers," she adds. "Calculations show battery electric drivers will pay the same in RUC as heavier diesel utes and around double the rate of road taxes as efficient petrol cars.

"EVs are still the future, but the rate at which we reap the benefits of that future is looking likely to slow. For our climate targets, this could be material unless we take alternative action."

The number of EVs passed an important milestone before the end of 2023 with 100,000 hitting our roads.

Last year, more than one-quarter of new cars registered here had a plug, while December was a record month for EV sales with more than half of new vehicles sold being electric.

It was also the last month of the CCD and "whatever you think of that scheme, it unquestionably stimulated demand for EVs", says Corson.

Sales increased 409 per cent since the discount came into effect in July 2021, while in the latter part of 2023 the feebate scheme had become cost neutral to the crown.

Drive Electric emphasises the CCD's benefits extended beyond lower sticker prices in that it put New Zealand on the map with carmakers.

"The number of brands and models available here roughly quadrupled in a couple of years," says Corson. "We also got better prices. There are now eight models of new EVs priced under $50,000.

"While this remains unaffordable for many, the trend is towards cheaper options. Globally, battery prices for EVs came down 14 per cent last year. Chinese carmakers continue to change the game."

With the CCD gone, and RUC coming in for BEVs and PHEVs next month, Corson says a robust emissions standard is still in play and the government has said it will invest more in EV charging infrastructure.

"That being said, 2024 will be a difficult year for the uptake of EVs here in New Zealand. Some demand would have been brought forward to achieve the discount before it was cut, interest rates remain high and there's no more cash back on EVs."

Worldwide, the momentum for electric cars marches on in many jurisdictions. In Norway, their market share in 2023 was about 90 per cent and China hit 36 per cent.

HOW RUC WORKS

RUC will apply to vehicles powered fully or partly from externally supplied electricity and weighing less than 3.5 tonnes from April 1.

Light BEVs and PHEV owners will need to buy a RUC licence and display it on their windscreen.

When someone buys RUC, they pay ahead of time for the distance they're going to travel in units of 1,000km. The first time EV owners buy their licences, they will need to provide their odometer reading, says the NZTA.

When a warrant of fitness is undertaken, a vehicle's mileage will be reviewed. If the odometer exceeds the RUC purchased, owners will be invoiced for any difference.

An individual can be fined up to $15,000 for providing false records. Late payment can incur a 10 per cent penalty on the amount owed.

The NZTA points out everyone who uses our roads contributes to their upkeep in some way, with most paying through fuel-excise duty.

Simeon Brown, Minister of Transport, outlined ahead of last year's election an aim to shift all vehicles to RUC – and away from excise – so the National Land Transport Fund is sustainable moving forward.

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Keeping focus on wholesale

Rui Santos and Ben Carrancho, right, launched Auction Online in 2019

Auction Online says it will be sticking with the wholesale market and has no plans to venture into the retail space despite three high-profile figures in New Zealand's car industry taking a 40 per cent stake in the dealer-only trading platform.

Rui Santos and Ben Carrancho formed the company in 2018. It has since sold 10,000 vehicles through dealer-to-dealer auctions and has about 850 registered car traders signed up for its services.

Plans to expand the business are afoot and have been given a boost by three people from the Armstrong's Motor Group – executive director Rick Armstrong, chief executive Troy Kennedy and chairman Mark Darrow – becoming shareholders.

"We weren't seeking investment," Santos, who previously owned the company 50-50 with Carrancho, told Autofile.

"They approached us and we engaged in discussions with them about selling a portion of our business. We felt this was the natural progression for Auction Online in terms of growth. They are respected individuals and well-connected, so it seemed like the ideal partnership to pursue.

"Armstrong's has a massive geographical footprint with dealers across New Zealand. With this partnership, Armstrong's Motor Group will be adding a few more cars through Auction Online, which will give us more of a presence in the South Island, an area we have yet to fully tap into.

"I imagine that push into the South Island will now move along quite quickly with us teaming up with Rick, Mark and Troy. There are doors that can now be opened to us that were previously a long way away or hard to access."

The value of the deal is undisclosed and is a personal investment by the Armstrong's trio rather than one by the group, which represents 18 international vehicle brands at its locations nationwide.

Armstrong, Kennedy and Darrow are also believed to be keen to invest further in Auction Online as the business expands.

The company forecasts good growth in the next six months and, after initially only focusing on dealers, it has set its sights on encouraging rental and leasing companies to sell unwanted stock through its auctions.

Santos, who has spent more than 15 years in the automotive industry, says the idea for Auction Online came while he was working as Hyundai divisional manager at Farmer Autovillage in the Bay of Plenty.

Before moving to New Zealand in 2016, he spent eight years in financial manager and dealer principal roles in South Africa.

"I was in dealer land for 10 years before creating Auction Online, seeing trade patterns and seeing that dealers are largely creatures of habit and they stick to doing the same thing," adds Santos.

"Generally, what happens is dealers get prices from wholesalers in their area and only deal with a handful of other dealers to get prices on trade-ins.

"I quickly realised that if you broaden your horizons a little and reach out to different people and other areas then the prices vary substantially. That led to the idea of creating a virtual platform that could reach users around the country and make sure dealers get better prices for their cars."

Santos paired his knowledge of dealerships with Carrancho, who has more than two decades of experience in business ventures and has a background in marketing and crafting software applications.

Auction Online is increasing its offerings and last month launched Auto Cash-up, which allows registered motor-vehicle traders to make direct offers to private sellers.

It is also getting into financing and working with a financing house to offer short-term loans for dealers to buy stock.

Its main rivals are Turners and Manheim, but Santos notes Auction Online is a dealer-only platform and plans to retain that focus for the immediate future.

"We aim to continue expanding and establish Auction Online ▶

as a standard practice in every dealership nationwide," he continues. "Our goal is for every dealer to integrate Auction Online into their toolkit."

"I don't see us going into the retail space at all. We're just focusing on wholesale at this stage."

Reflecting on the company's beginnings, Santos says it was registered in 2018 and months were spent developing the product before it officially started operating in January 2019 when it hosted its first auction.

An accountant by qualification, he explains he always put plenty of focus on the profitability of dealerships he ran and tried to maximise gains in every way.

"That wholesale channel hasn't had much focus from many dealers. It's an untapped resource that can be quite profitable, so my understanding of how a dealership operates has helped in developing our offering."

Santos notes there was initial reluctance from dealers to try the auctions because people aren't always comfortable with change and it took them time to merge into a new area of virtual wholesaling.

From left, Rick Armstrong, Mark Darrow and Troy Kennedy from Armstrong's Motor Group

"It was a big obstacle for us at the start as we tried to get dealers to realise that dealing with the same buyers day in, day out doesn't mean you're getting the best money for your car.

"Thankfully, some dealers saw the benefits of Auction Online and gave it a go, and from there it grew and more and more dealers took a look. Essentially, we're trying to make more money for dealers by getting their cars in front of as many people as possible.

"Your focus as a dealer is to sell the new car to the client and not concentrate too much on their trade-in, which is a by-product of the trade, but a lot of dealers have now realised the potential money that can be made in wholesale."

Nearly one-third of the country's dealers are now signed up to Auction Online, but Santos acknowledges the company – like most businesses – needed to navigate the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic soon after launching.

"We were going extremely well and experiencing growth every month and had hit our first peak just before the first lockdown.

"When we opened up again the results were about 50 per cent of where we had been before lockdown, but we quickly got back to those previous levels and started growing in that post-Covid boom.

"The motor industry boomed because of stock shortages. Everyone was desperate for stock so our results increased just like everybody else's in the motor industry, but the market appears to have gone back to the old normal now."

Santos describes the current market as "pretty challenging" with the government's axeing of the clean car discount impacting activity as consumer demand shifts from electric vehicles (EVs) to models with internal combustion engines.

"It's a strange space at the moment and some dealers have it tough out there. EV sales have dropped quite significantly without that push or incentive to buy one, and it looks like many people are going back to petrol and diesel cars."

Organisations opt to team up

The Motor Trade Association (MTA) and Collision Repair Association (CRA) have become partners.

The aim of the two longstanding organisations teaming up is to create a stronger voice and united front for the collision-repair sector.

Stewart Gibb, general manager of the CRA, says a lot of work has gone into bringing the two together, which has resulted in his association becoming a chapter of the MTA.

He adds: "The CRA and MTA change is for the better, for the future. Much of the benefit of working together will not be noticed until both organisations start working together.

"There was overwhelming support from our members for the partnership."

Lee Marshall, the MTA's chief executive, says: "Both organisations have the interests of the industry at heart with excellent people in both.

Lee Marshall, left, of the MTA, with Stewart Gibb, of the CRA

"It's a no-brainer that we're stronger together. Joining forces is logical and powerful. We now have essentially the entire collision-repair market as members and, as such, can advocate effectively on behalf of the industry."

The merging of resources and co-branding will provide members on both sides with enhanced tools and support across quality, technical aspects, industry engagement and dedicated training facilitated by I-CAR.

All members will be given access to the CRA's collision repair industry-specific business information, networking events, buying privileges and templates. They will also be able to use the MTA's tools, learning and full members benefits.

The partnership, which officially started on March 1, means about 600 collision-repair businesses will now carry the blue MTA badge alongside the red CRA badge.

The CRA's membership includes qualified panel beaters, automotive refinish painters, and all other car collision-repair tradespeople and allied businesses.

Founded in 1913 and formerly known as the New Zealand Motor Body Builders' Association, it changed its name in 1998 to reflect progress in the trade.

The CRA is also involved with ongoing training. It organises courses for members and non-members through its training arm known as I-CAR.

I-CAR is an interactive training organisation based in the US. It undertakes research into the correct repair methods required for today's modern vehicles.

The CRA has also been working with MITO to standardise and streamline apprentice training, especially theory and off-site aspects.

End of road for ute

Mazda New Zealand will be dropping the BT-50 from its line-up this year, marking an end to 58 years of the marque retailing utes here.

It sold 347 units of the model last year, which was less than six per cent of its total new-vehicle registrations, and there is several months of stock remaining in showrooms.

The BT-50's sales total for 2023 was down from 746 in 2022, or by 53.5 per cent, while they dropped by 64.2 per cent from 2,025 in 2021. Over this three-year period, registrations of the ute have tumbled by 82.9 per cent.

"The conclusion of the BT-50 is the end of an era for Mazda in New Zealand," says David Hodge, managing director of Mazda NZ. "It is a model that has served the country well over many years.

"Undeniably, the market has changed significantly over the past few years. The move towards SUVs, a greater uptake of electrified vehicles and, most recently, the clean-car programme have all influenced consumer tastes."

The BT-50 shares the same platform as Isuzu's D-Max. By comparison, the latter notched up 1,038 registrations last year. Mazda's ute was also outperformed by Volkswagen's Amarok and Nissan's Navara.

The decision to drop the BT-50 in New Zealand hasn't only been influenced by its low sales figures. The marque also wants to reduce its overall emissions because of the clean car standard.

While the government's decision to scrap the clean car discount means ute buyers are no longer pinged with fees when they are first registered, emissions ratings of such vehicles are expected to come under greater scrutiny as carbon dioxide (CO_2) targets get tougher under the standard.

As Mazda redefines its local product range, the focus is shifting towards upcoming new models and electrification.

The transition is part of its multi-solution approach to reduce CO_2 emissions and offer powertrains suitable for different markets' conditions.

In 2023, the marque welcomed new-generation, large-platform products with the CX-60 and CX-90, and this year will see the first-ever CX-80 join the range.

Extra updates to the CX-30 and CX-5, along with the MX-5, will further strengthen its line-up on our shores.

Mazda has offered a pick-up in New Zealand since 1966 with the B-Series later being rebadged as the Bounty. A large percentage of those early models were assembled here after being imported as knocked-down kits.

The BT-50 was launched in 2006. The first new-generation model made its debut in 2011 in various configurations including single, freestyle and double cab.

The most recent version, launched in 2020, was offered exclusively as a double cab.

The BT-50 was launched in 2006


The second-gen model was released in 2011


The current model year of the ute


Key Motors

Stink-bug survey success

Car importers will be relieved to know that a programme set up by the government has failed to find any brown marmorated stink bugs (BMSBs) at survey sites across New Zealand.

A pilot post-border early detection and monitoring system to counter the threat of the insects was launched by the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) for the 2018/19 high-risk season.

The idea was for experience gained in surveying and detecting stink bugs would then be used to help eradicate them if they became established here.

Even if surveys detect no BMSBs, the frequent collection of native and introduced pentatomids, that's to say stink and shield bugs, provides evidence to trading partners that this country is free of the pest.

Following pilots, the MPI established an annual national surveillance programme in 2019/20 conducted by Auckland-based SPS Biota after imports of cars almost ground to a halt in the previous high-risk season from September 1 to April 30 after BMSBs were found on vessels and vehicles.

Survey methods include inspection of sticky traps for pentatomid bugs attracted by lures, left, and samples collected by using beating sheets. Photos: SPS Biota

It consists of seasonal monitoring using lured traps placed on or near host plants, and vegetation searches at targeted transitional facilities and other risk sites.

The MPI recognises stink-bug incursions aren't limited to one commodity. High-risk pathways exist for accidental importation associated with overseas cargo, such as used vehicles, new and used machinery, and containers from BMSB host countries.

The number of inspection sites remained at 80 for the 2022/23 season with 66 per cent in the North Island.

Of the targeted sites, 68 were transitional facilities with past histories of interceptions or importing significant volumes of risk materials from host countries.

The remaining 12 were yards storing imported cars from stink-bug host countries, while Kiwifruit Vine Health (KVH) funded six extra sites near horticultural activities in the Bay of Plenty.

The survey season spanned 24 weeks with traps inspected every 10 working days with any insects looking like pentatomids being regarded as suspect BMSBs.

From the 80 national risk sites, 753 samples were collected and 755 pentatomid specimens recorded. The KVH-funded risk sites captured 54 samples with 56 identifications.

The good news is that no adult or larval BMSBs were detected at any of the sites although eight specimens of interest other than pentatomids were found. These were determined not to be of biosecurity risk and were native or naturalised introduced species.

The pattern of BMSB detections over the past five years appears to effectively track populations from emergence in November to a decline from March onwards, and there's little evidence for extending the duration of surveys.

"The programme has again generated robust evidence supporting claims of area freedom for this pest in New Zealand," states the report.

"Methods used to detect BMSBs are continually being refined and this will help inform response actions to any detections in the future."

Rebate issues linger

A number of dealerships have been spoken to by the NZTA after it uncovered listings for about 300 vehicles that recently received the clean car discount (CCD).

The action follows allegations of dealers selling electric vehicles after registering the cars in their name and securing rebates before the scheme ended on December 31.

The Imported Motor Vehicle Industry Association (VIA) says several consumers have contacted the agency, which found hundreds of such cars listed for sale and has since spoken to eight dealerships about them.

Greig Epps, VIA's chief executive officer, has reminded dealers of their responsibilities under the legislation.

Traders wanting to claim a discount at registration had to declare they would use the vehicle as a company, courtesy or demonstration car for at least three months. Dealers should be aware the scheme is being managed until the end of June.

"This includes the need to hold onto electric cars for three months if you received the CCD for the vehicle yourself," says Epps. "The last three-month period ends on March 31, so let's make sure we're all doing the things right by then.

"The NZTA seems to be taking a balanced approach to this issue. It appreciates it when dealers work with them to fix the issue."

IN BRIEF

Border-inspection provider partners with AA

Automotive Technologies Ltd (ATL) has linked up with the AA to provide co-branded odometer-verified windscreen stickers on qualifying vehicles.

"We are thrilled to provide customers with the benefit of having one of New Zealand's most trusted brands associated with our contracted pre-export inspection processes," says Matt Battle, general manager of shipping provider Moana Blue.

"The partnership between the AA and ATL also meets a key component of the AA Preferred Dealer criteria."

Jonathan Sergel, the AA's chief mobility officer, adds Moana Blue and ATL have been on his organisation's radar "for some time now" for inclusion in its programme for odometer inspections.

Sergel says they have a shared vision "to ensure AA members and consumers are protected against fraud, and can have confidence when purchasing imported vehicles that carry the shared AA/ATL logo".

'Family friendly' SUV voted country's top model

The Honda CR-V, pictured, has taken out NZ Autocar's car of the year and best family model awards. Editor Kyle Cassidy describes it as a "highly competent vehicle, good value, a decent drive and dependable".

Class winners included the Lexus RX – luxury, Volkswagen's Amarok – ute, Hyundai's Kona Hybird – eco car and the MG4 Electric – best value. Visit autofile.co.nz for the full story.

After-market supplier secures trusted status

OEM Audio has joined the Consumer Trusted ranks. The accreditation is awarded to companies that fulfil 11 key principles including exceptional customer service, fair-contract terms and accurate advertising.

The programme also aims to assist businesses in meeting legal obligations and raising their standards for operations.

Christchurch-based OEM Audio supplies car multi-media units, reversing cameras and GPS navigation options. In addition, there's EV Power by OEM Audio. Its products include charging cables and wall chargers.

Owner Paul O'Connor and his team are thrilled to have achieved Consumer Trusted status. The approval process included Consumer NZ asking eight mystery shoppers to covertly phone OEM Audio about its products. The company scored 97 per cent for service.

Guidance revised down after cross-rate changes

2 Cheap Cars has reviewed its projected net profit after tax for 2023/24 to between $6.3m and $6.5m – down from $6.8m – due to recent exchange-rate variances.

A steady increase in the value of the kiwi against the yen has led to higher-than-expected hedge losses. Paul Millward, chief executive officer, notes the company remains on-track to deliver an "unparalleled result".

Drugs valued at $69 million found in vans at port

Customs has seized significant quantities of methamphetamine and MDMA ecstasy after searching imported vehicles.

Officers discovered 149.8kg of MDMA and 67kg of meth hidden in panels of vans, which had arrived at Auckland last month from Europe, with street values of $45m and $24m respectively.

Association getting closer to members

The Imported Motor Vehicle Industry Association (VIA) is seeking closer contact with its members and offering them more information about its activities by launching a new online stakeholder engagement system.

A message was sent to existing members late last month about the development, asking them to update their profile details so they can be kept informed about key topics affecting the sector.

The system will provide regular updates about VIA activity, press releases, blog posts, consultation issues, meetings and webinars, and one-on-one engagement with key stakeholders.

Greig Epps

Greig Epps, chief executive officer, says it is expected to take about a month for the system to be fully operational.

"It's about us trying to find a way to keep track of all stakeholders and being able to send the right information to the right people," he told Autofile.

"Through the system we can engage with members more easily and there's the ability to syphon out conversations so you can just talk to dealers or people in logistics or compliance.

"We've found members don't always want the same thing, so we want the system to allow people to discuss what they want to talk about."

Members can still phone or email VIA with any enquiries, but the system has been designed to offer a space to allow them to easily access documents or information.

Epps adds the development will ensure members are the first to see what VIA is working on, and allows them to be a part of its work in talking to the government and representing industry.

"When there are government consultations, we plan to put that information up and members can go directly into the system and give us feedback on those issues," he explains.

"There's no point saying we represent the industry if people working in it haven't had an opportunity in some way to provide input to what we do.

"Not everyone can make a Teams video call. This will give everyone more of a chance to engage with the wider stakeholder network and we want to create broader access for our members. We need to stay engaged with them."

Epps says Lisa Metcalfe and the team at Gecco, a New Zealand-based service provider, deserve credit for their support of the system's roll-out, which comes at the same time VIA has launched a new tagline for the association – "The voice for vehicle importers".

"It's on the new system and something we will be putting in our submissions. We're just quietly putting it out there as our purpose and that we're the voice for the industry."

VIA has about 70 organisations among its membership, which encompasses the whole supply chain, and used vehicles imported into the country have been through at least one of its members.

The new online system also provides a more streamlined way for businesses or people to become part of the association.

"It's important for the efficient functioning of the organisation that we bring members on board quickly and simply, and we're always open to having more members," adds Epps.

"What we're offering now is more engagement and access to information and the chance to contribute to activities, and knowing that the more members we have the stronger our voice with government will be."

Rewarded for overall excellence

Hawke's Bay Toyota has taken out the top honour at this year's Toyota and Lexus Business Excellence Awards.

The locally owned company, which has been operating for more than 30 years, secured the Toyota Supreme Award at last month's ceremony.

It recognises overall excellence in branch operations, market leadership and branch facilities, so there is always fierce competition for it each year among the country's 64 Toyota and Lexus stores.

Hawke's Bay Toyota operates across five locations in Hastings, Napier, Taupo, Rotorua and Gisborne. Its chief executive officer Angus Helmore was born and raised in the region, and has 16 years' industry experience with the marque.

Lexus of North Shore, which is based in Auckland's Wairau Valley, won that marque's supreme award, while Lexus of Queenstown won its sales and marketing award.

Rutherford & Bond Toyota won the used-vehicles excellence award and the president's award went to Valley Toyota in Thames.

Manukau Toyota in south Auckland secured the gong for the new-vehicles excellence, as well as Toyota's finance and insurance award.

Blenheim Toyota took out the leadership award and South Canterbury Toyota in Timaru was honoured for service excellence.

Pacific Toyota in Tauranga was judged to be top for parts and accessories, while Rutherford & Bond Toyota Kapiti, of Paraparaumu, was best branch.

Angus Helmore, chief executive officer of Hawke's Bay Toyota, flanked by Andrew Davis, vice-president of Toyota's mobility group, left, and Neeraj Lala, CEO of Toyota NZ


Derek Tilyard, CEO of Rutherford & Bond Toyota


Mark Jago, Lexus of North Shore's CEO

This year's citizenship award went to the Wellington branch of Rutherford & Bond for a leadership programme co-developed with its ambassador Ardie Savea to inspire 10 local emerging leaders from low-decile high schools, with one securing a $2,500 scholarship.

It has had a significant impact on the lives of participants. Many have gained scholarships to tertiary institutions, achieved regional or national honours in their sports or gained academic awards.

The citizenship award was introduced in 2022 to recognise Toyota stores' commitment to backing community activities. After receiving 18 entries last year, there were 36 in 2024 and most franchises support more than one group.

Projects recognised at this year's awards ranged from environmental causes to mobility services, sports clubs, mental-health programmes, youth employment initiatives and emergency services, such as surf lifesaving and regional rescue helicopters.

Neeraj Lala, chief executive officer of Toyota NZ, says the business excellence awards celebrate the achievements of dealerships and their contribution to keeping it as the country's "leading mobility brand".

"Our store staff care deeply about communities they operate in and they are doing things they feel are worthy of recognition.

"The citizenship award highlights a growing trend among businesses, including those outside the automotive sector, towards prioritising social impact as we grapple with how to grow the economy at the same time as protecting things we value – people and nature.

"It's up to business leaders to highlight examples where business is not just achieving sales growth, but also achieving sustainability targets. There's a strong link between corporate success and social responsibility."

As for 2023, Lala says: "We not only held onto our number-one slot against some tough competition, disruption from Cyclone Gabrielle and regulatory challenges, but we also broke our own records and sold more vehicles in one year than ever before."

Toyota and Lexus stores notched up 33,640 new-vehicle registrations last year, 52 per cent of which were electrified.

Traders back safety

Research has shown that 66.7 per cent of cars for sale via dealerships have current safety-rating labels displayed on them.

The NZTA has thanked those who took part in the national survey with a special shout-out going to traders proactively using the stickers.

A report prepared for the agency was based on analysis of data from 300 randomly selected dealers visited late last year.

A spokesman for the agency says: "More than six in every 10 vehicles on registered dealers' sites displayed a current safety rating label.

"This is a pleasing result. It shows many recognise the value of voluntarily promoting safety ratings and helping to get more people into safer vehicles.

"Based on analysis of the data from dealerships selected at random for the survey, we found vehicles with higher safety ratings were more likely to have a label displayed compared with vehicles rated as one and two-star.

"While there was no discernible difference between the proportion of labels displayed in franchise dealerships compared to independents, the survey indicated there is an opportunity for some brands, segments and regions to be more proactive.

"Dealers can expect to hear more on this from industry associations, which are supporting our efforts to increase voluntary label uptake further.

"Thanks again to all the dealers who permitted the independent research company to visit their sites."

The NZTA believes increasing voluntary uptake is preferred rather than introducing a regulatory regime, and is working on a range of initiatives to get people into safer vehicles including by raising public and industry awareness.

Industry movers

LISA WILSON has taken over from her father, Peter Robinson, as chief executive officer of Oamaru-based North Otago Toyota.

Wilson had been acting CEO since June 2023 and before that was chief operating officer. She also worked for the family-owned business while at school and university before returning in 2020 as administration manager and chief finance officer.

In between, she spent 11 years with Deloitte in Dunedin as a chartered accountant and business consultant.

"It is my vision to align our brand with like-minded organisations or individuals who are prepared to give back to the community that has supported us throughout the previous 40 years we have been in business," says Wilson.

Robinson, who was CEO for 31 years, remains a company shareholder and director. He also plans to move into a sales consultant role to support Wilson and his son Michael, who is new-vehicles manager.

Robinson started his career in 1983 with Wrightcars Oamaru, a General Motors dealership, which was purchased in February 1989 by John Rush Toyota. In 2017, he and his wife Leonie took over full ownership of North Otago Toyota.

SYLVESTER RIDDELL, pictured, has been appointed as Geneva Finance's chief technology officer after filling the role on an acting basis for three months.

His connection with the company dates back to 2016 when he spent a year working on finPOWER Connect, its back-end lending system.

Riddell previously held senior accounting and technology positions with the State Bank of South Australia, Countrywide Bank and Toyota Finance NZ.

DAVID SMALE stepped down as an independent director of Geneva effective on March 31. He was chairman from 2008-20, and returned temporarily as a director in September 2023.

The board wishes to thank him for his support and assistance over recent months, and acknowledges his earlier years of service to the business.

KRIS FAAFOI starts as chief executive of the Insurance Council of NZ on April 7. He was a Labour MP from 2010-22 and replaces Tim Grafton.

During his political career, Faafoi, pictured, served in Labour-led governments from 2017-22. His portfolios included commerce, consumer affairs, customs, immigration and justice. Most recently, he has been running his own consulting business.

GLEN DYER has been appointed to lead Iveco's operations in Australia and New Zealand.

He started at Iveco Australia in early 2021 as head of sales and product. Before joining the company, he held positions in the commercial sales and financial services divisions of Mercedes-Benz across the Tasman and in the UK.

Dyer, pictured, has taken over from Michael May, who has been promoted and has relocated to Italy to oversee the development of Iveco GATE, its dedicated sustainable commercial transport division.

TO FEATURE IN INDUSTRY MOVERS EMAIL EDITOR@AUTOFILE.CO.NZ

From left: Andrew Haigh and Tracy Martin, MTF Finance area sales managers, Nicole Pye of Buythiscar, Steven Zhang of MIG Cars, Chris Lamers, MTF's chief executive, Dion Prentice of Dions Motor Group, Taash Haley of Morrison Cars, and Natasha Callister, MTF's chief commercial officer

Celebration to thank backing finance firm

Staff at dealerships across the country have been recognised for their contribution to helping a company achieve substantial expansion during 2023.

The winners of the inaugural MTF Finance dealer awards were treated to a special celebration on Waiheke Island in late January.

Chris Lamers, chief executive officer, says the awards follow on from a remarkable year of growth for the company last year with profits increasing by 38 per cent.

"We're thrilled to pay tribute to the significant contribution of our recourse dealers," he enthuses.

"Our vehicle dealers embody the core values of our organisation, embracing responsible lending practices while prioritising exceptional customer experiences.

"The MTF Finance team congratulates all the winners and expresses gratitude to our recourse vehicle dealerships for their commitment to excellence."

The award-winners included Taash Haley, of Morrison Cars in Christchurch. She took out the staff excellence prize "for being an excellent ambassador for the MTF brand, going the extra mile for customers for rock-star results".

Steven Zhang, from MIG Cars in Christchurch, scooped the business excellence award for the highest year-on-year net receivables growth for the October 1 to September 30 period.

Dion Prentice, of Dions Motor Group in Cromwell, won the culture of responsibility gong. This recognises the dealership most engaged with and supportive of compliance at MTF, and adopting a culture of responsible lending.

Nicole Pye, from Auckland-based Buythiscar, claimed the best-performing new dealership award. This honour was open to newly approved recourse dealers with strong growth, which had also started MTF lending within the past 24 months.

Security threat 'contained'

An automotive software company has taken steps to contain the effects of a cyber attack by offshore hackers last month.

Auckland-based Auxo is strengthening protection for its own products and its partner customers' IT systems, and has engaged cyber and legal experts with international experience.

Chief executive David Murdoch says: "We will continue to be in contact with any potentially affected customers, but we believe the threat has been contained.

"While it's disappointing to be the victim of an attack, we've taken the opportunity to further secure our systems. We will be working with our customer base to increase the resilience and security of all Auxo and customer IT systems."

Clients with questions can email comms@auxosoftware.com. Auxo's car-industry products include SAM, Orion, Synergy and Autoline.

Retargeting audio audiences

Very few consumers will purchase a product the first time they see an advert for it.

Maybe they don't have time at that exact moment to click a link or visit a website. Perhaps, particularly in the case of buying a car, they want to do more research or consult with their partner before financially committing.

As an advertiser, it's important to have strategies in place to remain front of mind – throughout the consideration phase of the purchasing journey – to ensure you capture those customers when they are ready to convert. Retargeting is one such strategy.

In this age of digital advertising, we're able to capture data from the moment someone visits a website or is presented with a campaign.

We can tell if they have shown interest in an ad and can then "follow them" whenever they are online, popping up with promotions that remind them of our brand and products they liked.

I have no doubt many of you have experienced this for yourselves when, after searching online for a new pair of sneakers, for example, you start to see adverts for the same or similar shoes every time you visit a website or social-media app. This is retargeting in action.

In a recent issue of Autofile, we discussed the growing popularity of digital audio in New Zealand.

With 77 per cent of Kiwis streaming content into their ears across a week, it's no surprise this space is ripe for advertisers.

Listeners of digital audio tend to do so when they can be fully engaged in music or podcasts, meaning they are an ideal audience for targeted ads.

Such campaigns become even more powerful when they include second screen retargeting.

Second screen retargeting is when a digital audio campaign is presented to a consumer for a specific product or brand. That same customer is then retargeted with display advertisements for the same product or brand on other websites or apps.

This technique is proven to increase brand awareness as well as the likelihood that listeners will respond to the call to action.

There are numerous benefits to running a campaign that

JAMES HENDRY
National account director
AdTorque Edge NZ

incorporates both digital audio and second screen retargeting.

Advertisers have witnessed an increase in conversion rates from their stand-alone digital audio ads, given the reinforcement of their campaign's call to action. The impact of these multi-faceted campaigns can be as much as four times higher than what's obtained running digital advertising on its own.

Through effective reporting methods, incorporating second screen retargeting also gives a clearer view on campaign performance and enhances the marketer's decision-making processes for future ad spend.

One of our clients, a personal watercraft provider, was looking to increase brand awareness and product recall in the lead-up to summer.

The aim of the advertising campaign was to drive traffic to a customised landing page targeting an audience in close proximity to areas commonly known for personal watercraft usage.

The strategy was to first present users with digital audio ads that invited them to "shake" their devices to open a website link for more information.

Those same customers were then retargeted online using companion display ads that appeared on sites they visited.

This internationally award-winning campaign drove some impressive results for our client with a jump in the brand's website traffic of 108 per cent compared to the same period in the previous year.

Total site conversions increased by 43 per cent and the campaign landing page itself achieved a conversion rate of 23 per cent.

Diversifying your marketing budget to incorporate a variety of advertising channels is key to generating the best return on investment.

Further to this though, our recommendation is to employ a strategy that capitalises on the power and efficacy of both digital audio and display advertising by combining the two.

Utilising second screen retargeting will enable you to capture customers who are "still thinking about it" after hearing your digital audio ad and lead them down the path toward conversion.

Twist in puzzle for vehicle charges

There has been a lot of talk lately about what's next for road-user charges (RUC) especially with the exemption for electric cars ending this year.

The idea of applying RUC to all light vehicles has been tossed around and you know what? I've come around to it.

Initially, it seemed like a direct hit on buyers of electric vehicles (EVs), potentially derailing the shift towards cleaner transport. But the more I have learned, the clearer it becomes that my early takes missed the mark.

An article was penned by myself a few months ago when I argued that RUC should be entirely based on vehicle weight. I focused my argument heavily on the fairness and fear of stigmatising electric cars.

I was convinced that slapping RUC for a flat $75 per 1,000km on all light vehicles wasn't just unfair, it was counterproductive.

After all, don't heavier vehicles do more damage to our roads? Shouldn't their owners pay more? That seemed like a no-brainer, backed by my own number-crunching that suggested a wildly different fee structure based on weight.

However, here's the twist. My understanding of RUC was too narrow. I was too focused on one piece of the puzzle.

The RUC system isn't just used to keep our roads smooth. It's used to cover many costs, including the building of more highways and infrastructure to ensure we can all get where we're going regardless of our ride's weight. This broader perspective was an eye-opener for me.

KIT WILKERSON
Head of policy and strategy
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Digging into the details, it turns out the government's current proposal acknowledges light vehicles don't really dent our roads that much. The portion of the fee for such vehicles that covers the cost of road maintenance is already set at only a few dollars per 1,000km.

The argument we should base the maintenance component on weight quickly falls to practicality when we realise the most that would result is a few dollars of savings between the lightest and heaviest light vehicles.

The added complexity would add administration costs, which would then need to be rolled into the price and would just make it more expensive for everyone.

Most of the proposed RUC fee is actually about chipping in for new roads, a cost that – fairly enough – is shared equally by all drivers.

Admitting I got it wrong isn't easy, but necessary. The bias I had towards a simple solution blinded me to the complexities at play.

In doing so, there was a failure to give due credit to those already wrestling with these tough decisions, policy advisers and regulators who have already been trying to balance fairness with practicality. It's a reminder good policy needs to consider all angles, not just the ones that seem obvious at first glance.

With this revised outlook, I'm on-board with the way light vehicles can be rolled into the RUC scheme. The solution is designed with the entire picture in mind, one that accounts for the collective need for infrastructure over individual contributions to wear and tear.

RUC and fuel-excise duty goes towards road maintenance. SH25A at Tarapehi, which links two sides of the Coromandel Peninsula, needed a bridge installed after Cyclone Gabrielle. Photo: NZTA

Until we're ready for a deep-dive review of RUC, the proposed fees for light vehicles make sense as a way to fold that part of our fleet into the system.

This journey from critique to understanding underscores a critical lesson about policy-making. It's rarely as straightforward as it appears.

Complex challenges demand nuanced solutions. Sometimes that means setting aside initial reactions for a more informed approach. It's about finding a balance that serves the common good, ensuring we all move forward together.

Too often, our own biases aim us towards simple solutions that only focus on the straw man we build by focusing on the part of the problem that's most important or most obvious to us.

We all have a tendency to ignore what we do not know, cannot see, do not understand or that which conflicts with our world views. This is often what defines experts, their experiences and awareness of a bigger picture which includes more details, even inconvenient ones.

As we navigate these changes, let's keep the conversation going. There's always room for improvement and for refining our approach as we learn more and as technology evolves.

The shift towards EVs is just one piece of a larger puzzle, a puzzle we're all putting together one piece at a time.

My only feedback to the government's RUC team would be to ask that the rest of light vehicles be added as soon as possible.

Many interest groups are seeing unfairness, or even hostility, in anomalies created by the tension between the two different methodologies that are RUC and fuel-excise duty.

The problem is that any effort made to try to address perceived unfairness will need to be undone once the entire fleet is moved to RUC, which will again lead to some light-vehicle owners feeling like they're being singled out.

Man jailed after dealer thefts

A criminal who targeted businesses in the Waikato after being released from prison has been jailed for four years and five months.

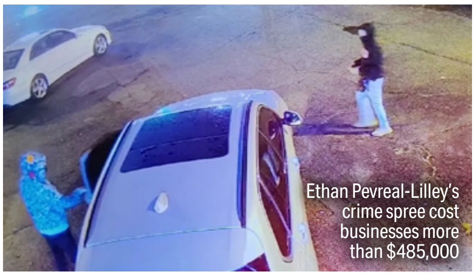
Ethan Cory Douglas Pevreal-Lilley, of Huntly, caused about $500,000 of losses to dealerships in Hamilton he targeted sometimes more than once.

A burglary of Turners Cars in Te Rapa Road overnight on November 5-6, 2022, resulted in the yard being closed after he stole keys to all 165 vehicles on-site.

The 31-year-old then returned and made off with a $26,000 Mercedes-Benz. He went back a third time with associates to take a Volkswagen Polo and a Holden, Hamilton District Court was told.

The vehicles were later found in Huntly. The Holden was burnt out, the VW had panel damage and the Mercedes-Benz was undamaged. It cost the trader $300,000 to get new keys, locks and to replace ignitions.

Pevreal-Lilley's spree began early on October 30, 2022, at Fairview Motors, which was targeted multiple times. He opened unlocked cars before stealing a $10,000 Nissan Cefiro.


Ethan Pevreal-Lilley's crime spree cost businesses more than $485,000

Going back later that night, he dragged a $12,500 trailer into the middle of the yard, drove a $35,000 Nissan Skyline onto it and used a $12,000 Ford Courier to tow it.

Winger Subaru was hit on the afternoon of November 5. Pevreal-Lilley stole a backpack from one unlocked vehicle before getting into a ute.

However, he failed to hot wire it. Instead, he fled on foot and ended up at Prestige Collision where he walked into the office. He stole a hoodie, keys to a Mercedes-Benz and a jump-start pack.

In the early hours of November 12, he was back at Winger Subaru with an associate and stole tools from a van, along with a torque wrench and plastic case used on Ferraris.

They then targeted Prestige Collision again where Pevreal-Lilley walked around with keys he stole the previous weekend.

He appeared in court for sentencing last month on 12 charges. Nine were for burglary, two for possession of instruments to use in a burglary and one of unlawfully getting into a vehicle.

Judge Kim Saunders had already indicated Pevreal-Lilley would get a 20 per cent discount for his guilty pleas.

His counsel, Wayne Dollimore, pushed for further discounts for remorse and courses completed on remand. He said the offending began after the defendant lost his job "and had all this free time with the wrong associates".

Judge Saunders said the offending was pre-meditated and the scale of loss exceeded $485,000.

The month that was... March

March 16, 1998

Dealers lose large chunk of sales pie

Registrations in February 1998 indicated nothing but doom and gloom, no matter how much the industry wished otherwise.

New-car sales were at their lowest for nearly a quarter of a century and their slice of the pie was being eroded by higher public-to-public sales.

The second-hand car market fell by six per cent and dealer-to-public trade by twice that. Used-imported car sales declined by 26 per cent and used commercials by 32 per cent.

In the new market, registrations decreased by 22 per cent, with cars down 24 per cent and commercials dropping 15 per cent.

There was no doubt the second-hand market was grim. Government statistics showed this sector went down by six per cent from 64,981 units in February 1997 to 61,024 in February 1998. Car sales had also dropped by six per cent from 52,051 to 48,723 over the same timescale, or by 3,328 units.

March 7, 2008

Turners Auctions announces 2007 results

Turners Auctions announced its full-year net surplus after tax and interest of $2.3 million, which was down by 27 per cent on the same time in 2007.

As had been previously signalled, the result was adversely affected by a one-off fraud committed over the previous seven years by a former employee. The ex-staff member had since pleaded guilty in court, but the case had bitten into the company's profits.

The group's net surplus, restated without the impact of the fraud, would have been $2.9m – down by six per cent on 2007.

Auction unit sales were stable at 71,000 compared to the prior period, despite conditions in the second-hand car market that the company said had been challenging.

In its 2007 full-year announcement, Turners said: "The total market dropped 0.5 per cent in 2007 with further consolidation of the dealer community.

"The pressure on dealers has been exacerbated by the widely publicised collapse of the consumer finance sector, a decline in Japanese domestic consumption and the strong competition for cars in Japan, particularly from Russia."

The company had reported strong growth in group operating revenue, up 13 per cent to $85.3m. The biggest contributor to that was Turners Fleet with revenues up by $9.9m and 29 per cent.

March 4, 2005

'Sucked in' by registered trader

A former member of New Zealand's automotive industry was looking for answers after being "sucked in" by someone registered as a motor-vehicle trader, but who was facing charges of fraud in excess of $377,000.

Steve Hutchby, a former provider of dealer systems and who also ran a publishing house in Sydney, said the state of the industry was "totally unsatisfactory" with consumers unable to identify legitimate car dealers.

In October 2004, he said he purchased a 1996 Toyota Land Cruiser VX Limited from a company's website. After checking the owner was registered under the Motor Vehicle Sales Act, Hutchby put down a $15,000 deposit on its full price of $24,000.

The trader allegedly promised delivery in six to eight weeks, blaming the delay on the fact the Toyota was repossessed and the finance company was slow in processing its papers. Six weeks later, the next excuse was a shipping delay.

In the new year, Hutchby asked for his money back, but the seller told him that he was having cashflow problems. After further investigation, Hutchby discovered the man was being prosecuted by the police on 21 charges of fraud and deception.

March 26, 2010

Are there deals for importers?

While Kiwis were pushing for quality used imports and there was a rise in sales in late 2009, when it came to the shipping industry business was still reeling.

The vehicle-carrier sector was feeling the aftershocks of the global recession with trade expected to remain the same as 2009 – and that was slow.

Similar to many of its competitors, Hoegh Autoliners was still waiting for a used-imports recovery to the likes of 2007/08.

"There is a slight increase in business and we have noticed an increase in volume this year," said Hoegh's commercial manager Neil Lay Yee.

But, overall, "we're looking at 2010 as the same as 2009" with vehicle carriers coming from Japan not full of stock.

While 2011 might look like the turning point for the industry globally, Lay Yee pointed out New Zealand's car industry would be hit with vehicle-emissions rulings.

"I think then that we'll probably see an increase in business at the beginning of 2011 before those standards are implemented."

Global turmoil hit all areas of shipping in 2009, reversing years of boom and healthy freight options, reported Moody's Investor Services.

Changes to reporting on register

As a follow-on from my article last month, there are new requirements in the revised terms of use for the motor-vehicle register (MVR) whereby gazetted changes to section 241 of the Land Transport Act 1998 are now in effect.

Dealers who are accessing the MVR for a trade-in assessment to confirm the customer is the "registered person" or to verify a change of ownership should now be meeting the new requirements.

These include displaying a general access statement on either your website or physical signage, while every user in your business should have a unique and identifiable log-on.

You should also be keeping a record of every log-on access for a period of at least 18 months and any privacy breaches, including errors or mistakes made. If the latter happens, the user must immediately notify the NZTA and Privacy Commissioner.

From November 1, 2022, a log had to be kept and then submitted to the transport agency detailing all annual access from that date until October 31, 2023.

It should also include evidence of staff training, and a summary of all unauthorised access occurrences as previously notified to the NZTA and Privacy Commissioner.

As detailed online at www.gazette.govt.nz, there are rules on authorised access to certain names on the MVR.

Point 19 states that if the user or any staff – whether or not they are acting within the authority of the user – breach any conditions, then Waka Kotahi may immediately suspend or cancel the user's access to personal information on the register under section 241.

The MTA is in ongoing dialogue with the transport agency regarding the MVR and the completion rate by MTA-authorised users.

Car dealers need to follow strict rules when accessing the motor-vehicle register

At our November meeting and given this is the first-time the year-end reports have been requested, the NZTA extended the deadline to the end of November 2023 for

LARRY FALLOWFIELD
Sector manager – dealers, Motor Trade Association

the report for the November 1, 2022, to October 31, 2023, period.

During our recent meeting, it has come to our attention that dealers who are accessing information via Motochek or an approved third-party portal still haven't completed or submitted their annual reporting.

As the new terms and conditions commenced on November 1, 2022, the first annual report was due on November 1, 2023.

To ensure any future punitive measures for non-compliance of not submitting the year-end report, it's vitally important to complete and submit your annual report as quickly as you can to the NZTA by emailing it to s241@nzta.govt.nz.

Your report must contain evidence that clauses 11 to 16 have been complied with, a record of staff training performed in accordance with the requirements in clauses nine and 10 over the past 12-month reporting period, and individual users and their training completed, such as internal training, Privacy 101, Privacy ABC and on-portal use.

Also included must be all actions taken in relation to all instances, or suspected instances, of unauthorised access over the 12-month period, all privacy breaches, and breach descriptions and notifications sent to the NZTA and Privacy Commissioner.

This process is also relevant to towage operators, fuel suppliers and registered financial service providers with access to the MVR.

The MTA has suggested to members who use the register that they make electronic copies of all look-ups at the time in an annual reporting template capturing data by each month so that each year-end report contains the relevant data from November 1 to October 31.

This can then easily be submitted on November 1. If you are using a third-party portal, contact your provider to see if it can assist with compiling that information.

If you have any questions, please to reach out to me via larry.fallowfield@mta.org.nz.

Cadillac coming down under

New Zealand and Australia will be the world's first markets to be supplied with the Lyriq in right-hand drive (RHD) from the factory floor.

The SUV will be available in both countries as a 2025 model with John Roth, vice-president of Global Cadillac, saying it "redefines modern luxury" as the industry continues on its road to electrification.

"Cadillac is experiencing great sales momentum and we're expanding our business globally," he adds. "The RHD Lyriq will enable new opportunities in important markets where EV adoption is strong.

"It elevates our brand through integrated technology, craftmanship and dedication to delivering spirited performance."

The Lyriq is Cadillac's first all-electric model and is manufactured at the Springhill plant in Tennessee on a dedicated RHD line.

At its heart is General Motors' Ultium battery system. It enables an entire line-up of models – from high-volume crossovers, SUVs and full-size pick-ups to low-roof luxury cars – to be built on the same core architecture.

Cadillac's all-electric Lyric boasts a 33-inch LED display

The 2025 Lyriq boasts two motors to power all four wheels with performance estimated at 373kW of power and 610Nm of torque.

Its new battery enables a near 50-50 weight distribution, and a lower centre of gravity for a sporty and responsive drive.

Inside, there's an integrated 33-inch diagonal advanced LED display. It curves towards the driver in a single continuous screen.

A final range and charging times will be published at a later date, although they are described as "competitive".

By way of comparison, the 2024 Lyriq in the US has an Environmental Protection Agency-estimated range of 494km for the AWD variant and 505km in RWD.

Although pricing has also yet to be revealed, the current line-up in the States starts at the equivalent of NZ$95,550 for the Tech, NZ$102,250 for the Luxury and NZ$103,050 for the range-topping Sport.

Jess Bala, managing director of General Motors Australia and NZ, says the all-electric Cadillac portfolio in both countries will expand after the Lyriq.

"Launching our all-new, all-electric EV business positions us well to be able to select the right models for these markets."

Dedicated "experience centres" for the marque will be established in Auckland, Melbourne and Sydney along with an "intuitive presence" for online purchases.

Bala says: "Our centres will be destinations where customers can discover more about Cadillac, and explore, test drive and buy a Lyriq."

EIGHT-SEATER UNVEILED

GMC's Yukon, a full-size premium SUV, will join GMSV's portfolio following a strong business case being made for extra models from the US.

The eight-seater will be remanufactured in Melbourne. It will go on sale in New Zealand as well as across the Tasman.

"The popularity of vehicles we sell through our network has grown substantially in a few short years," says Greg Rowe, director of GMSV. "This success is what inspired us to investigate the possibility of adding an all-new model to the line-up."

GMSV dealerships will offer the highly equipped Yukon Denali. Its first examples should arrive in showrooms in early 2025.

Meanwhile, the model-year 2024 build of the E-Ray is expected to start in the middle of this year. It will be the quickest accelerating Corvette ever thanks to the addition of an electric-drive unit to its LT2 6.2-litre V8 engine.

Chevrolet's Silverado variants in the 1500 range – the ZR2 and LTZ Premium – will receive a new GM performance exhaust for 2024.

The ZR2 will also be fitted with new equipment. This includes a rear camera mirror, 15-inch head-up display, power tilt and telescoping steering column, adaptive cruise control and a Bose sound system.

The Yukon Denali

Time for the Borg to enter


The electric Lanzador concept

Lamborghini has unveiled images of its Lanzador coupe-SUV – the Italian brand's first four-seat and two-door battery electric vehicle.

However, production will have to wait until 2028 because the company's factory in Sant'Agata Bolognese will need significant expansion to make it fit for the task of this converting this concept into reality.

While the proportions are new, all the styling components are there. There are no obvious signs that a hefty V8 isn't on-board except for the lack of exhausts.

It develops more than 1,000kW – or one megawatt – of power, and according to Stephan Winkelmann, Lamborghini's chief executive officer, it's a "concrete preview of the production vehicle".

With an electric motor placed on each axle, the Lanzador features all-wheel steering and self-levelling suspension. The marque says the model will ensure a long range, but so far it has been scant on detail.

Off-world seems to be a buzzword by perhaps conjuring up nightmarish images of the Borg, an enemy of Jean-Luc Picard in the next generation of Star Trek. According to Lamboghini's design chief, Mitja Borkert, the Lanzador is "inspired by spaceships".

Styling inspiration also comes from the new Countach LPI 800-4 with sharp, angular panels, narrow headlights and 23-inch alloys.

Inside, a Y-shaped centre console separates driver from passenger, and hosts the heating, ventilation and air-conditioning system, infotainment and drive-mode controls.

The Lanzador also uses an array of recycled materials in its cabin. These include 3D-printed recycled seating foam, recycled plastic and nylon stitching, recycled Australian merino wool, regenerated carbon fibre and sustainably tanned leather.

"We are looking into our future without forgetting our DNA," says Winkelmann. "With this concept, we're ushering in a new segment, the ultra GT.

"It's poised to offer customers an unparalleled driving experience, one that's quintessentially Lamborghini thanks to groundbreaking technologies."

Dancing on the moon

Toyota has, perhaps, gone out of this world with an SUV rooted in the real lunar cruiser it developed for the Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency.

The concept has been created by Calty Design Research, the company's US arm, which has produced daring designs, such as its pared-back MR2 supercar.

The futuristic design of the Baby Lunar Cruiser, pictured, aims to "conquer rugged terrain on Earth and beyond", with FJ40 styling cues and airless tyres.

It's operated by using two joysticks with a digital screen for a dashboard and digital readouts on the vehicle's exterior.

The moon car has a pressurised cabin, 45-day range and a hydrogen fuel-cell powertrain, all of which will never reach earthbound vehicles.

Back down to this planet, Toyota is rumoured to be developing a smaller version of its Land Cruiser to rival Suzuki's Jimny. It could be a five-door small four-by-four to compete in this relatively uncontested segment.

Toyota also filed a trademark for the Land Hopper model name last year, so watch this space.

Photos: Getty Images / Red Bull Content Pool

Keen to make his next move

It's not a matter of if, it's when. There is no doubt. Liam Lawson will be New Zealand's next star of Formula One.

Tucked under the wing of the all-conquering Red Bull organisation, he set the paddock afire when he subbed for injured Australian driver Daniel Ricciardo in 2023.

This year, he's reserve driver across all four Red Bull F1 entries and has his eyes set on a full-time drive in 2025.

Now aged 21, Lawson is squarely "in the zone" for greatness.

He has come a long way since the days when he'd get his mum to drive him from Pukekohe to the Toyota Racing Series (TRS) build facility at Hampton Downs, often still in his grey school uniform, just so he could absorb the atmosphere. Even then, his mad passion burned brightly.

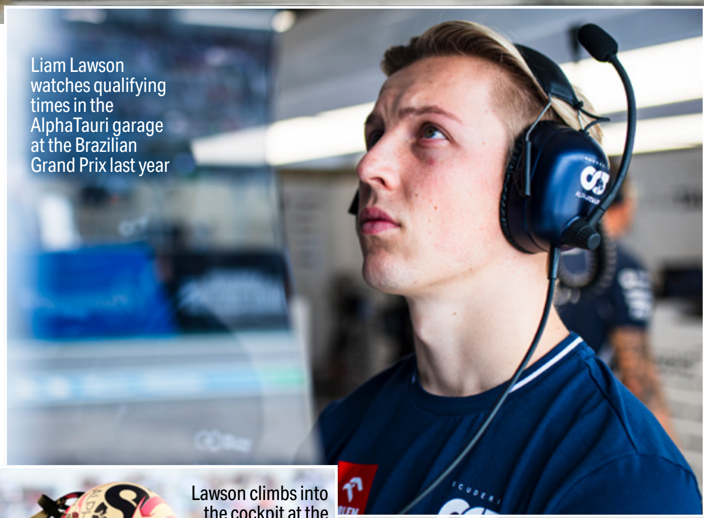
Series manager Barrie Thomlinson was always pretty sure Lawson would be racing in a TRS car as soon as he was old enough.

In the build-up to this point in his career, Lawson has won 53 races and scored 115 podium finishes. He has started from pole 25 times and set 39 fastest laps. Many of these came in single-make championships where car set-up and driver ability are crucial.

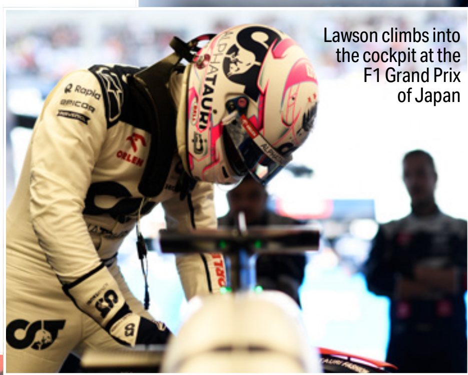
Lawson's road to glory started aged six in karting. It's a path well-trodden by race drivers the world over. His full-time karting campaigns ran from 2011-15 and he netted numerous class titles. He's not work-shy by any means.

Stepping up to full-sized cars, he raced Formula Ford and Formula Vee in 2017. He won the Formula Ford championship. He also raced the whole Australian Formula 4 championship, finishing second.

The 2018 season was about F3 Asia – three races and eighth overall – and the German F4 where he was second.



Liam Lawson watches qualifying times in the AlphaTauri garage at the Brazilian Grand Prix last year



Lawson climbs into the cockpit at the F1 Grand Prix of Japan

Racing at the Mount Wellington kart track is where it all began
Photo: liamlawson.com

In 2019, there was the Castrol Toyota Racing Series, which he won after a thrilling duel with Marcus Armstrong. Then he raced FIA F3 and Euroformula Open, finishing second in the latter.

The following year, Lawson competed in two championship seasons, finishing second in New Zealand's TRS and fifth in the FIA F3.

In 2021, he again took on double-race seasons, finishing second in the DTM – the Deutsche Tourenwagen Masters, German touring cars – and ninth in F2. He was third in F2 in 2022, recording three wins and eight podium finishes.

And so, onto last year when the young Kiwi got the opportunity all racers dream of. With Ricciardo damaging his hand as he began a comeback F1 campaign, Lawson got the call.

"Formula 1 is all I will ever be satisfied with. If I don't nail this, I'll never get another chance like it." And nail it he did.

In the Honda-powered

On the grid during the final round of the Japanese Super Formula Championship at Suzuka, Japan
Photos: Dutch Photo Agency / Red Bull Content Pool

AlphaTauri – essentially, Red Bull's second team – he raced five grands prix, never putting a wheel out of place. He often outqualified and outraced team-mate Yuki Tsunoda.

There wasn't much of a discussion behind it. Red Bull adviser, Dr Helmut Marko, asked if he was ready, Lawson replied "yes" and he went on to make an immediate impression in what turned out to be one of the season's trickiest races.

He came ninth in Singapore to secure his first F1 points. It was the highest individual finish AlphaTauri had achieved all season.

He also came second in the Super Formula series, which had been his main focus in 2023.

All up, it has been a tough pathway for Lawson. It never felt like a comfortable place, the "junior" academy of an F1 team.

Just ask Craig Lowndes, who suffered through just one year as a Red Bull junior before fleeing back to Australia.

Or Marcus Armstrong, who gritted his way through several years in the Ferrari Academy, being slotted into some very ordinary F3 and F2 teams when Mick Schumacher was favoured and had the primo seat at the Prema team.

Or Armstrong's British flatmate and sometime rival, Callum Ilott, who has been in and out of these pressure-cooker environments.

As Lawson says: "When you're 16 and getting phone calls where you're being told, basically, if you don't perform in the next race you're out of the programme, having that from a young age is obviously quite stressful.

"When I was that age, I remember it was really stressful. I always tried to show that it wasn't, but I remember it was pretty brutal sometimes. When you get to the age I am now, I've had that for five years."

That pressure is necessary. Lawson knows the junior team environment played a huge part in getting him ready for last year's F1 opportunity.

"Formula 1 comes with a massive amount of pressure. You have the whole world looking at you and I think without dealing with those high-pressure situations from a young age, I probably wouldn't have been so ready for it."

He has been on the receiving end of his fair share of rev-up phone calls from Red Bull

Lawson was runner-up in the 2023 Japanese Super Formula Championship

management over recent years.

"But it's not that it was unfair as well, you know. Generally, there will be races where, if I make a mistake – because obviously we all do – then you expect one of those kinds of calls. There's always a good reason for it."

It's to Lawson's credit that he has not only thrived, but has excelled, at Red Bull.

As always with Kiwis, the big difficulty is in financing racing careers. Lawson is from humble origins, and the backing of a group of New Zealand fans and influencers has helped get him to this point. But it's Red Bull's ongoing support that will open the door to F1 in 2025.

Lawson has been told there will be a place on the grid for him in 2025 after he's got more races in before that point. Three of the current four Red Bull drivers' contracts expire this year.

Right now though, Lawson must control the aspects that he can and let the 2024 season play out. It really is not if, but when.

CAUGHT ON CAMERA

In a new Red Bull documentary called "Liam Lawson: In The Wings", the Kiwi confronts the challenges of chasing his F1 dream while balancing racing in the fiercely competitive Super Formula Japan series.

Before the age of 17, Lawson had won on his debut in every category before joining Scuderia AlphaTauri in 2021.

He has now secured his spot as an official reserve driver for both Oracle Red Bull Racing and AlphaTauri.

"F1 has always been and still is 100 per cent the dream," says Lawson in the 30-minute film. "It's the only thing I'll ever be satisfied with. A successful career is Formula 1 world champion."

The documentary on him, which is now available to watch on Red Bull TV, gives viewers a rare look into Lawson's Super Formula season and F1 debut.

It covers the determination, struggles and his appetite to get a permanent F1 seat while juggling competing in Super Formula with the aim of winning the series.

"Doing well in Super Formula is massively important if you want a chance at F1. It's the closest [racing series] by far to Formula 1 and is the championship Red Bull likes to send its drivers to as that last little stage of evaluating before F1.

"In The Wings is a look at the season that shows how tough it really is and how much is involved.

"When you watch these racers, you don't always realise how much goes on or what it's like behind the wheel. There's an incredible amount of pressure to perform at F1 while the whole world is looking at you."

The programme shows the highlights and lowlights from on-track to in the garage.

With intimate and never-before-seen footage of Lawson with his family, partner and team-mates, it provides viewers with insights into the sacrifices, support and unwavering effort required for his pursuit to become a world champion.

"My whole family sacrificed a huge amount for me to be able to do what I'm doing now," he shares in the film. "It all comes back to my family and us starting this together. It's not just my dream, but it's a big accomplishment for my family as well."

Visit www.redbull.com/nz-en/films/in-the-wings to watch the documentary.

Entering new era

AlphaTauri, which joined the F1 grid back in 2006 and initially raced under the Toro Rosso guise, will emerge for its 2024 F1 season with a new name.

It will now be known as RB, with the team's full name being the Visa Cash App RB Formula One Team to mark a stronger reference to the Red Bull operation.

Over the years, Sebastian Vettel, Max Verstappen and Daniel Ricciardo built up experience there before going onto Red Bull.

Buyer unable to claim costs to replace battery after driving hybrid for 1,800km

The case: Eight months after purchase, the hybrid battery in the buyer's 2014 Toyota Aqua S hybrid failed and needed to be replaced. The buyer did this and wanted the trader to pay $1,800 for the work as well as her alternative transport costs. However, the dealer refused to pay for repairs saying the customer hadn't given it an opportunity to fix the issue.

The decision: The tribunal agreed with the trader and dismissed the purchaser's application.

At: The Motor Vehicle Disputes Tribunal via video link.

Background

Briony Bennett purchased a 2014 Toyota Aqua S with an odometer reading of 132,232km for $12,000 from Kiwi Cheap Cars on November 18, 2022.

Its hybrid battery needed replacing about eight months later and after she had driven about 1,800km in the vehicle.

Bennett replaced the battery and wanted to claim the $1,800 for that and her transport costs while unable to use the Aqua.

The trader said she wasn't entitled to any remedy because it had offered to fix the fault and she didn't give it a reasonable opportunity to do so.

The case

The engine and hybrid-battery warning lights came on in July 2023, so Bennett had the Aqua assessed by Auckland City Toyota.

Its diagnostic scan found a "P0480 replace hybrid battery pack" code and she was told it would cost about $3,645.

Bennett contacted other repairers and, in September, had it replaced by Ultimate EV for $1,800.

Following the tribunal hearing in October, she provided the results of Auckland City Toyota's scan.

These showed the hybrid battery had degraded so much that it required replacement or significant overhaul. For example, the voltage on cell number six of the pack was 12.14 volts, whereas other cells came in between 13.35V and 14.09V.

Under the Consumer Guarantees Act (CGA), a reasonable consumer must have realistic expectations as to the durability of hybrid-battery cells in an eight-year-old car.

They should understand the battery will degrade as such a vehicle is used and will require refurbishment or replacement from time to time.

A reasonable consumer also needs to realise that a supplier's obligations under section six of the CGA are finite and, at some point, the risk of the car developing defects must transfer to the purchaser.

However, Bennett had driven only about 1,800km before the fault occurred, so the adjudicator found the vehicle wasn't of acceptable quality because it wasn't as free of minor defects or as durable as a reasonable person would consider acceptable.

The question the tribunal had to answer was whether the faults were such that a reasonable consumer, fully acquainted with the extent of the issues, wouldn't have purchased the car.

It noted buyers of hybrids of a similar age and mileage should understand the hybrid battery wasn't new and would degrade.

Certainly, a reasonable person would expect the supplier to provide a remedy if the battery had to be replaced after about 1,800km of driving.

However, the tribunal wasn't satisfied that a reasonable purchaser of a hybrid of this age and mileage would refuse to buy it because of such a fault.

It is well-established that when a vehicle has defects that breach the CGA's guarantee of acceptable quality, a consumer must first give the supplier a reasonable opportunity to remedy it before having any problem fixed elsewhere and claiming repair costs from the trader.

Bennett might have been able to recover the costs under section 18 of the CGA if Kiwi Cheap Cars had failed, refused, neglected or otherwise not succeeded in fixing the failure after being given a reasonable opportunity to do so.

Email correspondence between the parties showed the dealer initially declined to take responsibility for the repair because it considered the Aqua had been of acceptable quality when supplied.

On July 28, 2023, Bennett advised the trader that she would take her complaint to the tribunal. The dealer replied it would address the issue at its cost and provide a six-month warranty.

The adjudicator ruled Kiwi Cheap Cars had offered to provide a remedy as of July 31.

Bennett then asked for further information from the trader, including an appointment time to take the Aqua in, the identity of the repairer and work to be done.

The dealer didn't provide those details and instead asked her to return the vehicle for repairs. She was unhappy with that response, so she filed her claim in August.

Bennett initially sought to reject the Aqua and obtain a full refund. But she then arranged to have the hybrid battery replaced because she had been without a car since its warning light illuminated.

A 2014 Toyota Aqua

The finding

The tribunal found Kiwi Cheap Cars initially refused to fix the car, but then changed its mind and offered to remedy the battery failure. However, Bennett didn't give the trader a reasonable opportunity to do so.

The dealer's correspondence with her was less than ideal. It left her uncertain as to what would be done to her vehicle, when and by whom, but its conduct didn't amount to a refusal, failure or neglect to repair.

While the trader remained willing to remedy the fault at its expense, Bennett wasn't prepared to give it that opportunity because it didn't supply the information she requested.

Her position was understandable because she wanted reassurance about the identity of the repairer and work that would be performed. That said, the dealer's failure to provide that information didn't amount to a failure or refusal to fix the problems.

Order

The buyer wasn't entitled to recover her repair costs so the claim was dismissed.

Testing carried out by three independent repairers points to faults with transmission

The case: The buyer wanted to reject her 2015 Subaru Impreza soon after purchase because it shuddered at low speeds. The trader's repairer checked the car more than once and said it wasn't faulty. But the problem persisted, so the purchaser had it independently checked by three companies and a problem was diagnosed with the transmission.

The decision: The evidence showed the vehicle was faulty so the tribunal upheld the consumer's right to reject the Subaru.

At: The Motor Vehicle Disputes Tribunal, Hamilton.

A 2015 Subaru Impreza

Background

Ling Cheng wanted to reject the 2015 Subaru Impreza she bought for $12,559 from 2 Cheap Cars on February 21, 2023.

She claimed it had a faulty transmission since it was supplied and that the trader had failed to remedy it despite having a reasonable opportunity to do so. Cheng sought a refund and costs.

The dealer agreed the Subaru had a problem, and stated it was prepared to refund the sticker price and cost of diagnosing the faults, but added Cheng wasn't entitled to recover any other costs from the business.

The case

Cheng said the Subaru's engine shuddered shortly after purchase so she returned it to 2 Cheap Cars and, despite the vehicle stalling during a staff test drive, the employee couldn't identify an unusual shudder.

The issue remained, so she again contacted the trader to complain about the shuddering and an intermittent battery issue that caused the Impreza to stall.

The dealer had it assessed by Car Tech on March 24. It test drove it but couldn't find a fault. Cheng said it stalled while going home.

The trader asked her to return the Subaru to Car Tech to replace the battery and the vehicle didn't stall after that.

However, it continued to shake at low speeds so she contacted the dealer but its repairer again found no problems.

In May, Cheng had the vehicle assessed by Subaru franchise Winger Hamilton, which road-tested it and found a "very slight" shudder at about 10kph under light acceleration. Its diagnostic scan found no fault codes.

Winger Hamilton then found carbon build-up on the throttle body, which it cleared, but the shudder remained.

It also found the transmission fluid was a different colour to what the factory recommended. It didn't know if the fluid used was correct, but if it was that it could have pointed to an internal transmission fault.

Cheng asked the dealer to have the Impreza repaired by Winger Subaru.

However, the trader asked her to return it to Car Tech, which replaced the transmission fluid, and she was again told her Subaru wasn't faulty.

Cheng had the vehicle assessed by Motormekanix on June 21 at a cost of $127. It also found a slight shudder at around 10kph, which could have been due to a possible transmission issue. It performed a diagnostic scan and found no relevant fault codes.

She also had the Impreza assessed by Marshall Transmissions, which found a "jerk as lock-up applies and then slight shudder as accelerating lightly". It noticed it shuddered when coasting downhill.

Marshall Automotive monitored live data from the transmission control module and found the "lock-up command" and "secondary pressure" were inconsistent when surging happened.

It suspected the transmission's belt and pulleys were damaged, and the transmission required replacement at an estimated cost of $16,902. Cheng paid $100 for this assessment.

Garry Moore, who appeared at the hearing for 2 Cheap Cars as its general manager of operations, agreed the Impreza had a transmission fault, and offered to refund the purchase price and compensate Cheng for the diagnostic costs she incurred.

Moore said that Car Tech told him the Subaru could also have had a differential or differential mount fault.

The finding

The evidence showed the Subaru's continuous velocity transmission (CVT) was faulty.

Cheng had complained of it shuddering at low speeds since purchase and various technicians had confirmed the existence of that shudder.

Marshall Transmissions thought it was due to a damaged CVT belt or chain and pulleys.

After considering the evidence, the tribunal was satisfied the Subaru hadn't been of acceptable quality for the purposes of section six of the Consumer Guarantees Act (CGA).

This was because it had an internal fault within the transmission that meant it wasn't as free of minor defects or as durable as a reasonable consumer would consider acceptable.

The CVT fault was a failure of a substantial character because it was essential to the car's operation and needed a costly replacement or significant overhaul.

As the transmission fault was a major item to repair, Cheng was entitled to reject the vehicle and to have the $12,559 purchase price refunded.

She was also entitled to recover $227 she spent having the CVT problem diagnosed by Motormekanix and Marshall Transmissions.

Cheng also wanted to recover the $148 fee she paid to cancel flights she had booked to China in June 2023. She said she didn't want to travel there while the transmission fault remained unresolved.

However, the tribunal wasn't satisfied this cost was a reasonably foreseeable consequence of the car's failure to comply with the CGA's guarantee of acceptable quality because its problems didn't prevent her from flying.

Likewise, Cheng wasn't entitled to recover the $500 she claimed to have spent on petrol when travelling to and from various technicians to have the car assessed.

She provided no evidence to the tribunal to show the precise cost she incurred and $500 seemed an excessive amount given all relevant travel appeared to have occurred within Hamilton.

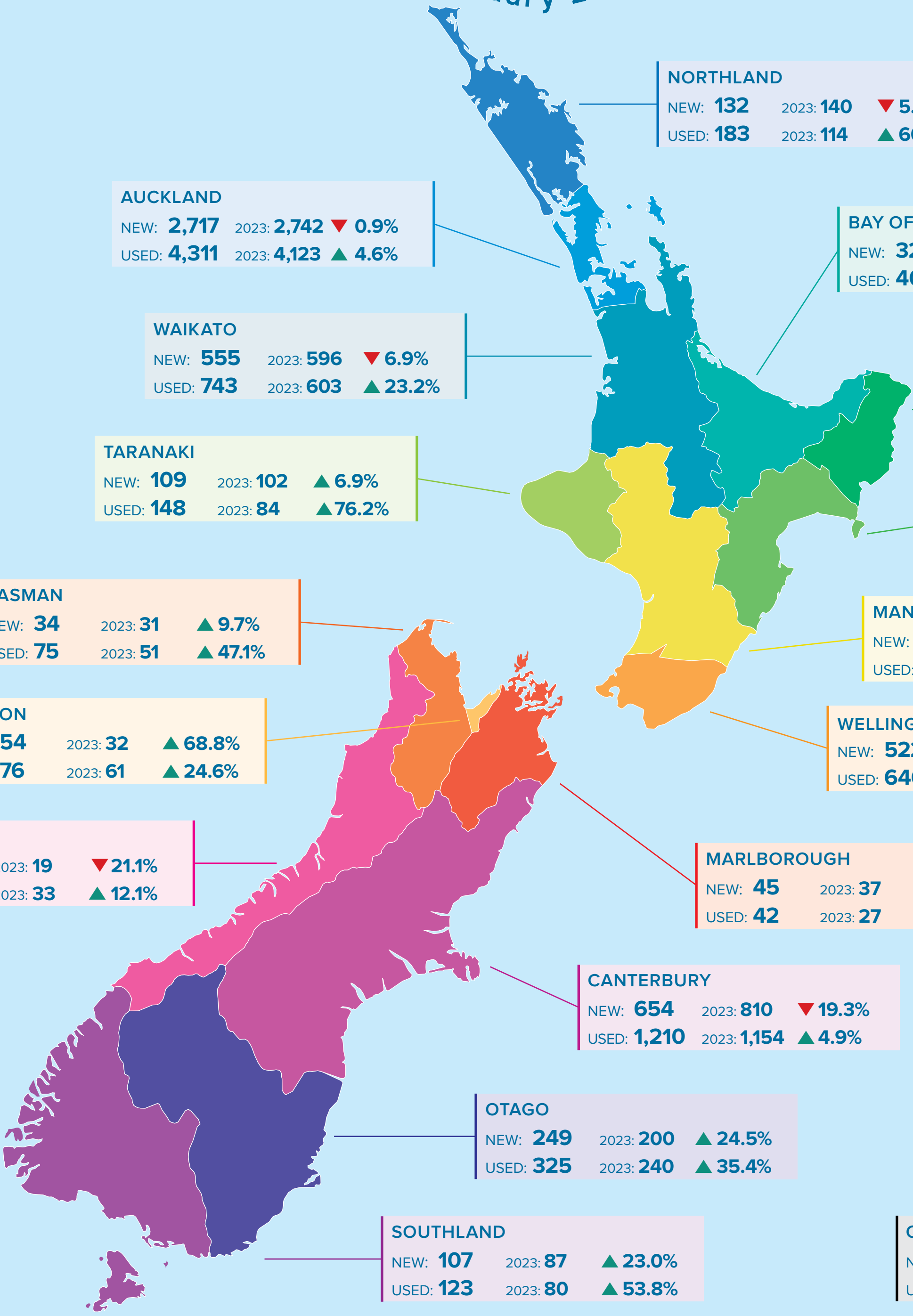
Orders

Cheng's application to reject the Subaru was allowed and 2 Cheap Cars was ordered to pay her $12,786. The dealer also had to collect the vehicle.

AROUND THE COUNTRY
February 2024

Total new cars
5,950
2023: 6,241 ▼ 4.7%

Total imported used cars
8,823
2023: 7,749 ▲ 13.9%



NORTHLAND
NEW: 132 2023: 140 ▼ 5.7%
USED: 183 2023: 114 ▲ 60.5%

AUCKLAND
NEW: 2,717 2023: 2,742 ▼ 0.9%
USED: 4,311 2023: 4,123 ▲ 4.6%

BAY OF PLENTY
NEW: 327 2023: 344 ▼ 4.9%
USED: 400 2023: 290 ▲ 37.9%

WAIKATO
NEW: 555 2023: 596 ▼ 6.9%
USED: 743 2023: 603 ▲ 23.2%

GISBORNE
NEW: 31 2023: 25 ▲ 24.0%
USED: 50 2023: 33 ▲ 51.5%

TARANAKI
NEW: 109 2023: 102 ▲ 6.9%
USED: 148 2023: 84 ▲ 76.2%

HAWKE'S BAY
NEW: 159 2023: 150 ▲ 6.0%
USED: 171 2023: 102 ▲ 67.6%

TASMAN
NEW: 34 2023: 31 ▲ 9.7%
USED: 75 2023: 51 ▲ 47.1%

MANAWATU-WHANGANUI
NEW: 231 2023: 261 ▼ 11.5%
USED: 254 2023: 192 ▲ 32.3%

NELSON
NEW: 54 2023: 32 ▲ 68.8%
USED: 76 2023: 61 ▲ 24.6%

WELLINGTON
NEW: 522 2023: 634 ▼ 17.7%
USED: 646 2023: 532 ▲ 21.4%

WEST COAST
NEW: 15 2023: 19 ▼ 21.1%
USED: 37 2023: 33 ▲ 12.1%

MARLBOROUGH
NEW: 45 2023: 37 ▲ 21.6%
USED: 42 2023: 27 ▲ 55.6%

CANTERBURY
NEW: 654 2023: 810 ▼ 19.3%
USED: 1,210 2023: 1,154 ▲ 4.9%

OTAGO
NEW: 249 2023: 200 ▲ 24.5%
USED: 325 2023: 240 ▲ 35.4%

SOUTHLAND
NEW: 107 2023: 87 ▲ 23.0%
USED: 123 2023: 80 ▲ 53.8%

OTHERS (Chatham Islands, overseas, unknown)
NEW: 9 2023: 31 ▼ 71.0%
USED: 29 2023: 30 ▼ 3.3%

Imported Passenger Vehicle Sales by Make - February 2024

MAKE	FEB'24	FEB'23	+/-%	FEB'24 MKT SHARE	2024 YEAR TO DATE	2024 MKT SHARE
Toyota	3,433	3,002	14.4	38.9%	6,745	38.0%
Mazda	1,223	1,113	9.9	13.9%	2,552	14.4%
Nissan	1,219	993	22.8	13.8%	2,493	14.1%
Honda	723	535	35.1	8.2%	1,381	7.8%
Subaru	654	461	41.9	7.4%	1,307	7.4%
Suzuki	246	213	15.5	2.8%	500	2.8%
BMW	238	240	-0.8	2.7%	456	2.6%
Mitsubishi	230	237	-3.0	2.6%	469	2.6%
Lexus	173	105	64.8	2.0%	341	1.9%
Volkswagen	165	330	-50.0	1.9%	370	2.1%
Audi	151	175	-13.7	1.7%	329	1.9%
Mercedes-Benz	138	131	5.3	1.6%	292	1.6%
Land Rover	35	14	150.0	0.4%	74	0.4%
Ford	32	46	-30.4	0.4%	69	0.4%
Jaguar	22	8	175.0	0.2%	34	0.2%
Jeep	16	8	100.0	0.2%	40	0.2%
Volvo	14	18	-22.2	0.2%	33	0.2%
Porsche	13	11	18.2	0.1%	32	0.2%
Chevrolet	12	13	-7.7	0.1%	20	0.1%
Chrysler	9	6	50.0	0.1%	16	0.1%
Dodge	9	13	-30.8	0.1%	16	0.1%
Mini	9	12	-25.0	0.1%	21	0.1%
Tesla	7	0	700.0	0.1%	12	0.1%
Daihatsu	6	3	100.0	0.1%	9	0.1%
Hyundai	6	4	50.0	0.1%	13	0.1%
Alfa Romeo	5	2	150.0	0.1%	9	0.1%
Peugeot	5	8	-37.5	0.1%	10	0.1%
Kia	3	3	0.0	0.0%	9	0.1%
Renault	3	1	200.0	0.0%	3	0.0%
Bentley	2	3	-33.3	0.0%	7	0.0%
Ferrari	2	0	200.0	0.0%	6	0.0%
Holden	2	6	-66.7	0.0%	8	0.0%
Pontiac	2	2	0.0	0.0%	3	0.0%
Smart	2	3	-33.3	0.0%	3	0.0%
Cadillac	1	2	-50.0	0.0%	3	0.0%
Others	13	28	-53.6	0.1%	44	0.2%
Total	**8,823**	**7,749**	**13.9**	**100.0%**	**17,729**	**100.0%**

Imported Passenger Vehicle Sales by Model - February 2024

MAKE	MODEL	FEB'24	FEB'23	+/-%	FEB'24 MKT SHARE	2024 YEAR TO DATE	2024 MKT SHARE
Toyota	Aqua	961	1,190	-19.2	10.9%	1,831	10.3%
Toyota	Prius	779	697	11.8	8.8%	1,430	8.1%
Mazda	Axela	390	436	-10.6	4.4%	833	4.7%
Nissan	Note	340	230	47.8	3.9%	723	4.1%
Toyota	Corolla	318	254	25.2	3.6%	647	3.6%
Honda	Fit	304	239	27.2	3.4%	607	3.4%
Mazda	Demio	301	268	12.3	3.4%	591	3.3%
Nissan	X-Trail	279	148	88.5	3.2%	578	3.3%
Subaru	Impreza	270	201	34.3	3.1%	572	3.2%
Nissan	Serena	256	183	39.9	2.9%	547	3.1%
Toyota	C-HR	243	148	64.2	2.8%	466	2.6%
Mazda	CX-5	197	192	2.6	2.2%	432	2.4%
Subaru	XV	183	118	55.1	2.1%	361	2.0%
Suzuki	Swift	168	158	6.3	1.9%	339	1.9%
Honda	Vezel	147	70	110.0	1.7%	270	1.5%
Toyota	Vitz	146	109	33.9	1.7%	330	1.9%
Mitsubishi	Outlander	145	166	-12.7	1.6%	280	1.6%
Volkswagen	Golf	106	225	-52.9	1.2%	241	1.4%
Mazda	Premacy	103	76	35.5	1.2%	213	1.2%
Mazda	Atenza	99	79	25.3	1.1%	192	1.1%
Toyota	Spade	95	23	313.0	1.1%	192	1.1%
Toyota	Camry	88	68	29.4	1.0%	182	1.0%
Toyota	Vellfire	82	9	811.1	0.9%	162	0.9%
Toyota	Sai	73	104	-29.8	0.8%	162	0.9%
Nissan	Leaf	69	163	-57.7	0.8%	103	0.6%
Toyota	Auris	60	48	25.0	0.7%	135	0.8%
Lexus	CT 200h	59	29	103.4	0.7%	112	0.6%
Nissan	Juke	56	66	-15.2	0.6%	97	0.5%
Subaru	Forester	56	36	55.6	0.6%	98	0.6%
Toyota	Wish	55	49	12.2	0.6%	118	0.7%
Toyota	Alphard	52	16	225.0	0.6%	98	0.6%
Toyota	RAV4	49	14	250.0	0.6%	103	0.6%
BMW	320i	44	41	7.3	0.5%	80	0.5%
Subaru	Outback	42	17	147.1	0.5%	72	0.4%
Subaru	Legacy	41	56	-26.8	0.5%	92	0.5%
Others		2,167	1,823	18.9	24.6%	4,440	25.0%
Total		**8,823**	**7,749**	**13.9**	**100.0%**	**17,729**	**100.0%**

Kiwi company in major buy-out

UDC Finance has announced it has started the process of purchasing the Bank of Queensland's New Zealand portfolio.

In a statement to Australia's stock exchange, the bank says the sell-off is part of its plan to streamline its operating model and reduce compliance by exiting a lending portfolio in an overseas jurisdiction.

Don Atkinson, chief executive of UDC, says the $238 million book aligns with its core business and features high-quality customers. The transaction is expected to be completed in the second half of 2024.

Chris Screen, the Bank of Queensland's business banking group executive, is pleased to have secured a purchaser in UDC, which is New Zealand's largest non-bank lender.

Under the sale agreement, the bank will sell its assets at 91 per cent of the book value.

Numbers up

Registrations of used-imported cars climbed by 13.9 per cent in February. The total was 8,823 compared to 7,749 during the same month of last year. Toyota's Aqua was the top model. Its total was down by 19.2 per cent to 961. Next up were the Prius on 779 and Mazda's Axela with 390. Last month's top three marques – Toyota, Mazda and Nissan – recorded increases of 14.4, 9.9 and 22.8 per cent respectively.

CAR THEFTS INCREASE

Toyota's Aqua remains our most frequently stolen car after claiming the title for the second year in a row, according to AMI.

The insurance company reveals the model was featured most in almost 17,000 vehicle theft claims last year.

AMI adds 2023 also produced the second-highest annual number of such thefts of the past five years.

Nissan's Tiida was second on the most-stolen chart while the Toyota Corolla jumped into third after being ranked eighth in 2022. Mazda's Demio and Atenza completed the top five.

Auckland suffered the highest volume of vehicle theft with more than one-third of claims coming from there in 2023, followed by Canterbury on 17 per cent and Waikato with 12 per cent.

AMI's data also shows cars made in 2005 were the most common across claims, followed equally by those built in 2006 and 2014.

Wayne Tippet, executive general manager of claims, says: "It's concerning to see another year of elevated vehicle theft claims.

"We're seeing consistent similarity in the price of commonly stolen vehicles too, usually no more than $5,000 in value. These seemingly cost-friendly cars are typically 10 years or older."

Cars without advanced security features, such as keyless ignitions, immobilisers or alarms, and those parked where swift getaways are possible have a higher risk of being stolen.

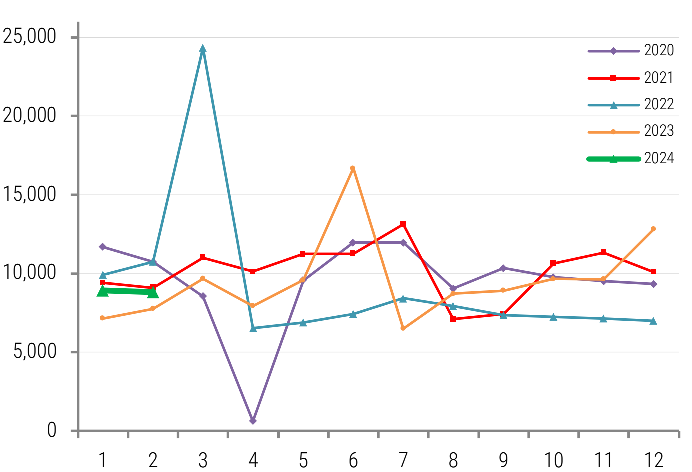
PYROTECHNICS APPROVAL

The Imported Motor Vehicle Industry Association has been advised by the NZ Defence Force that it is no longer offering automotive pyrotechnic disposal.

This is because commercial operator International Pyrotechnic Solutions has now been approved to carry out this type of work.

The company was created to service the needs of Kiwi vehicle companies affected by the Takata airbag recall because a solution was required for the de-arming and disposal of hundreds of thousands of inflators. Email enquiries to Len Julian, technical director, via len@pyrocompany.co.nz.

Used Imported Passenger Registrations - 2020–2024



Used Imported Passenger Vehicle Sales by Motive Power - February 2024

MAKE	FEB'24	FEB'23	+/-%	FEB'24 MKT SHARE	2024 YEAR TO DATE	2024 MKT SHARE
Full battery electric	90	180	-50.0%	1.0%	134	0.8%
Plug-in hybrid electric	102	155	-34.2%	1.2%	208	1.2%
Non plug-in petrol hybrid	4,098	3,513	16.7%	46.4%	7,982	45.0%
Petrol	4,412	3,735	18.1%	50.0%	9,161	51.7%
Diesel	120	166	-27.7%	1.4%	243	1.4%
Others (includes non plug-in diesel hybrid, fuel cell)	1	0	0.0%	0.0%	1	0.0%
Total	**8,823**	**7,749**	**13.9%**		**17,729**	

Group taking over logistics firm

The Optimus Group has entered into a deal to acquire Autocare Services, an Australian logistics company serving the automotive industry.

The global automotive business, which in New Zealand owns a number of companies including JEVIC NZ, Nichibo and Vehicle Inspection NZ, says the agreement will help it expand and build a strong value chain in the market across the Tasman.

Autocare, which has its headquarters in Melbourne, is one of Australia's largest integrated automotive logistics providers and has been operating for more than 60 years. Owned by Linx Cargo Care Group, it has strategic operations in all major port regions of the country. It offers transportation, storage and processing services for imported vehicles.

Autocare also provides services such as storage, cleaning, quarantine and customs clearance, as well as delivering cars to dealerships, and rental and fleet providers.

The Optimus Group, which has its head office in Japan, notes the share acquisition is due to be completed by April 1 as part of its diversification strategy.

"In the current fiscal year, our group is working to expand its business domain and strengthen our value chain suited to the Australian market, including acquiring shares in Autopact, a major vehicle dealership chain, in November 2023," says the company in a statement.

"With Australia's supply of vehicles 100 per cent dependent on imports, logistics plays an essential role in the automotive industry across the vast size of the country."

It adds: "By linking up with existing businesses, including Autopact and used-vehicle imports and retail operations, this acquisition will enable the group to accelerate the building of our 'Australian model'."

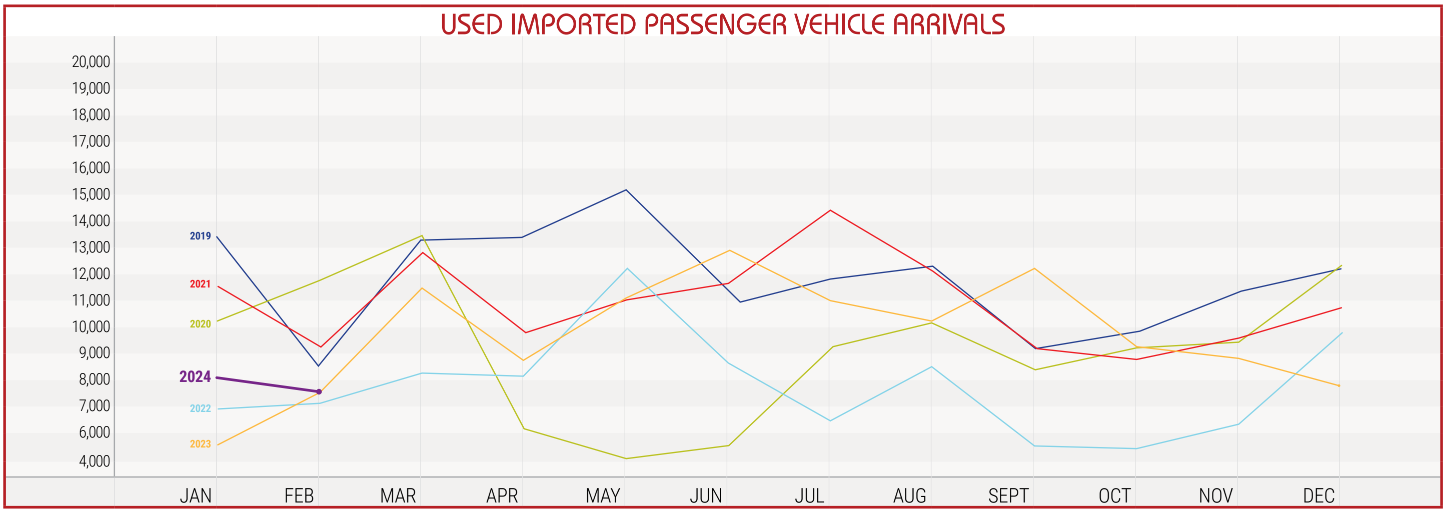
NUMBERS DROP

There were 7,491 used passenger vehicles imported into New Zealand last month.

That was a decrease of 7.8 per cent from 8,121 in January this year but up 1.6 per cent from February 2023's total of 7,372.

Japan accounted for 97.2 per cent of February's overall total with 7,281 units.

In addition, 109 came in from Australia, 43 from Singapore, 27 from the UK, 21 from the US.



Used Imported Passenger Vehicles By Country Of Export

COUNTRY OF EXPORT	2024 JAN '24	2024 FEB '24	2024 FEB MRKT SHARE %	2024 TOTAL	2023 Q1	2023 Q2	2023 Q3	2023 Q4	2023 TOTAL	2023 MRKT SHARE	2022 TOTAL	2022 MRKT SHARE
Australia	74	109	1.5%	**183**	338	306	267	352	1,263	1.1%	2,353	2.6%
Great Britain	20	27	0.4%	**47**	75	60	58	79	272	0.2%	512	0.6%
Japan	7,985	7,281	97.2%	**15,266**	23,317	32,064	32,800	25,281	113,462	98.0%	87,740	95.6%
Singapore	18	43	0.6%	**61**	50	75	48	77	250	0.2%	423	0.5%
USA	12	21	0.3%	**33**	68	56	83	58	265	0.2%	487	0.5%
Other countries	12	10	0.1%	**22**	48	61	61	71	241	0.2%	250	0.3%
Total	**8,121**	**7,491**	**100.0%**	**15,612**	**23,896**	**32,622**	**33,317**	**25,918**	**115,753**	**100.0%**	**91,765**	**100.0%**

Boom in business reported

Turners Automotive Group has announced revised guidance to a net profit before tax of at least $48 million for 2023/24, ahead of $45.5m in the previous 12-month period.

The used-car market and the business continue to demonstrate "strong resilience despite a broader economy under pressure", it states in an update to the NZX in February. "Meanwhile, stabilisation in the official cash rate [OCR] is turning from a headwind into a tailwind for the finance business."

When it comes to automotive, Turners Cars in Timaru opened in October 2023 and the new Napier branch opened just last month.

"Margins on owned stock continue to hold up well and some good progress is being made in the transition of wholesale auction units into the retail sales channel," says the company.

Damaged and end-of-life vehicle volumes, excluding one-off weather events, continue to grow.

With interest margins stabilising, the finance division has seen some small expansion in the past few months. The loan book is growing at a modest pace and arrears are performing well within expected levels.

"There is still some sensitivity to the OCR track and any reduction in the OCR during 2024 would be positive for bottom-line growth."

New insurance-policy sales are tracking well and ahead of the 2023 financial year, while claims ratios are described as "stable". Investment returns continue to improve.

As for credit management, debt-load levels are increasing as is the volume of payment arrangements in place although economic conditions are making payment arrangements more difficult.

"There is a clear increase in debt load from the SME sector as pressure intensifies in parts of the economy."

The company reports it's approaching a decade of sustainable dividend growth, with an 11 per cent compound annual dividend growth rate since the 2015 financial year.

BOOST FOR DEALERS

Traders sold 14,814 second-hand cars to the public in February, which was an increase of 2.6 per cent from 14,437 during the same month of 2023.

There were also 12,438 public-to-trader deals last month, which was up by 11.7 per cent from 11,140 in February last year, and 39,817 private transactions.

SECONDHAND CAR SALES - February 2024

	DEALER TO PUBLIC				PUBLIC TO PUBLIC			PUBLIC TO DEALER		
REGION	FEB '24	FEB '23	+/- %	MARKET SHARE	FEB '24	FEB '23	+/- %	FEB '24	FEB '23	+/- %
Northland	482	414	16.4	3.25	1,790	1,623	10.3	181	171	5.8
Auckland	5,083	5,471	-7.1	34.31	13,629	13,349	2.1	5,399	4,984	8.3
Waikato	1,524	1,322	15.3	10.29	3,784	3,770	0.4	1,056	1,013	4.2
Bay of Plenty	964	916	5.2	6.51	2,730	2,685	1.7	620	549	12.9
Gisborne	126	98	28.6	0.85	357	274	30.3	35	29	20.7
Hawke's Bay	510	487	4.7	3.44	1,475	1,143	29.0	356	252	41.3
Taranaki	340	332	2.4	2.30	1,030	983	4.8	177	177	0.0
Manawatu-Whanganui	809	734	10.2	5.46	2,051	2,077	-1.3	706	628	12.4
Wellington	1,416	1,298	9.1	9.56	3,075	3,097	-0.7	1,118	893	25.2
Tasman	119	125	-4.8	0.80	453	449	0.9	7	6	16.7
Nelson	120	113	6.2	0.81	378	446	-15.2	133	154	-13.6
Marlborough	133	110	20.9	0.90	404	409	-1.2	67	64	4.7
West Coast	111	118	-5.9	0.75	300	301	-0.3	41	30	36.7
Canterbury	2,104	1,972	6.7	14.20	5,275	5,148	2.5	1,959	1,649	18.8
Otago	656	617	6.3	4.43	1,980	2,050	-3.4	432	389	11.1
Southland	259	261	-0.8	1.75	987	890	10.9	151	152	-0.7
Other	58	49	18.4	0.39	119	147	-19.0	0	0	0.0
NZ Total	**14,814**	**14,437**	**2.6**	**100.00**	**39,817**	**38,841**	**2.5**	**12,438**	**11,140**	**11.7**

New Passenger Vehicle Sales by Make - February 2024

MAKE	FEB'24	FEB'23	+/-%	FEB'24 MKT SHARE	2024 YEAR TO DATE	2024 MKT SHARE
Toyota	1,128	745	51.4	19.0%	2,755	19.6%
Mitsubishi	580	473	22.6	9.7%	1,722	12.3%
Suzuki	476	766	-37.9	8.0%	1,013	7.2%
Kia	423	395	7.1	7.1%	1,250	8.9%
Ford	375	253	48.2	6.3%	818	5.8%
Honda	310	322	-3.7	5.2%	655	4.7%
Mazda	290	308	-5.8	4.9%	608	4.3%
MG	223	310	-28.1	3.7%	419	3.0%
Nissan	222	139	59.7	3.7%	590	4.2%
Hyundai	207	563	-63.2	3.5%	499	3.6%
GWM	199	0	19,900.0	3.3%	496	3.5%
Volkswagen	169	196	-13.8	2.8%	376	2.7%
Tesla	152	168	-9.5	2.6%	179	1.3%
Subaru	126	189	-33.3	2.1%	345	2.5%
Mercedes-Benz	123	96	28.1	2.1%	242	1.7%
Lexus	117	44	165.9	2.0%	228	1.6%
Land Rover	111	114	-2.6	1.9%	218	1.6%
Skoda	111	159	-30.2	1.9%	188	1.3%
BMW	98	138	-29.0	1.6%	258	1.8%
Audi	97	121	-19.8	1.6%	215	1.5%
Mahindra	52	3	1,633.3	0.9%	100	0.7%
Peugeot	48	80	-40.0	0.8%	104	0.7%
Porsche	47	55	-14.5	0.8%	142	1.0%
Mini	45	48	-6.3	0.8%	97	0.7%
BYD	37	142	-73.9	0.6%	76	0.5%
Cupra	29	36	-19.4	0.5%	69	0.5%
Volvo	25	34	-26.5	0.4%	58	0.4%
Jaguar	20	17	17.6	0.3%	35	0.2%
Jeep	15	21	-28.6	0.3%	32	0.2%
SsangYong	14	19	-26.3	0.2%	52	0.4%
Haval	10	153	-93.5	0.2%	22	0.2%
LDV	10	1	900.0	0.2%	16	0.1%
Polestar	8	6	33.3	0.1%	9	0.1%
Ineos	7	0	700.0	0.1%	16	0.1%
Citroen	6	11	-45.5	0.1%	17	0.1%
Aston Martin	5	6	-16.7	0.1%	6	0.0%
Alfa Romeo	4	8	-50.0	0.1%	7	0.0%
Maserati	4	1	300.0	0.1%	13	0.1%
Bentley	3	1	200.0	0.1%	7	0.0%
Can-Am	3	3	0.0	0.1%	8	0.1%
Fiat	3	7	-57.1	0.1%	8	0.1%
Isuzu	3	10	-70.0	0.1%	28	0.2%
Renault	3	28	-89.3	0.1%	14	0.1%
Chevrolet	2	2	0.0	0.0%	11	0.1%
Others	10	50	-80.0	0.2%	30	0.2%
Total	**5,950**	**6,241**	**-4.7**	**100.0%**	**14,051**	**100.0%**

New Passenger Vehicle Sales by Model - February 2024

MAKE	MODEL	FEB'24	FEB'23	+/-%	FEB'24 MKT SHARE	2024 YEAR TO DATE	2024 MKT SHARE
Toyota	RAV4	466	201	131.8	7.8%	1,084	7.7%
Suzuki	Swift	227	486	-53.3	3.8%	510	3.6%
Ford	Everest	220	111	98.2	3.7%	524	3.7%
Mitsubishi	Outlander	218	192	13.5	3.7%	647	4.6%
Mitsubishi	ASX	175	26	573.1	2.9%	613	4.4%
Kia	Sportage	156	96	62.5	2.6%	264	1.9%
Toyota	Highlander	154	112	37.5	2.6%	448	3.2%
Tesla	Model Y	145	95	52.6	2.4%	170	1.2%
MG	ZS	144	232	-37.9	2.4%	274	2.0%
Mitsubishi	Eclipse Cross	142	215	-34.0	2.4%	349	2.5%
Toyota	Corolla Cross	131	67	95.5	2.2%	373	2.7%
Mazda	CX-5	128	155	-17.4	2.2%	274	2.0%
Kia	Seltos	124	6	1,966.7	2.1%	434	3.1%
Honda	ZR-V	105	0	10,500.0	1.8%	258	1.8%
Suzuki	Jimny	105	73	43.8	1.8%	178	1.3%
Nissan	X-Trail	104	77	35.1	1.7%	238	1.7%
Honda	CR-V	99	114	-13.2	1.7%	218	1.6%
GWM	Haval H6	98	0	9,800.0	1.6%	223	1.6%
Toyota	Corolla	94	103	-8.7	1.6%	219	1.6%
GWM	Haval Jolion	83	0	8,300.0	1.4%	205	1.5%
Toyota	Yaris Cross	83	70	18.6	1.4%	176	1.3%
Honda	Jazz	82	176	-53.4	1.4%	127	0.9%
Nissan	Qashqai	77	32	140.6	1.3%	294	2.1%
Suzuki	Ignis	75	96	-21.9	1.3%	132	0.9%
Hyundai	Kona	68	216	-68.5	1.1%	150	1.1%
Toyota	Land Cruiser	63	15	320.0	1.1%	139	1.0%
Hyundai	Tucson	60	106	-43.4	1.0%	141	1.0%
Ford	Escape	58	48	20.8	1.0%	90	0.6%
Volkswagen	Tiguan	58	51	13.7	1.0%	148	1.1%
Volkswagen	T-Roc	52	59	-11.9	0.9%	73	0.5%
Kia	Niro	49	60	-18.3	0.8%	113	0.8%
MG	MG 3	49	50	-2.0	0.8%	90	0.6%
Land Rover	Defender	46	43	7.0	0.8%	88	0.6%
Suzuki	S-Cross	44	26	69.2	0.7%	114	0.8%
Mazda	CX-3	42	26	61.5	0.7%	73	0.5%
Hyundai	Santa Fe	41	143	-71.3	0.7%	117	0.8%
Subaru	Outback	41	65	-36.9	0.7%	112	0.8%
Ford	Puma	40	23	73.9	0.7%	96	0.7%
Toyota	C-HR	40	90	-55.6	0.7%	61	0.4%
Skoda	Superb	39	39	0.0	0.7%	51	0.4%
Lexus	NX	38	5	660.0	0.6%	85	0.6%
Subaru	Forester	34	53	-35.8	0.6%	86	0.6%
Mercedes-Benz	GLE	33	8	312.5	0.6%	61	0.4%
Subaru	Crosstrek	33	0	3,300.0	0.6%	96	0.7%
Mazda	Mazda3	32	39	-17.9	0.5%	56	0.4%
Others		1,555	2,341	-33.6	26.1%	3,779	26.9%
Total		**5,950**	**6,241**	**-4.7**	**100.0%**	**14,051**	**100.0%**

Emissions targets 'heat' next year

The drive for distributors to import low-emissions vehicles remains despite the demise of the clean car discount (CCD).

And Gary Collins, general manager of automotive with Suzuki NZ, is hoping for a smoother ride when it comes to sales this year.

Despite the company maintaining its market share in 2023, feebates and government policy had more impact than expected.

Now the focus turns to the clean car standard (CCS), under which the target for new light vehicles has this year been reduced by 11.1 grams of carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions per unit. It means an average-weight car has an emissions goal of 133.9g per kilometre.

That said, Collins emphasises that for vehicles coming in at less than 1,200kg, which is most of Suzuki's range, the target is 113.6gCO2/km.

This means an automatic Swift GL, "one of the most fuel-efficient internal combustion engine [ICE] vehicles on the market and more efficient than a number of hybrids", incurs an 8g penalty or $360 in CCS fees.

While not ideal, he describes these sorts of values as "manageable" although "the shift in 2025 is where the heat starts to come on".

Collins explains: "The targets go down another 21.3g/km while penalties go up 50 per cent, so that Swift GL auto moves to $1,957 per vehicle.

"It's important all distributors have some battery electric vehicles from 2025 onwards to help offset penalties incurred on ICE and hybrid models."

The industry will be closely following the outcome of the government reviewing the CCS.

"All brands are carefully planning their model line-ups, not only for achievement of current targets but also to build credits for future years.

"Our line-up has altered to minimise penalties with the move to hybrid powertrains for the Vitara and S-Cross, along with expected improvements in emissions from the new Swift, strengthening our overall emissions position."

Collins says Suzuki NZ was on a bit of a roller coaster in 2023, flipping between CCD rebates applying across much of the fleet, and then to no rebates and a number of penalties.

"So much change in a short period can't be easy for customers to fully understand. Combined with impacts of the general election, high cost of living and low economic confidence, many of our customers went into hiatus.

"We had a period when the programme worked in our favour and a time when it certainly did not, so there are mixed feelings on its abandonment."

Collins notes the marque had a strong first half of 2023 and was on track to exceed the more than 8,000 registrations it achieved in the whole of 2022.

"For Suzuki it was a game of two halves. We took a bit of a beating in the second half. 2022 was our best-selling year ever, [but] with the economic and government factors, it wasn't realistic we would achieve that level of sales again last year.

"While not where we would ideally want to be, our sales of 6,929 in 2023 were expected."

The Swift was the brand's top model on 3,922 units, and the S-Cross Hybrid and Jimny also performed well.

Last year saw considerable market-share shifts for some Suzukis. However, it has remained a consistent performer to take out about five per cent of the market in each of the past three years. It notched up 4.7 per cent in 2023 to be the sixth best-selling marque.

The company is now looking to improve its position in the SUV segment with the introduction of hybrid powertrains for the Vitara and S-Cross models.

"With adjustments in government emissions policies, we expect mild hybrids will be major sellers in this segment as customers look to reduce running costs," says Collins.

"With a tightened economy, customers originally looking at larger SUVs may opt for smaller, more affordable options. We have experienced that as fuel prices rise, many downsize to decrease their cost of living."

BUSINESSES EXPAND

BYD North Shore has become the marque's 15th franchise in New Zealand after extending its partnership with the Andrew Simms Group.

It also means Andrew Simms operates out of 11 sites, with one in Dunedin and the rest in Auckland.

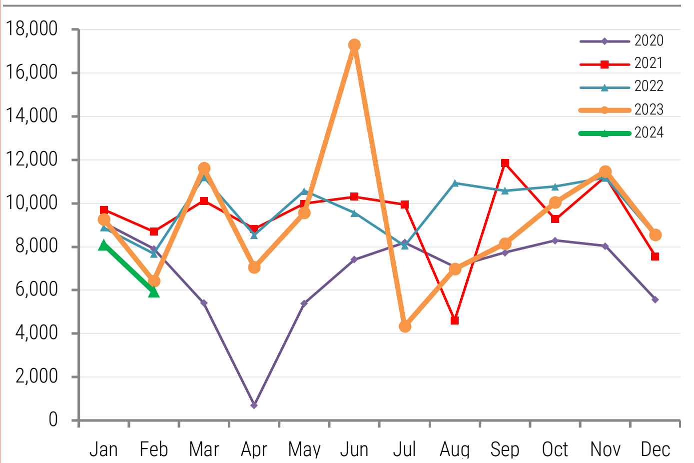
Warren Willmot, of BYD NZ, says the new North Shore dealership has "future capacity to be able to charge up to 40 cars at one time with eight of those being on a DC charger".

Sales drop

Registrations of new cars fell by 4.7 per cent last month compared to February 2023 – from 6,241 to 5,950. February's top model was Toyota's RAV4 with 466 units for a year-on-year jump of 131.8 per cent from 201. The Suzuki Swift came second with 227 and Ford's Everest was third on 220.

Last month's top three marques were Toyota on 1,128 registrations, Mitsubishi with 580 and Suzuki on 476.

New Passenger Registrations - 2020–2024



New Passenger Vehicle Sales by Motive Power - February 2024

MAKE	FEB'24	FEB'23	+/-%	FEB'24 MKT SHARE	2024 YEAR TO DATE	2024 MKT SHARE
Full battery electric	362	737	-50.9%	6.1%	605	4.3%
Plug-in hybrid electric	164	351	-53.3%	2.8%	366	2.6%
Non plug-in petrol hybrid	1,890	1,265	49.4%	31.8%	4,319	30.7%
Petrol	2,907	3,340	-13.0%	48.9%	7,239	51.5%
Diesel	627	548	14.4%	10.5%	1,522	10.8%
Others (includes non plug-in diesel hybrid, fuel cell)	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0.0%
Total	**5,950**	**6,241**	**-4.7%**		**14,051**	

Demand for utes in Japan rises

Marques in Japan are reintroducing overseas-made models into the domestic market to offer more options for buyers of vehicles suitable for camping and skiing.

Mitsubishi, for example, started selling the latest iteration of its Triton there in February. The decision ends a 12-year hiatus for the ute in Japan.

A four-wheel-drive variant there starts at around NZ$54,800 and is made in Thailand. It comes with a diesel engine, new suspension and seven driving modes.

The company stopped selling the Triton at home in 2011 amid shrinking demand, but has revived it after people became interested in vehicles for outdoor activities during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We are targeting those who want to own a car that's a little different," says Yoshiki Masuda, Mitsubishi's chief product specialist. "We hope to revitalise the domestic pick-up truck market."

Honda is planning to launch its India-made WR-V in Japan in its first introduction to the home market of cars made on the sub-continent.

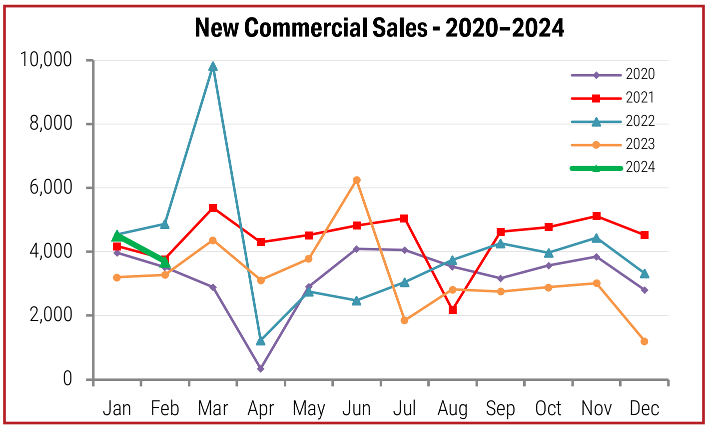
The compact SUV will join its domestic line-up of the Vezel and ZR-V in the same segment.

The popularity of SUVs and utes was on the rise in Japan even before the pandemic with Toyota bringing its Hilux back there in 2017 after a 13-year break.

Meanwhile, two utes could soon hit the market down under if plans by Omoda and Jaecoo's parent company are realised.

Charlie Zhang, executive vice-president of Chery, recently said the Chinese carmaker is planning to develop two pick-ups.

One of these will be a small to medium-sized model while the other will be a large fully electric or plug-in hybrid.



New Commercial Sales by Make - February 2024

MAKE	FEB'24	FEB'23	+/-%	FEB'24 MKT SHARE	2024 YEAR TO DATE	2024 MKT SHARE
Ford	1,093	932	17.3	29.5%	2,696	32.7%
Toyota	898	940	-4.5	24.2%	1,852	22.5%
Mitsubishi	437	234	86.8	11.8%	766	9.3%
Nissan	219	108	102.8	5.9%	397	4.8%
Isuzu	218	211	3.3	5.9%	554	6.7%
Volkswagen	118	53	122.6	3.2%	268	3.3%
Fuso	92	105	-12.4	2.5%	142	1.7%
Mercedes-Benz	71	70	1.4	1.9%	132	1.6%
LDV	55	132	-58.3	1.5%	126	1.5%
Scania	52	53	-1.9	1.4%	117	1.4%
Iveco	51	36	41.7	1.4%	98	1.2%
Fiat	40	30	33.3	1.1%	165	2.0%
Hino	38	65	-41.5	1.0%	85	1.0%
CRRC	35	0	3,500.0	0.9%	37	0.4%
Volvo	33	30	10.0	0.9%	75	0.9%
Chevrolet	31	13	138.5	0.8%	68	0.8%
DAF	28	21	33.3	0.8%	66	0.8%
Great Wall	28	24	16.7	0.8%	77	0.9%
Kenworth	27	13	107.7	0.7%	64	0.8%
Hyundai	22	49	-55.1	0.6%	103	1.3%
Others	125	150	-16.7	3.4%	347	4.2%
Total	**3,711**	**3,269**	**13.5**	**100.0%**	**8,235**	**100.0%**

New Commercial Sales by Model - February 2024

MAKE	MODEL	FEB'24	FEB'23	+/-%	FEB'24 MKT SHARE	2024 YEAR TO DATE	2024 MKT SHARE
Ford	Ranger	955	859	11.2	25.7%	2,426	29.5%
Toyota	Hilux	692	846	-18.2	18.6%	1,350	16.4%
Mitsubishi	Triton	437	230	90.0	11.8%	766	9.3%
Nissan	Navara	219	108	102.8	5.9%	397	4.8%
Toyota	Hiace	160	81	97.5	4.3%	416	5.1%
Ford	Transit	138	73	89.0	3.7%	270	3.3%
Isuzu	D-Max	106	116	-8.6	2.9%	351	4.3%
Volkswagen	Amarok	87	8	987.5	2.3%	211	2.6%
Mercedes-Benz	Sprinter	51	47	8.5	1.4%	94	1.1%
Isuzu	N Series	48	35	37.1	1.3%	92	1.1%
Isuzu	F Series	46	51	-9.8	1.2%	79	1.0%
Toyota	Land Cruiser	46	13	253.8	1.2%	86	1.0%
Fiat	Ducato	40	30	33.3	1.1%	165	2.0%
Iveco	Daily	40	28	42.9	1.1%	79	1.0%
CRRC	eS11 MAX	35	0	3,500.0	0.9%	37	0.4%
Great Wall	Cannon	28	24	16.7	0.8%	77	0.9%
Chevrolet	Silverado 1500	27	9	200.0	0.7%	55	0.7%
DAF	CF	27	19	42.1	0.7%	63	0.8%
LDV	Deliver 9	25	28	-10.7	0.7%	55	0.7%
Hino	500	19	26	-26.9	0.5%	34	0.4%
Others		485	638	-24.0	13.1%	1,132	13.7%
Total		**3,711**	**3,269**	**13.5**	**100.0%**	**8,235**	**100.0%**

"[A ute] is something we are planning for," he said. "For the traditional pick-up, we will see if there are emerging opportunities for us. We will see if we can do it through mergers or acquisitions."

If the project does come to light, the larger model available will probably be retailed in New Zealand and Australia under the Omoda or Jaecoo brand.

BYD is also planning to release its own plug-in ute later this year, adding to Omoda and Jaecoo's list of competitors alongside more established marques.

Omoda's current range consists of the petrol-powered C5 SUV, which is also offered as the fully electric E5. Its larger C9 and C7 SUVs are set to arrive here at a later date.

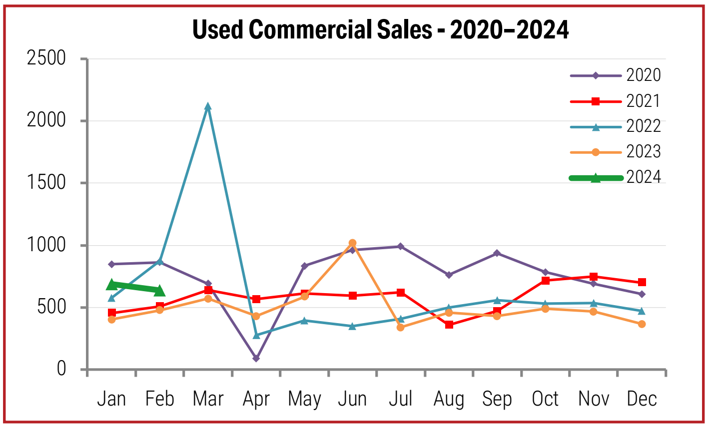
Finally, Isuzu Trucks NZ came first on 2023's ladder for truck sales in this country.

General manager Dave Ballantyne says the past few years have been challenging, especially with Covid-19 disruptions and pressure on the supply chain.

"But 2023 proved to be a turning point as we've been able to focus on delivering the best possible transport solutions to customers."

The company notched up year-on-year growth of 8.7 per cent with 1,240 trucks registered for a 16 per cent market share, according to data released by the Motor Industry Association for models with a gross vehicle mass of more than 3,500kg.

Ballantyne says: "The 2023 result is credit to the quality of our product and the outstanding efforts of our dealer partners."



FORD CLAIMS DOUBLE

Registrations of new commercial vehicles last month climbed by 13.5 per cent year on year to 3,711 units from 3,269.

The top model was once again Ford's Ranger with 955, up by 11.2 per cent. Toyota's Hilux was second with 692, down by 18.2 per cent, and Mitsubishi's Triton came third on 437 for a 90 per cent jump.

Ford was also last month's top-selling marque for new commercials with 1,093 units. That was up by 17.3 per cent from 932 in February 2023.

There were 653 used-imported commercials registered for a year-on-year rise of 37.2 per cent from 476. The top model was Toyota's Hiace with 234 units.

Used Commercial Sales by Make - February 2024

MAKE	FEB'24	FEB'23	+/-%	FEB'24 MKT SHARE	2024 YEAR TO DATE	2024 MKT SHARE
Toyota	309	173	78.6	47.3%	659	49.2%
Nissan	146	108	35.2	22.4%	307	22.9%
Ford	42	27	55.6	6.4%	82	6.1%
Mitsubishi	34	30	13.3	5.2%	56	4.2%
Isuzu	33	32	3.1	5.1%	59	4.4%
Hino	29	36	-19.4	4.4%	65	4.9%
Mazda	9	8	12.5	1.4%	17	1.3%
Chevrolet	6	4	50.0	0.9%	9	0.7%
Suzuki	6	5	20.0	0.9%	11	0.8%
Volvo	6	1	500.0	0.9%	7	0.5%
Volkswagen	5	1	400.0	0.8%	12	0.9%
Daihatsu	4	9	-55.6	0.6%	11	0.8%
Fuso	4	2	100.0	0.6%	4	0.3%
Dodge	3	3	0.0	0.5%	5	0.4%
Fiat	2	2	0.0	0.3%	10	0.7%
LDV	2	3	-33.3	0.3%	2	0.1%
Mercedes-Benz	2	0	200.0	0.3%	3	0.2%
Citroen	1	0	100.0	0.2%	1	0.1%
DAF	1	2	-50.0	0.2%	1	0.1%
Freightliner	1	1	0.0	0.2%	2	0.1%
Others	8	29	-72.4	1.2%	17	1.3%
Total	**653**	**476**	**37.2**	**100.0%**	**1,340**	**100.0%**

Used Commercial Sales by Model - February 2024

MAKE	MODEL	FEB'24	FEB'23	+/-%	FEB'24 MKT SHARE	2024 YEAR TO DATE	2024 MKT SHARE
Toyota	Hiace	234	120	95.0	35.8%	501	37.4%
Nissan	NV350	95	74	28.4	14.5%	196	14.6%
Toyota	Regius	41	19	115.8	6.3%	78	5.8%
Ford	Transit	30	0	3,000.0	4.6%	51	3.8%
Fuso	Canter	29	21	38.1	4.4%	42	3.1%
Isuzu	Elf	26	22	18.2	4.0%	44	3.3%
Nissan	Caravan	24	13	84.6	3.7%	51	3.8%
Hino	Dutro	22	25	-12.0	3.4%	47	3.5%
Toyota	Dyna	19	14	35.7	2.9%	42	3.1%
Nissan	NV200	12	6	100.0	1.8%	26	1.9%
Toyota	Toyoace	9	11	-18.2	1.4%	14	1.0%
Nissan	Civilian	7	4	75.0	1.1%	10	0.7%
Ford	Ranger	6	13	-53.8	0.9%	17	1.3%
Hino	Ranger	6	9	-33.3	0.9%	13	1.0%
Suzuki	Carry	6	5	20.0	0.9%	10	0.7%
Nissan	Atlas	5	5	0.0	0.8%	14	1.0%
Hino	FM	5	0	500.0	0.8%	5	0.4%
Daihatsu	Hijet	4	9	-55.6	0.6%	11	0.8%
Isuzu	Forward	4	7	-42.9	0.6%	9	0.7%
Mazda	Titan	4	3	33.3	0.6%	5	0.4%
Others		65	96	-32.3	10.0%	154	11.5%
Total		**653**	**476**	**37.2**	**100.0%**	**1,340**	**100.0%**

Asian giants battle it out

Imports surge

New-car imports in February came in at 7,739. This was up by 21.3 per cent from 6,381 in the same month a year ago and 71.8 per cent above January's total of 4,504.

Registrations of 5,950 new passenger vehicles were completed last month, which was down 4.7 per cent from February 2023 and represented a fall of 26.6 per cent from 8,101 units in January.

The numbers have resulted in the stock of new cars still to be registered rising by 1,789 to 70,394. Daily sales, as averaged over the previous 12 months, stand at 299 per day – down from 316 a year earlier.

February's results mean stock at-hand has increased to 236 days, or 7.8 months, if sales continue at the current rate. In the same month of 2023, it stood at 257 days.

China has surpassed Japan to become the world's largest exporter of vehicles, according to associations in both countries.

Investment in electric cars, an area where Japanese companies have been more cautious, has been a major factor in the boom across the Chinese industry.

It exported 4.91 million units last year, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers.

With one-in-three of the country's exports being totally electric, its customs authority estimates the total could even be 5.22m for a 57 per cent jump on 2022.

Meanwhile, the Japan Automobile Manufacturers' Association says 4.42m vehicles were shipped from its shores during 2023.

It's worth noting that in contrast to their Chinese competitors, Japanese marques also produce huge quantities abroad.

As for Toyota Motor Corporation (TMC), the world's most popular carmaker got even bigger after notching up record results last year.

It returned sales and production highs after putting the semi-conductor shortage behind it, and increasing output to meet demand in the US and Europe.

Its global deliveries rose by 7.2 per cent to 11.23m units. "Demand among customers shifted to hybrid and plug-in hybrid vehicles," says a spokesperson. "This is one of the reasons behind 2023's results."

TMC's overseas sales also reached a record after rising by 4.1 per cent to 8.93m. Registrations of petrol hybrids, plug-ins and hydrogen fuel-cell models rose by 35 per cent to a new high of 3.7m.

The company's global production climbed by 8.6 per cent to 11.52m. Japan remained its biggest production base where Toyota and Lexus output rose by 27 per cent to 3.37m units in 2023.

Honda's N-Box was Japan's most popular vehicle for the second straight year. Sales of the mini-vehicle climbed by 14.4 per cent from 2022 to 231,385 units in 2023.

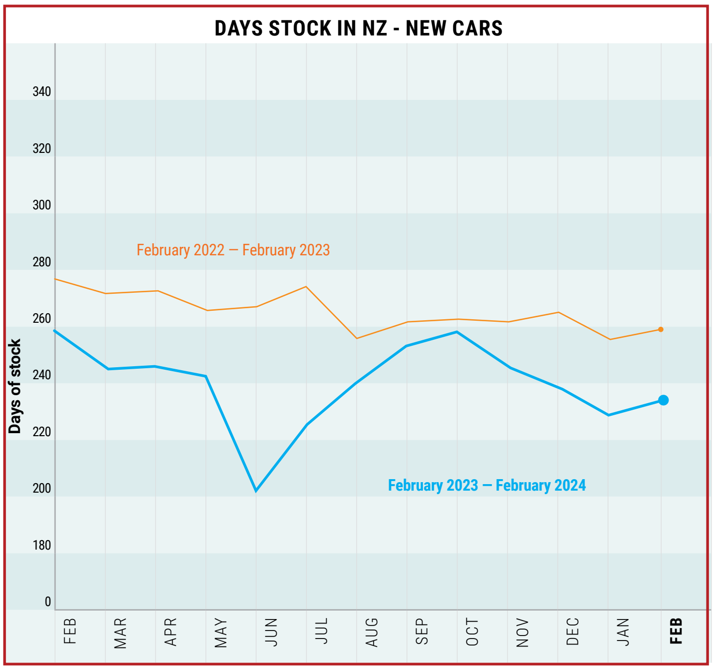
Toyota's Yaris sub-compact came second with 194,364 units, up by 15.3 per cent. It was followed by Daihatsu's kei-class Tanto with a 47.8 per cent jump to 159,392.

Nissan's Sakura – another mini-vehicle – was Japan's best-selling EV. It placed 36th in the overall rankings with 37,140 registrations.

A record 88,535 EVs were sold in Japan last year, accounting for 2.2 per cent of all new-car sales.

Dealer stock of new cars in New Zealand

	CAR SALES		VARIANCE	STOCK	DAILY SALES - 12-MONTH AVERAGE	DAYS STOCK AT HAND
	IMPORTED	REGISTERED				
Feb '23	6,381	6,243	138	81,195	316	257
Mar '23	7,506	11,605	-4,099	77,096	317	243
Apr '23	6,045	7,029	-984	76,112	313	243
May '23	7,995	9,541	-1,546	74,566	310	241
Jun '23	10,725	17,239	-6,514	68,052	331	206
Jul '23	8,183	4,332	3,851	71,903	321	224
Aug '23	9,399	6,972	2,427	74,330	310	240
Sep '23	10,030	8,126	1,904	76,234	303	251
Oct '23	10,751	10,037	714	76,948	301	255
Nov '23	7,825	11,476	-3,651	73,297	302	242
Dec '23	7,454	8,549	-1,095	72,202	302	239
Jan '24	4,504	8,101	-3,597	68,605	299	229
Feb '24	**7,739**	**5,950**	**1,789**	**70,394**	**299**	**236**
Year to date	**12,243**	**14,051**				
Change on last month	**71.8%**	**-26.6%**		**2.6%**		
Change on Feb 2023	**21.3%**	**-4.7%**		**-13.3%**		
	MORE IMPORTED	LESS SOLD		LESS STOCK		



However, the greener alternative to internal combustion engines continues to struggle to attract buyers in the world's fourth-largest automotive market.

Overall, EV registrations in Japan increased by 50 per cent in 2023 compared with the previous year's total of 58,813.

Of those, 43,991 were standard size and 44,544 were kei-class models. The ratio of EVs to total car sales was 1.7 per cent for standard-size models and 3.3 per cent for kei cars, up from 1.4 and 2.2 per cent respectively in 2022.

The total number of standard-size cars sold in Japan last year was 2.7m, up by 19 per cent.

Hybrids had the biggest market share – 55 per cent – thanks to 1.5m units. Petrol-powered models came in at 36 per cent.

Back to China and BYD retailed more than three million battery-powered cars in 2023, its most ever.

Even as sales surged, heavy competition and a sustained price war took a financial toll on many carmakers.

That said, BYD sold 1.6m EVs and 1.4m hybrids for a year-on-year increase of 62 per cent.

All told, Chinese marques retailed around 9.4m EVs and hybrids in 2023, up from 6.9m in 2022. It expects the total for 2024 to top 11.5m.

Already the world's largest automotive market, China is now also its fastest growing and is racing ahead in the EV transition. The country's electric-car makers and their suppliers now employ about 1.5 million people.

China dominates the supply chain for battery-powered cars, from mining and processing of cobalt and other materials used in lithium-ion batteries to deploying robots on production lines.

A big reason for it soaring ahead has been the Chinese government's heavy financial support to develop the industry.

When financial incentives for consumers expired as 2022 ended, marques slashed sticker prices. Many, including BYD, introduced another round of cuts in 2023, intensifying the price war.

Last year's price-cutting was started by Tesla, which has a factory in Shanghai. In January 2023, it lowered prices in China for the second time in three months and others followed.

As fast as China's EV sales boom, companies invest in factories and research, often fuelled by loans from state-owned banks and assistance from municipalities.

As worldwide competition for electric cars becomes more intense, political ramifications have heightened.

For instance, policymakers in the US have made it harder for foreign manufacturers to become partners with American companies. In Europe, lawmakers are investigating China's state subsidies, which could lead to tariffs being imposed by the EU.

Stock levels fall

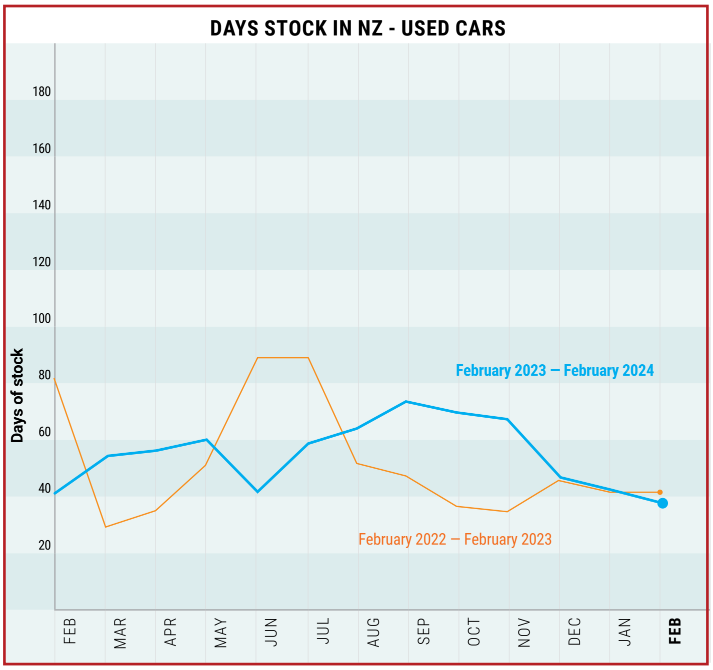
There were 7,491 used cars imported last month, up by 1.6 per cent from February 2023 when 7,372 units crossed our borders. However, the latest figure was down by 7.8 per cent from January this year.

Some 8,823 units were registered last month. That was 13.8 per cent more than the 7,750 in February 2023 but down by 0.9 per cent from 8,906 during January.

With 1,332 fewer used cars imported than registered last month, unregistered stock on dealers' yards, or in compliance shops, came to 12,378 units.

This was 9.7 per cent less than the 13,710 at the end of January and marks five consecutive months of decline. However, the February total was 6.5 per cent more than 11,624 a year ago.

Average daily registrations increased to 323 – up from 287 a year ago – and there's 38 days' stock remaining.



Dealer stock of used cars in New Zealand

	CAR SALES IMPORTED	CAR SALES REGISTERED	VARIANCE	STOCK	DAILY SALES - 12-MONTH AVERAGE	DAYS STOCK AT HAND
Feb '23	7,372	7,750	-378	11,624	287	40
Mar '23	11,442	9,665	1,777	13,401	247	54
Apr '23	8,768	7,931	837	14,238	251	57
May '23	10,954	9,577	1,377	15,615	258	60
Jun '23	12,900	16,668	-3,768	11,847	284	42
Jul '23	11,000	6,490	4,510	16,357	279	59
Aug '23	10,265	8,715	1,550	17,907	281	64
Sep '23	12,052	8,906	3,146	21,053	285	74
Oct '23	9,044	9,644	-600	20,453	292	70
Nov '23	8,711	9,639	-928	19,525	299	65
Dec '23	7,772	12,802	-5,030	14,495	315	46
Jan '24	8,121	8,906	-785	13,710	320	43
Feb '24	**7,491**	**8,823**	**-1,332**	**12,378**	**323**	**38**
Year to date	**15,612**	**17,729**				
Change on last month	**-7.8%**	**-0.9%**		**-9.7%**		
Change on Feb 2023	**1.6%** MORE IMPORTED	**13.8%** MORE SOLD		**6.5%** MORE STOCK		