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Unregistered dealers fuel extra complaints

New figures show rising discontent about traders but the amount of bans being dished out is falling

The number of annual complaints about dealers is set to hit the highest level in three years after more than 100 were lodged with the registrar of motor-vehicle traders in seven months.

Figures provided to Autofile by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) show there were 107 complaints about traders between July 1, 2024, and January 31, 2025.

This is only one shy of the total received for the whole year from July 2023 to June 2024 and well above the 70 recorded in 2022/23.

Concerns about unregistered trading are the most common cause of complaint and the increase follows a plea for legitimate dealers to provide the registrar with information about rogue traders.

Complaints and investigations about dealers are handled by the Motor Vehicle Traders Register (MVTR), which is operated by Occupational Regulation, part of the market integrity branch of MBIE.

Concerns about illegal trading are the most common cause of complaint

Duncan Connor, registrar of motor-vehicle traders, says details of the numbers of cars sold by a dealer or the types of vehicles sold are not recorded.

However, of the 107 complaints received between July 2024 and the end of January 2025, some 75 related to unregistered traders with 44 of these originating from across the Auckland region.

The number of unregistered trading allegations increased notably in the months after a MVTR newsletter was released in July covering issues related to the problem.

"A number of these complaints continue to be under investigation," says Connor.

"While the complaints process easily allows for complainants to be anonymous to ensure people feel

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GUEST EDITORIAL

Weathering storm key to being successful

Ben McFadgen says regulatory obstacles are limiting productivity across the rental sector

The close of 2024 was a wet fizzer for many, so you have to wonder what 2025 will bring.


BEN McFADGEN
CEO, Rental Vehicle Association NZ

The past five years delivered a pandemic, supply chain and cost pressures, geopolitical unrest and now a domestic recession.

For us, a focus on stability and resilience is needed. Without them, sustainability is a pipe dream.

The rental-vehicle sector is still recovering. It has dealt with a lot over the past half-decade – cost hikes, regulatory change, and fleet, parts, staffing and demand issues.

It needs some breathing room, but this peak season has been much the same as 2023/24 for tourist numbers and much less than pre-Covid.

Tourism is flatlining. The outlook – with the international visitor levy, other entry cost jumps, skyrocketing flights to New Zealand, destination carbon shaming and questionable infrastructure impacting perceived tourism value – isn't great.

Rental-vehicle operators must innovate, focus on cost control and stabilise their revenue flows at least until things improve. Tourism is a growth opportunity for this government.

Enter resilience. If 2024 looked like a B-level movie, international geopolitical and economic instability in 2025 makes it look like a five-time Academy Award-winner.

The rental-vehicle sector needs agility to withstand the coming shocks. Thankfully, the past five years have taught operators how to weather storms.

Next up, we need to improve our emissions efficiency through better vehicle utilisation and or via models that spit out less, and we're in the middle of the biggest change to the private-transport industry since the horse.

The landscape is looking different as European, US and Japanese OEMs contend with competition from China, and consumers adjust to the many powertrains available.

Operators can quickly gauge a new model's capability and reliability with all the kilometres racked up in a short timeframe.

Then we have regulatory effectiveness and efficiency – regulatory obstacles prevent the sector from productive emissions reduction and vehicle utilisation. We want to mitigate this.

The authorities also lose millions a year due to a paper-based infringement system. They need to embrace digital.

We lose more than 10 vehicles a week from theft or unlawful possession. The authorities' interest varies with there being "other priorities", apparently. We must get control of this problem. If not, our sector won't be sustainable.

We will continue to promote safe driving to domestic and overseas customers, and we're harnessing innovative technologies to get that message out.

With some minor regulatory improvements, we can be more proactive in managing vehicle speed. No doubt there will be more as the year progresses.

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DIRECTORS
Darren Wiltshire
dazzz@autofile.co.nz
ph. 021 0284 7428

Brian McCutcheon
brian@autofile.co.nz
ph. 021 455 775

DESIGNER
Adrian Payne
arpayne@gmail.com

EDITOR
Darren Risby
ris@autofile.co.nz

JOURNALISTS
Matthew Lowe
matthew@autofile.co.nz

Sue Brebner-Fox
sue@autofile.co.nz

MOTORSPORT
Mark Baker
veritas.nz@xtra.co.nz

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REGISTRATION AND COMPLAINTS STATISTICS

	JUL '22-JUN '23	JUL '23-JUN '24	JUL '24-JAN '25
Registered traders	2,882	2,852	2,789
Investigations			
Complaints received	70	108	107
Completed investigations	72	116	79
Number of convictions	3	3	0
Licensing			
Registrations cancelled	5	6	1
Bans confirmed	27	11	3
MVDT orders			
Complaints received	22	23	24
Complaints closed	20	13	15
First breach recorded	28	30	5
Second breach recorded	13	9	3

Source: MBIE

comfortable coming forward, it is noted that over 10 complaints were received from registered motor-vehicle traders who were happy to record their name and details on the complaint form."

He adds several people registered themselves as legitimate traders following investigations into complaints made since July 1 last year.

A number of individuals who sold slightly more than the legal limit of six units in 12 months "were educated and have ceased trading vehicles". Some were found to have been selling within the legal limit and no education or compliance action was required.

Connor says he selects the most appropriate enforcement mechanism to detect, deter and intervene to achieve compliance after receiving a complaint.

"Our preferred approach is to educate in the first instance," he told Autofile. "We use several tools to ensure accountability and deter further non-compliance, such as education, warning letters and media releases.

"Our investigators have powers to conduct site visits and inspections which are used to achieve compliance, educate and raise awareness.

"Most people are generally willing to comply. Those that are unwilling to comply and deliberately commit an offence or reoffend are prosecuted."

Being convicted of an offence under the Motor Vehicle Sales Act (MVSA) risks fines of up to $50,000 for individuals and $200,000 for companies.

BANS AND CONVICTIONS

While complaints are rising, the annual number of convictions for dealers and bans from the MVTR look set to hit three-year lows.

There were 27 bans issued in 2022/23. This number fell to 11 the following year and there were only three for the seven months to the end of January 2025.

As for convictions, there were three in 2022/23 and 2023/24 but in the current reporting period there have been none.

However, the registrar does have charges laid with the district court and one case is due to be heard this month and another in June although those matters are not related to complaints made in the latest period.

MBIE's figures also show one dealer had their registration cancelled between July last year and the end of January, which compares with six and five respectively in the prior two years.

Seventy-nine investigations into complaints were completed in the seven-month spell and there were 2,789 registered traders as of the end of January.

As for non-compliance with orders issued by the Motor Vehicle Disputes Tribunal (MVDT), 24 complaints were received and 15 were closed.

A first breach for non-compliance was recorded against five traders and three dealers were found to have made a second breach.

The number of gripes about dealers failing to comply with MVDT orders is already ahead of the previous two years, when the totals were 23 and 22, but the number of breaches is considerably lower.

During 2022/23, the number of first breaches was 28 and 13 second breaches were recorded. Those totals were 30 and nine respectively in the following year.

TRADERS ACTING AS AGENTS

Connor says his role is to ensure dealers are registered and, alongside other regulatory bodies, that they follow the requirements of the MVSA.

"Complaints against registered motor-vehicle traders generally relate to failing to meet responsibilities as agents while selling vehicles on behalf of another person," he explains.

"The MVSA places certain obligations on traders who act as agents for another person in the sale of a used motor vehicle."

These obligations include that the trader must pay to the principal all money received for the sale on consignment of the vehicle immediately on demand by the principal.

If no demand is made, this payment must be made within five working days after the receipt of the money. The sum required to be paid is less any fee or commission that the trader may lawfully charge for the sale.

Dealers must also on demand by the principal, or if no demand is made, within five working days after the completion of the sale provide a written account setting out the particulars of money received on the principal's behalf in respect of the sale and the way the trader has applied the money.

Any funds received by the trader cannot be used for payment of debts of the trader.

Connor says a number of

dealers have received bans that mean they are unable to sell motor vehicles for five years.

"The majority of those who have been banned have failed to comply with requirements imposed on them in decisions made by the MVDT.

"I would like to take the time to remind motor-vehicle traders of the importance of complying with the decisions imposed by the tribunal."

ENFORCEMENT APPROACH

The registrar deals with all complaints about registered and unregistered traders by investigating them before taking any enforcement action.

Connor says the approach is to provide information and education to encourage voluntary compliance in the first instance.

Measures to engage with the industry include a newsletter emailed to registered traders and those who have subscribed. It includes updates, information and education pieces from across the automotive sector.

"Our website offers resources about traders' responsibilities, including all newsletters that have been previously sent to registered traders.

"If individuals refuse to comply after being educated, they may be prosecuted and face fines.

"Certain actions can also result in a ban being placed on a person which prohibits them from trading, such as non-compliance with two MVDT orders within 10 years."

Car dealers have also been encouraged to report people who are unregistered and illegally selling vehicles.

Connor says an appeal to traders who spot anyone flouting the rules was made because the MVTR team "can't see everything".

He adds the existence of unregistered traders and how they often carry out business can harm the interests of consumers, and undermine the public's trust and confidence in traders in general.

In a newsletter last year, Connor mentioned how he had received several referrals from a legitimate dealer who identified individuals

selling vehicles without being registered.

This enabled officials to engage with those people to ensure ongoing compliance with legislation.

Subsequently, one person registered as a trader and another, who hadn't broken the law at the time, was educated before any offence was committed.

Connor adds that anyone who has a concern about a registered or unregistered trader can make a complaint by completing a form online at motortraders.mbie.govt.nz/about-us/complaint-form.

The types of complaint the form covers are unregistered trading, speedometer tampering, failure to pay principal and non-compliance with a MVDT decision.

Consumers can search the MVTR to find out which traders are registered or check if a particular person or entity has been banned from trading.

Connor says traders have obligations to consumers, who are protected by the MVSA, Fair Trading Act and Consumer Guarantees Act (CGA).

He highlighted the case of a trader banned following non-compliance with an MVDT order last year.

The buyer wanted to reject a 2006 Mazda MPV supplied by Vehicles Under $8,990 Ltd after having nothing but trouble with its performance, including brakes, temperature regulator and using excessive oil.

The purchaser complained to the trader, which completed some repairs over multiple trips. While the dealer hadn't refused to fix the car, it failed to repair it within a reasonable time.

The tribunal ruled the defects breached section 18 of the CGA and found further repairs required for a remedy would involve overhauling or replacing the MPV's engine.

The adjudicator ruled that within 10 working days of the date of the tribunal's decision Vehicles Under $8,990 Ltd had to refund the complainant $4,990, pay $75 for diagnostic costs and $500 for consequential losses.

On June 10 last year, the registrar received a complaint that the MVDT order hadn't been complied with.

Although this was a first instance of non-compliance for the trader, it was determined it was a second instance of non-compliance with a MVDT order for the director as a person concerned in the management of a company that had failed to follow an order of the tribunal.

Following correspondence with the business, its director, Hamish Colin Cross, was banned from motor-vehicle trading for five years until April 4, 2029. The business' registration was cancelled with the director being disqualified.

Clean-car targets 'impossible'

Importers face having to fork out millions of dollars in penalty fees under the clean car standard (CCS) over coming years unless there is a "massive swing" by consumers to purchasing EVs, warns an automotive business consultant.

Phill Haynes, of Juno & Jupiter Consulting, says while there's plenty of debate in Europe and the UK about mandates for zero-emissions vehicles and penalties for internal combustion engine (ICE) models, it is important to know a similar scenario is facing New Zealand.

He forecasts 28 per cent of imported new light passenger vehicles need to be fully electric or plug-in hybrids (PHEVs) this year if importers are to hit CCS targets.

For this country's used-imports sector, he predicts the figure needs to be 20 per cent.

Haynes told Autofile those

Phill Haynes forecasts importers will have to pay a "massive amount" under the clean car standard in the years ahead

figures are highly unlikely to be achieved, "in fact, absolutely impossible for used".

To meet those percentages would require a significant jump for both sectors from 2024 when EVs had an 11.2 per cent share of the new-car market and accounted for 2.2 per cent of used imports.

Haynes notes New Zealand also failed to achieve the government's CCS target last year.

His forecasts for coming years are calculated by predicting the combined carbon dioxide (CO_2) reduction for ICEs and hybrids, which leaves the balance of EVs needed to achieve the average vehicle CO_2 target.

As a result, Haynes suggests there's little chance of importers and dealers achieving the CCS goals. He estimates this will lead to the new-vehicle industry having to pay passenger car charges of about $75 million in 2025 and the used-import sector $40m.

He warns those totals could climb to $175m and $49m respectively by 2027 as CO_2 targets get progressively tougher at the start of each year.

The forecast is increasingly grim beyond that point with his analysis suggesting importers of new cars will have to pay more than $300m in fees in 2028 and 2029, with the cost of penalties per non-EV unit averaging more than $4,000.

For the used sector, importers are on course to face total charges of more than $80m in 2028 and in 2029, with the cost of penalties for hybrids and ICEs averaging about $1,900 per unit.

Haynes believes imports of some vehicles will stop at that amount, likely limiting total used-import volumes.

Importers can offset penalty CO_2 grams by using credit grams accrued through bringing in low and zero-emissions models or buying carbon credits from other EV importers.

Penalties likely to climb

The number of utes and vans being brought into the country may soon drop as importers find it harder to offset clean car standard (CCS) fees, with some possibly already limiting their light-commercial vehicle (LCV) mix.

Phill Haynes says the impact of the charges in dollars per unit is likely to be lower for light commercials than imported light passenger vehicles this year, but he warns they will take a bigger hit by 2027.

The CCS target for light commercials this year is 223gCO_2/km. In 2027, it will be 175gCO_2/km.

"In the space of two years, importers are supposed to get commercials to be nearly 50g less on average," notes Haynes.

"Ninety-five per cent of LCV imports are new, so some of that will happen. I suspect we will get below 200g and maybe even near 190g on average.

"But there won't be enough BEVs or PHEVs to get down to the target and there's likely to be a $50 million penalty in 2027 for light commercials over a smaller volume.

"This equates to about $8,000 per unit for utes or vans, which will be priced into the vehicle or importers will have to bring in fewer of them.

"One hybrid import might then balance out two diesels as opposed to now when one hybrid may cancel out the fees of three or four diesels."

As current penalties on commercials are relatively low, people are still deciding to buy them, adds Haynes.

However, in two years' time when fees have increased, consumers may look at cheaper, lower-power models or stick with what they already own for longer.

Offsetting though has a cost because it forgoes income from selling credits, which at the moment is income that's having to get used to discount high stocks of EVs after some importers got caught out by the clean car discount (CCD) being binned at short notice.

Haynes' cost predictions are based on a trading price of grams between CCS CO2 account holders.

This is lower than the NZTA's full rates for exceeding targets, which from the start of this year to the end of 2029 are set at $67.50 per gram for new-vehicle importers with a fleet-average account, or $33.75 for used.

For those taking the pay-as-you-go approach, the charges are $54/g for new and $27/g for used. The current open-market trading price of CCS credits is about $23/g for new and $15/g for used.

"It's a massive amount of money importers will have to pay and will be passed on," Haynes explains.

"Most penalty cars will have to absorb some or all the costs during 2025-26. By 2027, we predict there's not going to be enough tradeable credits to negate any of those penalties. Those that are available will be going up in cost and may be close to the price of paying a fee directly to the NZTA.

"The upshot is a stricter outcome than people might have thought. More money will have to be paid by consumers with fees added to sticker prices or the cost will come out of companies' profit margins.

CCS FORECAST IMPACT FOR NEW PASSENGER IMPORTS

	PREVIOUS YEARS, 2022-24			PREDICTED, 2025-29				
	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
No of imports	116,749	110,545	85,092	88,000	91,500	98,000	105,000	110,000
CCS target (gCO2/km)	155	145	133.9	112.6	108	103	76	65
Actual avg (gCO2/km)	141.5	119.4	143.7	131.8	125.4	120.9	117.7	110.8
Total fees	zero	$3m	$12m	$75m	$103m	$175m	$345m	$384m
Avg fees per non-EV unit	zero	$34	$159	$999	$1,358	$2,246	$4,253	$4,916

Source: Juno & Jupiter Consulting

"Even though the government thinks the CCS targets now look more reasonable, it hasn't averted inflationary pressure especially now imports have fallen. Arguably this is the principal intent of the CCS, just not as drastic or as soon as this."

NEW TARGETS BROUGHT IN

Simeon Brown announced revised CCS targets last year when he was Minister of Transport. Over time, they will align with Australia's regulations for imports that have been in place since the start of this year.

While New Zealand's targets for coming years are now softer than those set by the previous Labour government, Haynes forecasts they are likely to remain out of reach for importers.

For example, this year's goal for light passenger vehicles is 112.6g of CO2 per kilometre, but Haynes projects the average for new-car imports will come in at about 132gCO2/km.

"We're effectively 20g away from the target. That's 12,000 EVs short or 20,000 larger ICE cars too many."

His findings suggest the gap between the CCS settings and emissions from new imports could grow to more than 55g in 2029, at which stage vehicles are meant to average 65gCO2/km.

Haynes, who advises dealers, original equipment manufacturers and industry bodies, says because of the larger car mix in New Zealand and Australia, the portion

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of imports required to meet the government's CCS ambitions is effectively tougher than emissions rules in Europe and other jurisdictions.

Since EVs are the only cars that can meet future CCS targets, it means not enough of those vehicles are being imported.

The EU introduced a cap on CO2 emissions from January 1 this year that will require at least 20 per cent of all sales by most car manufacturers to be EVs if they want to avoid heavy fines.

Only about 13 per cent of all light vehicles sold in the EU were fully electric in 2024, according to the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association. For the UK, which adopted the same targets, about 15 per cent of car sales were EVs.

In contrast, Haynes' calculations show 28 per cent of new imports for New Zealand will need to be EVs in 2025 if dealers want to balance their CO2 accounts against penalties on ICE models and hybrids they will import. That level is expected to rise to 56 per cent by 2028.

"The analysis shows what importers will have to aim for to achieve the targets. Alongside the trends for ICE and hybrid cars that do produce tailpipe emissions, it suggests we need to get to 28 per cent this year.

"Unless we massively swing from petrol and diesel to hybrids and downsize our cars, we're going to need to hit that figure for EVs, which for 2025 looks unlikely. We are going to fail the 2025 CCS targets, like we did in 2024, but worse.

"When we look at our targets and CO2 projections, because we've got a high mix of larger vehicles compared to smaller models, the difference in average emissions is as significant as the task set for Europe.

"While we haven't got to achieve a 20 per cent mix of EVs under legislation like Europe, that doesn't really matter because to get close to our targets and minimise penalties we still need to achieve a higher percentage than that.

"When we look at the gap in vehicles that we need and forecast levels of CO2, we've effectively got a bigger gap and as much pain as Europe, probably more."

By 2027, New Zealand's new-car market is estimated to need to achieve a 35 per cent share of EVs to hit CCS targets.

"In 2024, there were about 9,500 new passenger EVs and in our forecasting we're getting to over 20,000 by 2027," says Haynes. "Most believe that's optimistic.

"More than doubling the number of new EVs sold compared to last year by 2027 is good but not enough – we would still only have about 60 per cent of what's required to meet the CCS targets."

VOLUMES OF IMPORTS

Haynes expects the overall number of new passenger imports to recover from 2024 and slowly increase over the coming years.

He forecasts the annual total will grow slightly in 2025 to 88,000 units before climbing to 110,000 in 2029, which will still be below 2022 and 2023.

However, Haynes predicts the number of used-passenger imports is set to tumble from the already low 88,242 in 2024 to possibly as few as 70,000 in 2027.

"When you look at used imports it's a slightly different picture to new because there are even fewer BEVs and PHEVs to source but we have a better balance of small cars, such as Toyota's Aqua, in the mix.

"Last year was dire for used imports and in 2027 we think it will be worse because the industry is limited by its inability to bring in any family-sized EVs.

"If importers can only bring in a certain number of 'clean' vehicles, that will reduce their ability to import other models if they want to avoid being hit with high fees. It's a balancing act of price, CO2 and availability that will cause limitations."

Haynes expects the volume of used petrol cars to fall from just over 50,000 last year to less than 10,000 in 2027. Hybrids, which came in at nearly 44,000 in 2024, are predicted to only climb to 47,000 over the same period.

"There's likely to be a drastic reduction in petrol vehicles. We have a marginal increase in hybrids because only a couple of hybrids will get under the 2027 CCS targets.

"Having a fee will limit what comes in to only mini-sized cars. It's the $10,000 to $13,000 family-sized petrol hatchbacks that will get most limited.

"Everyone's trying to buy them from Japanese auctions at present and prices have gone up, which also reduces volumes at the right price for New Zealand."

Haynes says the changing market may also mean used dealers rely less on sourcing from Japan and put a greater emphasis on domestic channels, such as trade-ins, auctions and wholesalers.

Equally, those still buying from auctions in Japan may have to look at higher mileage vehicles due to rising prices of later models with smaller engines and hybrids.

He adds importers will only be able to bring in the number of units that allows them to maintain a profit while juggling the CCS' increasingly tough requirements.

"Sooner or later importers will have to work out what a gram of carbon is worth to them in terms of what costs they can absorb as a business or pass on to consumers.

"They need to work out how to manage and balance the credits and fees. In 2025, only three new-car importers are likely to have a big pot of credits so people either have to buy them, and at increasing costs, or pay fees direct to the NZTA."

The challenges presented by trying to meet the CCS targets are also likely to affect the number of dealers who continue operating, with numbers having fallen from 2,909 at the start of 2024 to 2,810 by the end of last year.

Haynes observes there has already been some rationalisation in the used sector.

Trader numbers have dropped and a reduction in imports may mean the targets – along with economic pressures – are starting to impact the viability of being in the business.

"It might play to the strength of larger importers and impact small ones more. For example, the main businesses may carry on with a larger share of what's left but with lower volumes overall.

"It's likely to impact consumers who need the lowest-price, family-sized older cars most, for which there will be fewer imports and only domestic used trades to choose from.

"Or they will have to keep their cars on the road for longer, paying more out on fuel and repairs than on a fresh import."

Juno & Jupiter Consulting, led by Phill Haynes, advises clients on a strategic and tactical level on vehicle sales, funding, finance, leasing, commercial distribution and regulatory policies governing distributor operations and imports. This includes in-depth expertise on the new and used-car markets, retail operations and performance, and legislative changes on safety and emissions.

CCS FORECAST IMPACT FOR USED PASSENGER IMPORTS

	PREVIOUS YEARS, 2022-24			PREDICTED, 2025-29				
	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
No of imports	109,514	121,530	99,925	90,000	80,000	70,000	60,000	60,000
CCS target (gCO2/km)	155	145	133.9	112.6	108	103	76	65
Actual avg (gCO2/km)	177.3	174.8	164.6	129.1	122.8	116.6	108.6	96.2
Total fees	zero	$37m	$32m	$40m	$39m	$49m	$86m	$83m
Avg fees per non-EV unit	zero	$317	$329	$487	$548	$850	$1,905	$2,015

Source: Juno & Jupiter Consulting

'Mixed progress' tackling emissions

The government has responded to a monitoring report on reducing New Zealand's emissions in the wake of policies being scrapped.

Many of the Climate Change Commission's annual findings are broadly aligned with the coalition's, such as gross emissions tracking downwards since 2019 and the country being likely to meet its targets.

The crown entity board's reports states that "mixed progress" has been made towards implementing the first emissions reduction plan (ERP1).

It says that out of 305 actions, 41 were discontinued by the end of 2024 and six were scrapped by the previous government with some affecting the car industry.

In addition, the current coalition has canned 35 because they don't align with its approach on hitting climate-change priorities or had no effect on emissions abatement, according to the Ministry for the Environment (MfE).

Actions in ERP1 included continuing the clean car discount and establishing if it could be extended to other vehicle classes, and considering the future of the road-user charge exemption for electric cars beyond last year.

Measures to cut vehicle kilometres travelled have been ditched, including revising the NZTA's mode-shift plan and reducing targets in major urban areas.

New investments to show how transport projects will contribute to emissions-reduction objectives and setting high thresholds for this have been scrapped.

Also gone are support for businesses moving to circular-economy models, establishing a high threshold for new roads and ensuring the government policy statement on land transport is consistent with ERP1.

The previous government ditched initiatives with direct relevance to the automotive industry.


Plans for a scrappage scheme were canned by the previous government

These included the scrap and replace and social-leasing schemes to make access to cleaner vehicles affordable for low-income households, and investigating if extra targeted support was required to make low-emissions vehicles more accessible.

Labour also canned initiatives to boost e-bike uptake and implementing a sustainable biofuels obligation.

On the flipside, completed actions from ERP1 include publishing a list of approved smart electric-vehicle chargers that meet specifications for connectivity and efficiency.

The government's electricity demand and generation scenarios have been updated, and research on extra market mechanisms to accelerate the shift to a highly renewable energy system has been completed.

Overall, the MfE report confirms pollution is declining. The commission's finding aligns with the government's 2024 greenhouse gases (GHGs) inventory, which states gross emissions peaked in 2006 and declined from 2019-22.

The emissions trading scheme (ETS) is now the government's main climate-change tool.

The ETS aims to incentivise private investment in reducing emissions and removing carbon. Current and expected future ETS prices "will be key" to New Zealand reaching its targets.

That said, the commission's monitoring report reinforces the crown entity's view "that the ETS cannot be relied on to ensure emissions budgets will be met".

The MfE report states: "While the ETS cannot drive set abatement within an emissions budget period, changes to its settings will ensure New Zealand has a more credible market."

The government has agreed to reduce the number of units available between 2025 and 2029 from 45 million to 21m.

This will provide a high probability that ETS emissions will be within the scheme's estimated cap for the second and third emissions budgets.

Together with emissions pricing, "a clear role exists for policies that allow the ETS to work better and support early adoption of emerging technologies", states the MfE.

"Progress made and future potential reductions in a particular sector will be considered in the context of economy-wide emissions and removals."

It is the Climate Change Response Act that provides the framework by which New Zealand implements policies contributing to efforts to limit the planet's average temperature increasing, and which allow this country to prepare for and adapt to climate change.

It sets domestic long-term emissions reduction targets to 2050 through a series of interim targets, or five-year emissions budgets, which act as stepping stones to 2050's target.

HOW THE ETS WORKS

The MfE says the ETS helps reduce emissions by doing three main things. These are:

- Requiring businesses to measure and report their GHG emissions.
- Making companies surrender one "emissions unit", known as an NZU, to the government for each tonne of emissions they emit.
- Limiting the number of NZUs available to emitters.

The government sets and reduces the number of units supplied into the scheme over time through settings regulations. These limit the quantity that businesses participating in the ETS can emit.

These limits are informed by the total emissions allowed by emissions budgets, which also inform the scheme's price-control settings.

The ETS sends price signals to producers, consumers and investors. It puts a value on emissions by charging industries for their GHGs. It covers liquid fossil fuels, such as petrol, diesel and aviation, and stationary energy, mainly fossil fuels used for heat and electricity generation.

Also included are forestry, industrial processes, landfills and synthetic gases including those used as refrigerants.

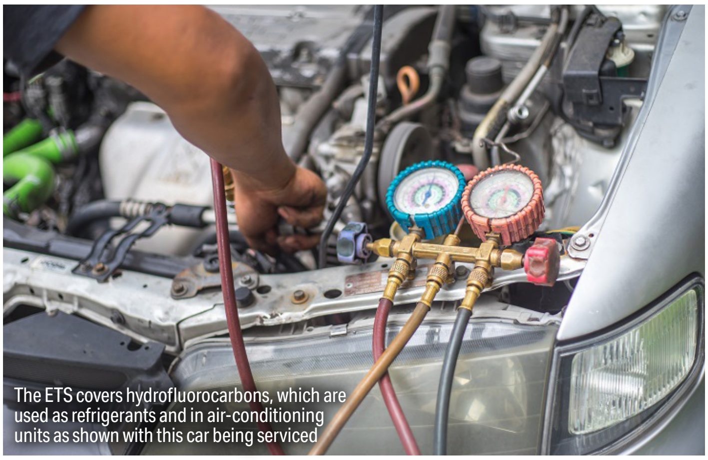
These industries must report their GHG emissions and surrender tradeable returns known as NZUs to the government for each one tonne of emissions they emit. These units can be bought and sold by ETS participants.

This cost to industry gets passed along the supply chain. It's hoped this has the effect of raising the cost of higher-emissions goods and services, and incentivising lower-emissions behaviour.

Carbon credits are different to NZUs in that they are financial instruments, which can be bought and sold. One carbon credit is equal to one tonne of CO2-equivalent. These credits are awarded for projects that store, avoid or reduce GHG emissions.

The government sets and reduces NZUs supplied into the ETS over time. This limits what companies can emit in line with emissions reduction targets. The price for units reflects supply and demand in the scheme.

Essentially, the price signal allows businesses to make economically efficient choices about how to cut pollution.


The ETS covers hydrofluorocarbons, which are used as refrigerants and in air-conditioning units as shown with this car being serviced

ACTION ON INNOVATION

Intelligent Transportation Systems New Zealand (ITNSZ) has welcomed the government including a new section in the second emissions plan (ERP2) that's focused on technology and innovation.

The organisation is also pleased to see more information on how it will monitor progress to ensure the country stays on track thanks to consultation feedback.

ITSNZ has outlined key inclusions about transport, technology and innovation. These include removing market barriers to encourage new technology to be trialled here.

Others are the low-emissions heavy vehicle fund, which can encourage early adoption of technology in this sector, transitioning the light fleet to road-user charges and away from fuel tax by 2027, and legislation to set up time-of-use schemes.

ITSNZ, which submitted on the draft ERP2, highlights other areas in the plans, such as international co-operation to prepare us to use new technologies as they become available, especially for aviation and shipping, major public-transport projects in Auckland and rail upgrades in the lower North Island.

It also welcomes introducing new technologies to optimise networks and services, and integrating transport investment with housing and land-use planning in our main cities.

Armin Guttke, chairman and president of ITSNZ, says: "It's encouraging to see the government take a technology-led approach to maximise emissions reduction.

"We support the least-cost, net-based and market-led direction of this plan. It's reassuring to see policies relating to co-investment and the removal of regulatory barriers that encourage investment in enabling technology and innovation.

"The inclusion of enabling technology and innovation lays the groundwork and path forward for a more sustainable and smarter transport system that supports productivity and economic growth."

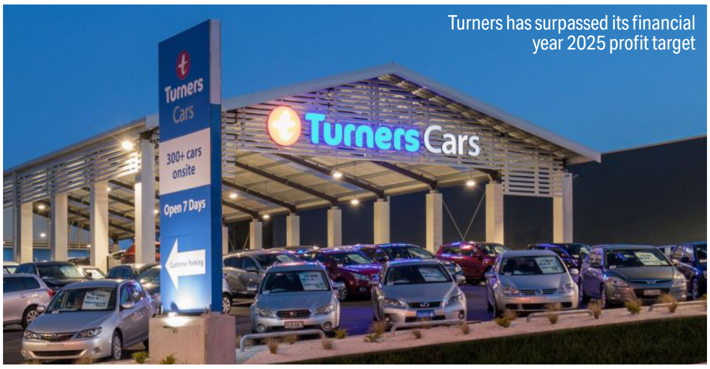
ERP2 comes into effect on January 1, 2026.

Aiming for fifth record in row

Turners Automotive Group has revised guidance for its 2025 financial year to at least $53 million of net profit before tax.

This would be eight per cent ahead of the $49.1m the company achieved in 2023/24 and surpasses its previous prediction of $50m.

If the updated total is realised, it will also mark the fifth consecutive record annual profit for the group.



Turners has surpassed its financial year 2025 profit target

Turners, in a statement to the NZX last month, says it has continued to grow despite the current cycle of challenging conditions because of its diversified business model, clear strategy and focus on customers.

It adds the business has recovered with 2024/25's third-quarter trading showing a "significant step forward" when compared to quarters one and two as vehicle margins recover and interest rates continue to decline.

The group expects results in the second half of its 2025 financial year across its four business divisions – automotive retail, finance, insurance and credit management – to be ahead of the same period a year earlier.

Todd Hunter, chief executive officer, says: "We are pleased to surpass our financial year 2025 profit target of $50m despite current economic challenges.

"Our wider team continues to do an outstanding job and this gives us strong momentum as we focus on our next target of $65m by financial year 2028."

GROUP'S PROFITS BOOM

Geneva Finance's pre-tax profit for the nine months to December 31 has come in at $5.9m.

That represents a jump of 97 per cent from $2.9m when compared to the same period in 2023/24.

Quest Insurance notched up a 67 per cent hike in pre-tax profit to $6.5m from $2.6m and from the September 2024 year-to-date result.

This result was mainly due to increased premium sales and static claim volumes over the period.

Quest's year-to-date premiums amounted to $41.7m, up by $7.8m and 22.8 per cent on the prior year, and it maintained strong solvency and solid cash holdings.

Geneva's lending operations in New Zealand posted a pre-tax loss of $2.3m for an extra $1m when compared to September 2024's result. Loan volumes rose by eight per cent to $44m on last year with $14.5m lent over the past quarter.

That compared with $11.4m over the same period in 2023/24. The total net-receivable ledger, after provisioning, increased to $107.5m, up $5.2m.

FPF Tonga is experiencing strong lending demand. It reported a pre-tax profit of $1.6m, up $0.3m.

"The group's overall results continued to improve on last year, but higher loan-book impairment charges and lingering high funding costs remain the main impediments to a much-improved performance for New Zealand lending operations," adds the company.

"It is expected increased impairment provisioning will continue over the fourth quarter and will impact on the group's full-year result.

Review leads to rebrand

DPL Insurance has rebranded itself as Autosure Insurance to eliminate creating any potential for clients to get confused between the two.


James Searle

Autosure is now a business brand of DPL with the change following an internal review of naming conventions.

The parent company says the decision ensures its identity remains relevant across the products and industries it serves. The shift also better aligns with its mission and values.

"Autosure is synonymous with New Zealand's motor industry," adds James Searle, chief executive officer. "It does exactly what it says and we are excited to carry this trusted brand into the future."

The rebranding has no impact on existing policies, premiums, claims processes or operational aspects of the business.

DPL, part of Turners Automotive Group, adds the transition to becoming Autosure will be seamless with no disruption to services or commitments.

Autosure Insurance was listed as the underwriter in policy documents from February 26 to ensure consistency and clarity across communications.

"Recent and impending interest-rate reductions are expected to positively impact on the group's funding costs, but will have a minimal impact in the current financial period."

FOCUS ON USED STOCK

The Colonial Motor Company has reported a record for trading profit after tax of $6.9m for the six months ending December 31, which was down by 23.8 per cent on the comparative period.

Chairman Ash Waugh says this is a better result than anticipated at the time of the company's annual general meeting in November "when the market and outlook appeared bleak".

The second half of 2024 largely lived up to that expectation, but a strong December – assisted by continued prudent cost management – has seen the six months end on a positive note.

"The market remained subdued relative to trading conditions enjoyed over the past few years, with recessionary impacts affecting demand for new light vehicles and now heavy trucks," says Waugh.

The remodelled Dunedin City Motors Mazda dealership

He points out that in terms of light vehicles, continued excess stock in the market has been maintaining the challenging trading environment.

"The refreshed focus placed on used vehicles in dealerships together with ongoing cost management have been contributors to the better-than-expected result.

"At the same time, the positive tone in the agricultural sector, driven by an increased dairy payout and aggressive marketing by major brands, has seen some 'life' return to the tractor market."

Despite development activity being slowed in response to a costlier market, Colonial will continue its property investment and refurbishment programme.

After an extensive search, a purpose-built workshop facility has been purchased for Avon City Motors in Rangiora, Canterbury.

This will replace an existing leased facility, and provides the branch with the chance to significantly expand its workshop and parts capacity.

Planning is under way to rebrand the building, create showroom space and have a strong used-car presence. This year will also see progress on a development project for Southpac Trucks in Palmerston North.

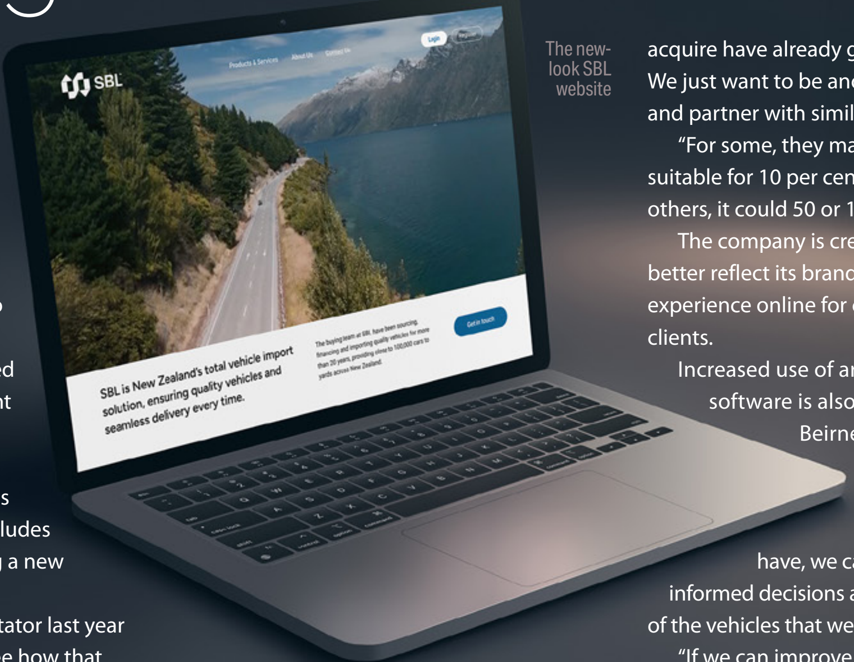
Dunedin City Motors' standalone Mazda facility, meanwhile, has been refurbished to reflect the latest brand look and feel. At the same time, a parts warehouse has been built to better meet customers' needs.

In addition, a new showroom has been constructed at Fagan Motors, Masterton. It provides the dealership with a destination that better meets branding requirements.

As for the rest of the financial year, Waugh says January's market across the country heralded no significant news for a change in market sentiment with new-car volumes coming in 14 per cent lower than January 2024.

He adds: "Given the concentration on cost reduction, efficiency, a revitalised used-vehicle focus and the strength of core franchise offerings, the company is well-placed to compete in this changed and challenging market environment."

Seeking win-win with dealers



The new-look SBL website

One of New Zealand's largest used-vehicle importers and distributors is seeking to double its market share in the next three years by boosting its numbers to about 10,000 units per annum.

Christchurch-based SBL, which has been running for more than two decades, says meeting the import goal will increase its share of the used light-vehicle sector from five per cent to 10 per cent.

Simon Beirne, founder and managing director, says the target is part of a "strategic journey" that includes refreshing the brand and launching a new website in the coming weeks.

The company brought in a facilitator last year to help define its purpose and to see how that aligned with the industry's perception of the business.

As a result of that, SBL is retaining its name but has developed a new logo and added a new catchline to its branding material.

> "We can use AI to make more informed decisions"
> Simon Beirne

Beirne explains: "SBL has had the same brand for 22 years. We want the market to better understand the business and not have any misconceptions about us.

"Our catchphrase used to be 'international vehicle brokers' but it's now 'total vehicle import solutions', which is what we're about.

"We are a one-stop shop. We can cover imports end-to-end and also offer a dealer finance facility.

"Part of our brand refresh reiterates that SBL has an incredible team with a lot of experience and knowledge, whether it's administration, sales or finance.

"We're all passionate at SBL about what we do and want to assist our customers to have an outcome that, as the Japanese say, is a win-win."

The company has increased staff numbers from 11 to 15 in recent months as part of its growth plans, including the November appointment of Vukan Cavor as an account executive in Auckland.

Many of the dealerships SBL engages with are in Auckland and Cavor brings 15 years' industry experience to the new role.

"Auckland is a big market and there's a lot of opportunity for SBL," says Beirne. "But equally we want to give back to our existing customers by Vukan popping in with a coffee and asking, 'Hey, how you are going? What can I help you out with?'

"We've also got Hiromi Kirk in Tauranga. She covers the central North Island while the rest of our team is Christchurch-based. With video conferencing and jumping on planes, we're always ready to see our dealers."

Most recently, the company has appointed Jason Wood in the newly created role of national sales manager. Wood has more than 35 years' industry experience and first met Beirne when they worked together at Integrity Wholesale.

Beirne created his broker model for imports in 2003 when SBL emerged from Integrity Cars, an importer and retailer run by his father Graham, who is a director of SBL.

After starting with just a couple of key staff, it has since expanded. Beirne says there's more potential for growth and the business is keen to engage with more dealers.

"We respect that customers we're looking to acquire have already got trading relationships. We just want to be another string to their bow and partner with similar-minded dealers.

"For some, they may see SBL as being suitable for 10 per cent of their business. For others, it could 50 or 100 per cent."

The company is creating a new website to better reflect its brand and deliver a better user experience online for current and prospective clients.

Increased use of artificial intelligence (AI) software is also on the horizon, which Beirne says will allow SBL to further enhance what it can offer.

"With all the data we have, we can use AI to make more informed decisions and give us more visibility of the vehicles that we could also be buying.

"If we can improve our buying, our customers will be happier because it will deliver a better outcome for them and it will allow us more time to work on our business instead of in our business."

Beirne notes the push to increase SBL's market presence comes amid difficult economic times, but he's optimistic better days aren't far away.

"It's been challenging for most businesses and definitely for our industry over the past 12 to 18 months. New legislation has been difficult to navigate as we adjust to the clean car standard's fees.

"Chatting to our dealers nationwide there appears to be some light at the end of the tunnel and more positivity out there.

"The next six months will likely remain a bit challenging. Then hopefully greener pastures will emerge for the next couple of years."

Beirne predicts other market changes may include some larger dealerships getting bigger while owners of some smaller ones may decide it's too tough to continue.

Jason Wood has joined SBL in the newly created role of national sales manager

He notes used-vehicle supply from Japan has been difficult of late because of other markets' increased buying activity as they try to take advantage of the weak yen.

"It ebbs and flows but there are still around 80,000 vehicles a week going through auctions there. A number of those vehicles now have a heavy following from Japan's dealer domestic market and a strong following from the export market.

"We've just got to be at the coalface ready to keep placing bids and capitalising on any market shifts."

First woman to lead marque

Carolyn McMahon has made history by being appointed as the first female president of Honda NZ.

With almost three decades' experience at Honda Australia, her leadership positions have included vice-president and director.

"I'm honoured to take on this role at an exciting time for the industry," she says. "I look forward to working with our talented team to continue delivering exceptional experiences for customers and further strengthening Honda's presence in the market."

During her time with the company, McMahon has been "instrumental" in driving business transformation. She has also overseen merging the cars division across the Tasman with Honda Australia MPE – motorcycle, power equipment and marine.

Nobu Sonoda, Honda NZ's current managing director, is transitioning to director of business services and the new business programme for Honda Australia, supporting its electrification strategy.

He says: "After 11 years leading the team in New Zealand, I'm delighted with the opportunity to take this experience to the Australian market."

In addition, Jay Joseph has been appointed chief executive officer and director of Honda Australia.

After spending time with American Honda as vice-president, he takes over from Yoshitaka Okamoto.

With 27 years under his belt at the company, Joseph has extensive experience and a deep understanding of the brand.

"I'm thrilled to step into the role of CEO and director during this pivotal time for the company," he says. "Carolyn has left an incredible legacy of innovation, collaboration and customer focus. I'm committed to maintaining that momentum as we evolve our operations and deliver outstanding value across Australia."


Carolyn McMahon

McMahon, who starts in her new role on April 1, joined the company in August 1995 as personal assistant to the managing director and quality co-ordinator for motorcycles and power equipment.

After four-and-a-half years, she became manager of human resources for eight years before being appointed general manager of business services in 2008.

McMahon then had different roles from 2012-15 – regional manager, general manager of sales and marketing, and GM dealer business and corporate secretary.

That was followed by two years as company secretary and general manager of business services before a seven-year stint as director before becoming, alongside that role, vice-president in April 2024.

Before joining Honda, McMahon was an assistant language teacher for two years with the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme in Ogaki, Gifu prefecture.

Tolls on privacy with charging

Congestion charging is being touted by the government as a tool to reduce inner-city traffic, but it could come with some tolls on people's privacy.

That's the flag being hoisted by researchers at the University of Auckland and the same could be said about other systems linked to the car industry, such as number-plate identification cameras, satellite tracking and short-range communication.

Professor Tana Pistorius, of the university's business school, and Isa Seow, a research fellow at the school of computer science, contend these types of technologies pose significant challenges when it comes to the Privacy Act.

As an example, not only do rego recognition cameras capture images of vehicles and their plates, they can also record extra information such as who the drivers and passengers are.

And with cameras' ever-improving resolutions, the researchers say there's a heightened risk of capturing sensitive biometric information, which raises concerns about recording and storing in-depth facial data.

New Zealand's biometric regulations are still evolving, says Pistorius, and the widespread use of new automatic number-plate recognition technology and software, which could be required for congestion charging, can accentuate risks linked to processing this data.

Seow points out there are further challenges regarding what such data could be used for with significant concerns around analytics, crime tracking and prediction, all of which could infringe on Kiwis' privacy.

Meanwhile, navigation satellite technology can pinpoint a car's location with "remarkable" accuracy, raising concerns about daily and repeated surveillance.

Dedicated short-range communication systems, which

enable vehicles to "talk" to roadside equipment, are seen as "particularly risky" if they store data about payments and vehicle location history on card systems.

Seow says systems for congestion charging are exposed to data risk and have been targeted by cyber-criminals overseas.

Overall, the researchers stress that no matter what technology is used, any data collected must be limited to what's strictly necessary for the intended purpose.

"A privacy impact assessment, namely a review of the implications and mitigation of risks, should be undertaken by the government before anything is put in place to curb congestion to ensure we have adequate safeguards," says Pistorius.

The researchers sought public opinion through four focus groups, which saw Aucklanders and Wellingtonians express concerns about the implications of charging systems on privacy.

Questions were raised regarding the duration of data over-collection and retention, and potential security breaches.

Respondents suggested all data should be deleted after six months to mitigate privacy risks. They also wanted regulations to protect against unwarranted police access to congestion charging data.

Other ideas to help address issues included anonymising licence-plate information during transit or storage, platforms for people to monitor their data across all government services and establishing geolocation fences to confine data collection.

HOW MUCH IS THAT DOGGY?

A four-legged robotic dog called Rover is playing its part in a manufacturer's plan to electrify its brands by 2030. The machine is based at JLR's build and test facility for electric cars in Coventry, England.

With the site being a complex and energy-dense environment with thousands of assets that require constant monitoring, Rover's role as a guard dog is of "critical importance".

It saves the company and its human colleagues valuable time by spotting potential operational issues, and wear and tear to equipment. The upshot is testing and development runs on schedule ahead of the Range Rover Electric's launch.

Just like an actual guard dog, Rover has its own kennel where it "periodically lives" and charges its 50-volt battery between shifts.

Unlike a regular canine, Boston Dynamics' robot can operate 24/7, and doesn't get distracted by calls to fetch sticks or the presence of cats. Fully automated to follow pre-set routes, Rover conducts up to 24 patrols each day and night using AI to open doors, ascend stairs and navigate high-traffic areas.

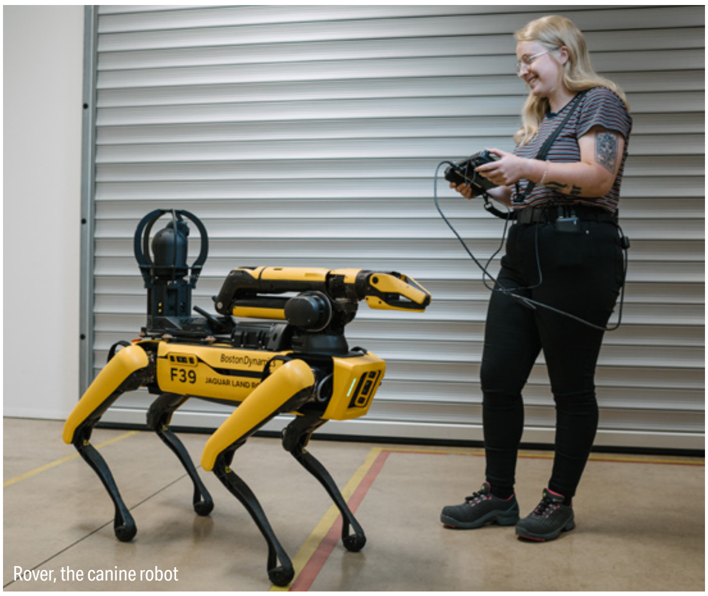
Continuously taking measurements and inspecting valves and machinery, it eliminates the risk of human error in these tasks while allowing engineers to analyse Rover's results to make business and maintenance predictions or perform repairs.

This quadruped can complete its duties thanks to the natural dexterity afforded by its four legs and robotic arm.

These are maximised by its advanced onboard sensors – "hearing" potential gas leaks and using thermal sensors to evaluate battery temperatures to ensure technicians work in safety.

JLR is scoping future uses for robotic quadrupeds across its global industrial footprint. This includes at its Solihull plant where preparations are under way for the Ranger Rover Electric's launch later this year.

Visit www.autofile.co.nz for a video on Rover, the robotic dog, working at JLR's EV facility.



Rover, the canine robot

Changing behaviour of car buyers

It's extraordinary to reflect on how the automotive industry has changed over the past decade, particularly with regard to customer purchasing behaviour.

It wasn't long ago that the buying journey centred around physical showrooms with traditional media channels, like television, radio and print, playing a significant role in influencing consumers' decisions.

Nowadays dealers are selling to much more informed and discerning customers, many having already undertaken most of their purchasing journey online before in-person interactions.

These buyers have different attitudes and expectations than a decade ago and, therefore, dealerships must adapt to convert them.

The research that New Zealand car buyers conduct prior to visiting yards has increased exponentially with more than 90 per cent saying they investigate the details of a vehicle online prior to enquiring with a dealer.

Rather than being "sold to" by a salesperson, early-stage buyers want transparent information about a car, such as specifications, price comparisons and reviews from credible sources, so they already have all the information before they go to a dealership.

JAMES HENDRY
Director, sales and operations
AdTorque Edge NZ

It's important your website captures those researching customers and provides them with the information they need. This means strategically developing content that performs well in search engines, while ensuring easy navigation and clear, concise content that's easily digestible.

Over the past 10-15 years, social-media platforms have become an integral part of the car-buying journey. YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok provide user-generated content such as videos, model comparisons and expert insights that many consumers rely on when considering a purchase.

Furthermore, younger audiences tend to trust opinions of automotive influencers and independent reviewers more than salespeople or traditional advertising. The endorsements of these personalities hold significant weight in purchasing decisions.

Maintaining a strong social-media presence is vital for car dealers to ensure they capture in-market customers.

This means staying active on your social pages through regular posting, responding to comments and proactively driving customer reviews.

You should also be advertising on the most viewed platforms – running campaigns that encourage engagement and drive leads to your website.

Online marketplaces such as Trade Me, Auto Trader and Facebook Marketplace have delivered benefits consumers have come to expect. Rather than traditional dealership visits of the past, shoppers can now browse, compare and purchase a far wider range of cars from home.

Although showrooms remain important, savvy dealers recognise their website is now just as vital, acting as their digital showroom.

Offering e-commerce solutions, such as online listings, trade-in valuations and end-to-end purchasing options, gives modern consumers the convenience they expect, bringing them further down the road to conversion.

Recent research shows that Kiwi advertisers spent almost 70 per cent of their total budget on digital channels in 2024. This 7.5 per cent year-on-year increase was reflective of the change in consumer media consumption.

With the surge in online research and digital engagement, dealerships must be more strategic than ever in their advertising efforts. Programmatic advertising and retargeting technologies offer an array of options that enable you to reach the right audience, at the right time with the right message.

In addition, this form of digital advertising is easily tracked and reported on. The insights marketers can obtain from such campaigns provide the ability to make data-driven decisions to maximise return on investment.

Whether it's expanding your digital footprint, upgrading to a seamless online purchasing experience or introducing data-driven decision-making, every step toward meeting customer expectation is driving necessary change.

Keeping up with ever-changing consumer behaviour may seem like an impossible task. However, rather than fearing it, dealers should be embracing it as an opportunity to lead the way in innovating the car-buying journey.

Industry movers

JOHN KETT has become chief operating officer of GWM Australia and New Zealand. He has replaced Hidesuke Takesue, who has retired after seven years in the job.

Kett, pictured, has 35 years' industry experience and has joined the company after spending five-and-a-half years in the same role for Hyundai Australia.

During his career, Kett has held various senior roles here, across the Tasman, and in China, South Korea, Singapore and Indonesia with brands including Holden, Fiat Chrysler, SsangYong and SAIC.

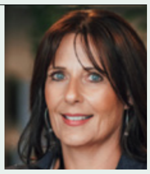
His nearly seven years with Fiat Chrysler Automobiles in Shanghai from 2009-15 included roles as vice-president, general manager of operations and chief financial officer of Asia-Pacific, and head of Jeep.

"GWM is driven by a talented workforce, partnered with a focused dealer network, and enabled by an ever-evolving portfolio and technology offering," says Kett.

"The sheer weight of numbers behind GWM positions the brand very well at a time when customers are most discerning."

Charles Zhao, GWM ANZ's managing director, says the marque is preparing for the arrival of updated products in 2025 including the Cannon and H6, and adding advanced plug-in hybrid technology to H6GT, Cannon Alpha and Tank 500.

He adds that GWM sold a record 45,954 new vehicles in Australasia last year.



NADINE BELL has been appointed as chief operating officer of Manukau Toyota Group after almost three years as chief marketing officer at Armstrong's.

Her previous experience includes more than two decades with Honda NZ after she joined the company in 2020 as manager of the national contact centre.

Bell's other roles there included manager of dealer training and sales development, national customer relationship manager, general manager of marketing, and general manager of after-sales and customer service.

Her automotive career took a year-long hiatus from April 2021 when she was group general manager of Appliance Connexion, a co-operative of branded and independent stores and appliance service agents across New Zealand.

STUART GIBBONS has retired as group manager of strategic development at the Colonial Motor Company.

He continues as a director and will provide support, as required, to the management team during the first half of 2025.

Gibbons joined Colonial in 1982 and held positions at subsidiary dealerships. The most recent was chief executive officer and dealer principal at Lower Hutt from 2002 until joining the group's management team in July 2020.

JERRY DELANEY has left his position of sales director at Ford NZ after more than 13 years with the company.

Delaney joined the business during 2011 as fixed-operations manager before taking on his most recent role in 2014.

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

Ben Montgomery is now Motorcorp's general manager

Taking two decades' experience into role

Motorcorp Distributors has appointed Ben Montgomery as its general manager, which involves leading the company's 40-strong team and being responsible for eight Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) franchises in New Zealand.

He has worked for the Giltrap Group, which owns Motorcorp, since 2012 and has held leadership roles spanning two decades in the industry.

These included marketing with Volkswagen and JLR's operations, Most recently he was Volvo NZ's general manager.

Before Giltrap, Montgomery spent three years working for Jaguar's dealer marketing service in the UK. He also held customer service and relationship roles for more than five years with BMW in that country and in New Zealand.

"A significant part of my career to date has been with iconic British brands here and overseas," he says.

"I've joined Motorcorp as we continue to strengthen each marque in the house of brands – Range Rover, Defender, Discovery and Jaguar. I'm looking forward to getting on the road and meeting our JLR team and customers."

Montgomery has taken on the role vacated by Steve Kenchington, who has become the chief executive of Giltrap.

"Having worked closely with Ben over the years, I do not doubt his skills, dedication and hunger for innovation will continue to propel our business forward," says Kenchington.

"The board is confident the company will continue to thrive under his leadership. Ben's ability to lead and innovate excites us as we continue to grow and strengthen our market presence."

Support for trader network

Avanti Finance has appointed Annie Wild as its new automotive relationship manager for the lower North Island.

Annie Wild

She has joined the company with a sales background in the industry, particularly in the leasing and digital spaces, and recently held sales management roles at Trade Me and SG Fleet.

Earlier in her career, she had sales positions with Electra Services, Tall Poppy Real Estate and the Lego Group.

"We're excited to welcome Annie to Avanti Finance," says Lee Robson, acting general manager of automotive.

"Annie brings a wealth of experience and will be a great support for our dealer network in the lower North Island region."

Wild is thrilled about joining a company that "genuinely values its customers, dealer network and employees".

She says: "I look forward to collaborating with the team and supporting our dealer network in driving their business growth."

Avanti Finance Group is one of the country's largest specialist lenders. Its portfolio includes Avanti Finance, Branded Financial Services, Bexhill Funding Group and Motorcentral Technologies.

Introduce solutions that make sense

Importers are doing all they can to source affordable low-emissions vehicles, but we need to manage what's already on our roads to make further progress. What I haven't heard is a realistic plan on how to do that.

At the moment, we judge models as they enter the fleet and, depending on their carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions, penalise them for potential to harm.

However, we need to ensure vehicles already in service are roadworthy, and minimise harm from accidents and noxious emissions. And we want to make room for newer, less harmful cars by removing the worst ones.

Most ideas floating around, such as warrant of fitness (WOF) failures for high emissions, sound simple. But they fall apart if you look closer because we don't have good baseline data for older vehicles.

If we don't know what a car's emissions should be, how can we say a test result means it has degraded – it might still be within the manufacturer's specifications.

That doesn't mean we should do nothing. We need a smarter way to manage the fleet that's fair, effective and works for our market. Here's what we could do.

DISTANCE-BASED WOFS

WOF checks are six or 12-monthly. It means a low-mileage car that sits in a garage most of the year gets tested as often as a work vehicle that clocks up 30,000km annually. That makes no sense.

When all vehicles move to road-user charges (RUC), we'll finally have a way to fix this. Instead of time-based inspections, WOFs should be required after a set distance.

High-mileage cars would be checked more frequently, which is where the real safety risks are, while owners of those with low mileages wouldn't be burdened with unnecessary inspections.

KIT WILKERSON
Head of policy and strategy
kit@via.org.nz

A distance-based WOF system makes emissions testing more logical. Real-world tracking at set mileage intervals will provide meaningful data on emissions over time, rather than random snapshots.

FRESH ACC APPROACH

Vehicle levies charged by ACC are built into fuel taxes. That system will become obsolete as more cars become electric. Instead of shifting levies into RUC, we should rethink how vehicle harm is paid for.

ACC rates models based on how well they protect their occupants. That sounds good, but big and heavy vehicles tend to shift danger onto everyone else.

A harm-based levy would fix this. This would incentivise vehicle design to reduce overall harm rather than just individual protection. It would also integrate with other harms such as air pollution and respiratory illness.

The best part of this approach is that as road harm decreases, ACC costs go down for all.

Because ACC is based on cost recovery, if we reduce vehicle-related injuries and emissions harm, levies will decrease over time without the need for government intervention.

> **We need a smarter way to manage the fleet that's fair, effective and works for our market**

EMISSIONS TESTS & LEVIES

Instead of failing vehicles at WOFs for high emissions, we can take a smarter approach.

Every inspection or every other one should include an emissions test. Instead of failing cars, the result should be used to adjust ACC levies.

Lower emissions would mean a lower levy. Since this fee is collected through RUC, people will pay more if they drive more, which is how it should work. This approach avoids punishing people for owning older cars and ensure they pay their fair share of harm caused.

Such a system would generate a comprehensive emissions dataset. We'd have real-world data for the entire fleet. Instead of guessing, we would have hard evidence on which vehicles are problematic so policies could be based on facts leading to better and fairer regulations in the long run.

CORRECT SCRAPPAGE GOALS

Traditional scrappage schemes tend to be inefficient and expensive. They often pay people to forego functional vehicles and don't always target the worst polluters.

Instead of throwing money at the issue, we should use clean car standard (CCS) credits as the incentive.

Under this system, every car that gets scrapped would earn CCS credits because doing so eliminates future CO_2 emissions.

Higher-emissions vehicles would earn more credits to ensure the worst offenders leave the fleet first, while EVs wouldn't earn any credits. Scrappers would pay owners cash up to the amount they could get for credits.

This approach also requires no government subsidies and keeps credit trading within the business-to-business market.

A gradual shift in stock would happen naturally rather than being forced through arbitrary bans or one-size-fits-all policies.

Such a system as I've outlined would work because it aligns incentives with real-world outcomes.

All of this isn't just a way to improve the fleet.

It's a smarter way to make policy. Instead of imposing bans, giving subsidies or creating arbitrary rules, we can use incentives that work with market forces to create lasting change.

It's time to stop talking about how we need to manage the fleet and start implementing solutions that make sense.

The month that was... March

March 3, 1997

Citroen and Volvo distributors split up

Volvo and Citroen products and were about to be sold separately in New Zealand rather than both operating through Continental Vehicle Distributors.

The French marque would continue to be distributed under the Continental banner, while Volvo would be marketed by Scandinavian Vehicle Distributors. Both companies had the same owners, including Richard Giltrap and John Fairhall.

Citroen hadn't performed well in the previous two years. In 1994, sales reached nearly 400, but by 1998 they were down to 184. Its target for 1997 was 250 units.

A large part of the problem had been a backlash against French products when that country ignored global opinion and continued testing its nuclear bombs in New Zealand's backyard.

Registrations for all three French marques – Citroen, Renault and Peugeot – plummeted when Jacques Chirac resumed testing at Mururoa, an atoll in French Polynesia, in June 1995. Volvo had consistently increased sales over the previous five years to reach 140 units in 1996.

March 16, 2007

WOVM debate sours

A debate involving the proposed implementation of mandatory whole of vehicle marking (WOVM) had taken a turn for the worse with involved parties seeking support from behind enemy lines.

A letter written by DataDot NZ's managing director, David Lumsden, questioned representations made about microdots by Perry Kerr, the MIA's chief executive.

"We have published our WOVM price in good faith and stand by it," said Lumsden. "The CEO of the MIA has not only disputed our quoted price publicly, but has actually gone further and quoted another price that's not correct."

At a meeting of the MIA the week before, members completely backed Kerr's statements. One of them was Ernie Ward, Daimler-Chrysler's managing director. He stated: "We do not support the introduction of DataDots because our vehicles don't need it. Regardless of cost, our customers shouldn't have additional costs for something they don't need."

Ward added he hadn't seen any reduction in insurance costs due to procedures involving microdots.

In response to Ward's statements, Lumsden said: "We aren't the only supplier of microdots. We have maintained that if the mandatory scheme is implemented, manufacturers will be able to choose their own suppliers."

March 29, 1999

Industry aghast at delays to act

News that the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act would remain in force into the next millennium came as a major blow to the automotive industry.

A proposed bill had been deferred because of the upcoming general election, which had resulted in a limited number of sitting days at parliament.

Steve Downes, executive director of the Motor Vehicle Dealers Institute, said: "It's frustrating and disappointing that a bill that could benefit consumers and dealers has been put on the back-burner. One has to question whether there is any genuine interest in addressing this outdated legislation."

He added debate about the bill had encouraged unlicensed trading and "cowboys" hoping for a deregulated environment had been touting for business from the public.

David Lynn, chief executive officer of the Imported Motor Vehicles Dealers Association, said the delay perpetuated uncertainty being experienced by those in the industry.

Perry Kerr, of the Motor Industry Association (MIA), added it would prefer the government reviewed whether a specific act was needed.

Daewoo was most affected by the deferral. It was restricted from selling outside the Auckland area because of licensing anomalies.

March 19, 2010

New segment – faux-wheel drive

Toyota and Nissan were joining the expanding list of companies producing "soft roaders" that would never leave the comforts of the city.

While genuine four-wheel drives (4WDs) owned by "city slickers" and "yummy mummies" might have been copping flak from the PC brigade, the shape, height and versatility of those vehicles had created a new "segment".

Dubbed "faux-wheel drives" – models that looked like traditional 4WDs but with powertrains that only drove the front or rear wheels – the segment was expected to expand with news that two of the most popular compact 4WDs on the market would soon come in as 2WD versions. These were Toyota's RAV4 and the Nissan X-Trail.

That was good for buyers because deleting the expensive 4WD underpinning allowed marques to cut prices significantly. For Nissan and Toyota, it meant they could compete against cheaper South Korean 2WD rivals.

The X-Trail and RAV4 had traditionally been marketed as having more genuine off-road credentials than the rest of the compact 4WD market.

Hunt reveals lessons for dealers

My wife needed to buy a vehicle towards the end of last year, so I thought I would share our experience on an important purchase for our household.

Our new car had to be within budget and fuel economy was a consideration given it would be idling for two hours a day on Auckland's southern motorway.

In addition, a high safety rating was a must because of some people's driving abilities.

Those were my considerations. My wife's were: "It must be comfortable to drive, have power when I push the gas to the floor, be stylish, be a mid-size SUV and it must have a great sound system."

After our internet research was done, six potential vehicles from five marques made the cut.

While on the first test drive, a major consideration emerged against which all vehicles would be judged. We decided it must be able to permanently disengage, and not have all those bing-bing, tick-tick noises that are annoying and distracting.

Our hunt for a vehicle provided some interesting experiences.

After answering "no" when asked about having a trade-in or wanting finance, the attitude of some salespeople quickly changed. "Just more tyre-kickers" appeared to be their outlook.

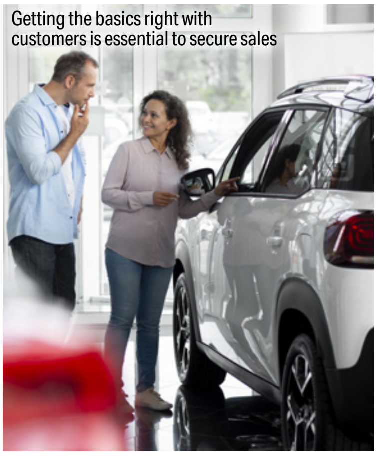
After our second test drive, we started saying we were considering a trade-in and finance was an option. As a result, it appeared staff thought we were more genuine buyers, which I find bizarre in 2025.

LARRY FALLOWFIELD
Sector manager – dealers, Motor Trade Association

One of our test drives happened by mistake because the car we went to view wasn't there. An alternative vehicle at the dealership didn't meet all our criteria but it was worth taking it for a spin.

It was a near-new, smaller SUV with low kilometres. It was underpowered, and also had too many bing-bings and tick-ticks.

At the next yard, there was no brand-new model to check out so we jumped into a near-new version and were told fresh stock was arriving in seven to 10 days.



Getting the basics right with customers is essential to secure sales

Initially, we weren't going to bother taking the near-new car out, which caused the salesperson much confusion.

We eventually relented and it passed most of the criteria. It was fast – sorry "peppy", safe and had relatively good fuel economy. The big downer was the road noise.

As our search continued, we found ourselves wandering around a second unrelated yard for one particular brand. By then, the rain had arrived and had become increasingly persistent.

There was no salesperson to be seen and after 20 minutes in the rain with no assistance forthcoming, it was time to move on. Busy Aucklanders have lattes to drink, so another two vehicles were scratched from our list.

Back home we jumped onto the website of a dealer we had already visited to book a test drive of a vehicle we wanted to see but was unavailable when we previously dropped in.

The third test drive came in week three of our search. This SUV had power and all the features you would expect, but there were the same bing-bings and tick-ticks as the smaller version.

Still, it was a good option until we found out there was a four-month wait for a new one in our preferred colour.

It was then up the road to another franchise. A new model wasn't aesthetically pleasing to my wife so we looked at the previous year's model that was near-new with low kilometres.

The salesperson drove the initial "demo loop" and then it was my wife's turn. It was fast, quiet and had servicing costs similar to others.

Maybe we had found our new car? "I can see myself driving this." However, then came the dreaded but. "It's too sparkly", so all that glitters isn't always a winner.

As for the final SUV we looked at, "no trade-in and no finance" was greeted by "no problem" by the attentive salesperson who followed up and rebooked a test drive of the car in the colour we wanted. We then had a winner – sold.

Hopefully, you can take some learnings from our buying journey. How many potential customers have walked off your yard after similar experiences?

If you want to thrive in 2025, ensure your team does the basics right.

Lexus first for Armstrong's

The Prime Minister has hailed a dealership as "world class" after joining staff and invited guests for its official opening.

Christopher Luxon attended the special celebration at Lexus of East Auckland, Botany, late last month ahead of it being opened to the public on March 1.

Among those joining him at the event were Rick Armstrong, executive director of Armstrong's, which holds the franchise, and its chief executive officer Troy Kennedy and chairman Mark Darrow.

Lexus New Zealand was represented by Andrew Davis, vice-president, and Tatsuya Ishikawa, acting chief executive officer of Toyota NZ.

The showroom in Ti Rikau Drive is the marque's first joint venture with Armstrong's, one of the country's largest independent automotive groups that now represents 18 brands.

Built on a 7,000sqm site, the 600sqm showroom boasts a customer lounge, barista cafe, dining area and business areas for clients. There's also a parts and service centre plus a full-service tyre centre.

Luxon, who is also National's MP for Botany, told the audience that the location offers an "outstanding showroom to showcase a premium product".

"It's exciting to be here," he said. "It's inspiring when you see people like Rick, Mark and all the team investing in capital and building a world-class facility like this that's going to do so well and sell quality products."

Justin Purkiss, who has been appointed Lexus of East Auckland's chief executive officer, has more than 20 years of automotive experience. He previously worked as general sales manager and a dealer principal for Winger Motors.

Lexus NZ says Purkiss' leadership "will ensure the continued growth and success of the brand in the region, providing exceptional service and a world-class experience".

The standalone facility was designed by Chow:Hill, which has worked on previous projects for the group as well as other dealerships in Auckland and Hamilton.

Lexus NZ notes the design company's expertise ensures the building offers "modern aesthetics and functionality".

Darrow said Armstrong's is


Guests enjoying the opening night

"immensely proud" of the facility. He added the business has grown and continues to invest despite some tougher years for the overall automotive market.

Kennedy said the dealership complements the company's


Attendees at the opening

The outside of the Botany dealership

From left, Tatsuya Ishikawa, Christopher Luxon, Rick Armstrong, Andrew Davis and Troy Kennedy

The Prime Minister leads the applause after Rick Armstrong, far right, cuts the ribbon

The PM with Lexus of East Auckland team members

automotive precinct in Botany and he hopes it will become the best Lexus dealership in terms of sales.

He added: "The launch of Lexus of East Auckland is a key milestone in the expansion of the Armstrong's Group and our dedication to sustainable mobility.

"This dealership will serve as a forward-thinking, premium experience for customers, especially as more drivers shift towards hybrid and electric vehicles.

"We're thrilled to bring Lexus' world-class vehicles and service to east Auckland, providing a premium experience that aligns with the brand's values of innovation and sustainability.

> **This dealership will serve as a forward-thinking, premium experience for customers**
>
> – Troy Kennedy, CEO, Armstrong's

"We look forward to welcoming the community and delivering a memorable experience. This dealership will not only strengthen our presence in Auckland, but will demonstrate our belief in Lexus as a leader in sustainable luxury."

The opening comes after a successful year for Lexus NZ with its sales climbing by 30 per cent in 2024 compared with the year prior.

"We have the goal to be the number-one luxury brand in New Zealand so opening this store is pivotal in terms of reaching customers," said Andrew Davis, of Lexus NZ.

He described the investment in a new dealership as reflecting the strength of the brand.

"We're proud of Armstrong's continued commitment to Lexus," added Davis. "We are confident this facility will bring our vehicles and customer service closer to Auckland's growing market."

Lexus of East Auckland is running special promotions this month to mark its opening, including zero per cent per annum finance across all models, excluding RZs.

Consumers can also drive away a new vehicle with a payment plan. It involves a deposit of one-third of the car's cost and paying another third in 12 months and the rest in two years' time.

'Value, quality and innovation'

The range of commercial vehicles offered by LDV has expanded with the arrival of its Deliver 7 mid-size van.

Its introduction to the Kiwi market offers loadspace, payload, comfort, safety, technology and value for money.

That's according to Kym Mellow, general manager of Inchcape NZ, which is the marque's distributor for this country.

"The Deliver 7 fits in size-wise preceding the larger Deliver 9s," he says. "It's a compellingly priced diesel that's suitable for urban delivery routes and cross-country transport while taking care of your bottom line."

Owners of small to medium-sized businesses and fleet operators consider time as a valuable asset.

Mellow adds: "They need a van that's comfortable, efficient and convenient with advanced safety and technology features."

Competitors in the same segment of the Deliver 7 include the Toyota Hiace, Ford Transit Custom, Hyundai Staria, Renault Trafic and Volkswagen Transporter.


LDV's Deliver 7

Two variants make up the Deliver 7's low-roof range – a short wheelbase (SWB) and long wheelbase (LWB).

Length-wise, they come in at 4,998mm for the SWB and 5,364mm for the LWB, while they are both 2,323mm wide and 1,998mm high.

The futuristic face with LED daytime running lights give it a striking look. There are also LED rear tail-lights, 236-degree barn doors with two-stage opening and a single or double sliding side door.

The Deliver 7's two-litre turbodiesel delivers 124kW of power and 390Nm of torque via the front wheels. It's mated with a nine-speed gearbox and an 80-litre fuel tank.

The 2,000kg maximum braked-towing capacity gives drivers extra capability if needed.

The van's cabin is a "practical and convenient workspace". Features include keyless entry and start, height-adjustable driver's seat with manual slide, recline, lumbar support and armrest.

The 12.3-inch infotainment touchscreen hosts DAB radio, Bluetooth, Apple CarPlay and Android Auto.

Practical additions at the rear include 236-degree opening rear doors, which are ideal for loading pallets via a forklift. They can be fixed in place while the van is on an incline. Both back doors come standard with glass.

There are six cargo area tie-down points with the SWB and eight on the LWB, a single-sliding door on the passenger side and rear-cargo lighting.

The new Deliver 7 starts from $53,990 for the SWB and $56,990 for the LWB. Both are covered by a seven-year or 200,000km warranty, unlimited kilometre seven-year roadside assistance and seven years' worth of warrant of fitness checks.

Mellow says: "It's the new game in town when it comes to the highly competitive mid-size van market. It offers exceptional value without compromising on quality or innovation."

BIGGER MODEL GETS BOOST

LDV's Deliver 9 boasts an increase in power and technical changes with the adoption of a Euro 6-compliant diesel engine.

Visually distinguished by its gloss-black radiator grille, its power and torque come in at 128kW and 420Nm – up by 20kW and 45Nm compared to the previous model.

It also boasts an eight-speed ZF automatic transmission as seen in LDV's new T60 Max Plus ute for a "seamless transfer" of its extra power to the rear wheels.

Upgrades have propelled the Deliver 9 from its previous bronze rating to gold by scoring 74 per cent in ANCAP's commercial van safety comparison segments.

Inside, the 12.3-inch infotainment system has been upgraded from 10.1 inches on 2023 vehicles. Long wheelbase high-roof vans feature 236-degree opening cargo doors as standard.

Pricing starts at $55,990 for the automatic Big Double Door and tops out at $65,990 for the Biggest Double Door auto.


The Deliver 9

Marques making electric moves

The Iveco Group has teamed up with Hyundai to launch the first model made on the latter's new electric light-commercial vehicle (eLCV) platform.

The eMoovy as it has been named by the Italian company, and the ST1 as it's called by Hyundai, offers urban delivery drivers up to 320km of all-electric range on the WLTP.

Via ultra-fast charging, it takes just 10 minutes to provide an additional 100km of range.

The van essentially combines the South Korean EV cab-chassis with the heavy-vehicle specialist's cargo compartment.

Equipped with an 800-volt power system familiar to Hyundai Motor's large-segment models, the eMoovy/ST1 boasts 160kW of power and 350Nm of torque.

Battery capacity is 76.1kWh with a smart management system shared with the Ioniq 5 and 6, and Genesis Electrified models.

The all-electric eMoovy

The power units have large capacities compared to electric light commercials in the same class and sensors detect battery information to prevent malfunctions.

The van also offers vehicle-to-load functions specialised for multi-purpose models, providing electric power inside and outside for enhanced convenience.

The two marques say its low-profile design makes it ideal for logistics and delivery operators, while low ground clearance maximises cargo capacity and improved operator mobility.

The interior is based on Hyundai's Staria Load – the layout is familiar, there's comparable convenience and technology features, and the latest safety equipment.

Standard advanced driver-assistance systems include lane-departure prevention assist, parking-distance warning and forward collision-avoidance assist.

The eMoovy/ST1 offers a low drag co-efficient of 0.29. Its cargo area is 2,462mm long, 1,810mm wide and 1,700mm high. Total vehicle height is 2,200mm while the step-in figure is 380mm.

"By leveraging our global eLCV platform, we have advanced EV mobility technology with Iveco's European expertise to position the eMoovy/ST1 as a transport platform that can transform the market," says Ken Ramirez, Hyundai executive vice-president.

The market down under is being studied for possible introduction of the van. Iveco hosted "experience" events in Europe either side of Christmas to get feedback on the model and its all-electric heavy-duty S-eWay Rigid.

Load up for family fun

Volkswagen has expanded its commercials line-up with the Multivan 7 TDI, which features a four-cylinder turbo-diesel engine.

The seven-seater, which boasts 110kW of power and 360Nm of torque, is built on the marque's advanced MQB platform enabling a high level of technology and functionality.

Five seats are adjustable and easily removable, the versatile multi-function table can be easily shifted between seats and there are sliding doors.

"This latest model offers everyday flexibility for large or extended families," says Kevin Richards, general manager of Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles New Zealand.

"With the highest standard of safety and two drivetrains to now choose from, the Multivan range is perfectly suited for Kiwis wanting to do more than A to B travel."

The 7 TDI boasts a five-star ANCAP rating. Driver-assistance systems include a front-assist area monitoring system, which includes city emergency braking, adaptive cruise control and lane assist.

The new Multivan, which starts at $88,000, joins the existing plug-in hybrid powertrain so buyers have a range of options to suit their needs.

Arvid Lindblad leads Zack Scoular at Hampton Downs

Rising star wins title as series records tumble

History has been created and new records set across New Zealand's top circuits in this year's Castrol Toyota Formula Regional Oceania Championship.

Rising Brit Arvid Lindblad took out the overall title of what was previously known as the Toyota Racing Series (TRS) after winning four of the five feature races.

Red Bull's junior team sent him to the southern hemisphere to win races and secure FIA Super Licence points on his planned journey to the top of his career ladder that is Formula One.

And for the first time in 50 years, the New Zealand Grand Prix (NZGP) was won by an Australian – Will Brown, the current V8 Supercars champion.

Always popular with major F1 teams as a place to hone the skills and speed of their junior drivers, the championship was also contested by the highest number of Red Bull-affiliated drivers ever.

In the 17-strong field, M2 Competition fielded no less than six cars. It has been the TRS champion team nine times, has had the drivers' champion eight times and has notched up about half of the series' race wins going all the way back to 2005.

This year's championship, which saw a switch to Pirelli tyres that shaved up to three seconds off lap records at all five circuits, kicked off at the 3.5km Taupo circuit over the weekend of January 10-12.

Kiwi Zack Scoular signalled his arrival on New Zealand's motorsport scene with an impressive pole position for the first race of the series.

In that race, he went from pole to the chequered flag. He held off Brown and a hard-charging Lindblad, who were second and third.

The championship's second race is a partial-reverse grid. On this occasion, it put American Josh Pierson on pole. However, it was Matias Zagazeta who gave Peru its first victory in Aotearoa's premier single-seater series.

He made a great start on old tyres to leap up from fourth on the grid to take the lead around turn one and was simply unbeatable for the next 18 laps. Pole-sitter Pierson was second with Lindblad third.

Then, in the feature race, Lindblad showed his form by sprinting away from pole to have a five-second lead over Zagazeta at the end.

"I could feel very quickly that the thermal degradation was a lot higher in this race than in the previous two, and the guys behind were very close," said Lindblad. "But after four or five laps, I managed to edge away."

Brown survived a scary moment early on after interlocking wheels with Michael Shin down the long back straight and sending the South Korean into a wild high-speed spin. Scoular finished third, having held off Brown through the closing laps.

At Hampton Downs a week later, Lindblad raised the stakes by winning the first and feature races, while Kiwi Sebastian Manson was victorious in the partial-reverse grid race.

Hitting the series midpoint at Manfeild Circuit Chris Amon, Lindblad was really shaping up as champion-elect.

It was a perfect performance by the Brit – perhaps his best to date in the championship – as he led from the start, built a lead and then delivered a series of qualifying level laps mid-race before breaking the field to scorch home by a massive five-and-a-half seconds.

Lindblad celebrating this year's Formula Regional title

Kiwi Zack Scoular was runner-up in both the Toyota FR Oceania Championship and NZGP

NZGP winner Will Brown in action at Highlands Motorsport Park

2025 TOYOTA FR OCEANIA FINAL STANDINGS - TOP 10

1	Arvid Lindblad	UK	M2 Competition	370
2	Zack Scoular	NZ	Mtec Motorsport	314
3	Nikita Johnson	USA	M2 Competition	305
4	Patrick Heuzenroeder	AUS	Mtec Motorsport	264
5	Matías Zagazeta	PER	M2 Competition	244
6	Sebastian Manson	NZ	M2 Competition	225
7	Josh Pierson	USA	Mtec Motorsport	219
8	Michael Shin	KOR	M2 Competition	197
9	Shawn Rashid	USA	Mtec Motorsport	169
10	Will Brown	AUS	Giles Motorsport	158

Brown celebrating with the Giles Motorsport team

In doing so, Lindblad extended his series lead over Scoular to 44 points.

On Sunday morning, the rain came. Scoular hit top form, using grooved wets on a drying track. He surged to the win. Johnson was second and Pierson third.

"I had a great car," said Scoular. "I knew if I was going to win this race and it was going to dry, I had to build a big lead.

"I was conscious of looking after the front tyres in particular, but the car had plenty of speed even when the track was drying.

"After the restart it was fully wet. All I had to do was get a good restart, which I did and I was able to bring it home comfortably."

Championship leader Lindblad and his M2 Competition team-mates had opted for slick tyres and fell to the back. Scoular was able to cut the Red Bull driver's series lead from 44 points to 26.

Lindblad was back in form in the afternoon feature race though, winning from pole ahead of Johnson and Patrick Heuzenroeder.

In the fourth round at Teretonga Park, Invercargill, Zagazeta walked back into the winner's circle by defeating the championship leader in the first race of the weekend. He led Lindblad into the first turn by several car lengths and never looked back.

Zagazeta said: "We had really tough races at Hampton Downs and Manfeild so to come back here, refresh and win is really good.

"I'm very happy with the job we've done on and off the track. It's fantastic to have a driver like Arvid in the championship because it pushes everyone to a higher level."

Manson made the most of a great start to hold off Scoular and Heuzenroeder to claim victory in the reverse-grid race.

Scoular's second place brought him level on points in the overall standings with Nikita Johnson with just four races remaining.

Series leader Lindblad was fast, but could not progress beyond sixth in the tightly matched field.

Lindblad then took his fourth straight feature win in the championship with only the 69th NZGP standing between him and an unprecedented clean sweep of the country's five top single-seater races.

"I really wanted to win today," commented the Brit. "The weekend has been decent, but not to the standard of the previous weekends, and I really wanted to win this race.

"The start was always going to be crucial and I made a decent one but not a mega one. I knew I had to send it and make it stick. A lot depended on Matias but he gave me the room."

By the time the 17-strong field took to the grid for the grand prix at Highlands Motorsport Park, Lindblad had done all the Red Bull organisation asked of him – winning the championship and securing those FIA Super Licence points for F1.

With Australians Brown, Heuzenroeder and Broc Feeney one-two-three on the grid, and Scoular fourth, the NZGP on February 9 promised an enthralling finale to the series.

Lindblad could only qualify fifth with this M2 Competition team unable to match the overall pace of Mtec Motorsport and Giles Motorsport.

It was Brown who put his name in the record books by becoming the first Australian since Warwick Brown in 1975 to win the NZGP.

He finished two seconds clear of Scoular. The latter was the first Kiwi, who was crowned rookie champion for the 2025 Castrol Toyota FR Oceania Championship.

Lindblad, carrying number one on his FT60 for the NZGP, fought through to claim third.

'Positive spirit' across business

Mercedes-Benz New Zealand has celebrated excellence across its cars, vans and financial services networks by handing out its annual awards for 2024.

Mercedes-Benz Botany and Mercedes-Benz Christchurch have been inducted into the marque's circle of excellence, with the former clinching top retailer for the third consecutive year.

The circle of excellence award was introduced by the brand in 2020 and recognises the top two performing car retailers in the country.

Joerg Schmidt, Mercedes-Benz NZ's general manager, thanked the company's dealerships for their "positive spirit and endless efforts to deliver the highest standards in sales and service every day across all parts of the business".

CablePrice Christchurch scooped the retailer of the year title in the vans section and its employees took out two of the individual prizes on offer.

Beth Morrison, of Mercedes-Benz Vans, says the South Island business has demonstrated excellence in all areas from sales to service and parts, and consistently shows a focus on its customers.

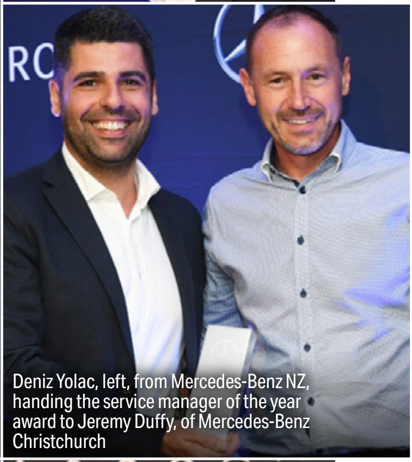
The awards evening held at the Cordis Hotel in Auckland last month was guided by New Zealand professional golfer Phil Tataurangi.

The event also recognised a number of individual achievements across sales and customer services.

These included Petra Morley, of the Botany branch, being voted as Mercedes-Benz Financial Services' business manager of the year.

Joerg Schmidt, left, general manager of Mercedes-Benz NZ, with Jon Aldridge, dealer principal of Mercedes-Benz Botany

Blaine Minne, of Mercedes-Benz Wellington



Deniz Yolac, left, from Mercedes-Benz NZ, handing the service manager of the year award to Jeremy Duffy, of Mercedes-Benz Christchurch

PASSENGER CAR AWARDS

Retailer of the year: Mercedes-Benz Botany.
Circle of excellence: Mercedes-Benz Botany and Mercedes-Benz Christchurch.
Sales manager of the year: Cameron Chubb, of Ingham Prestige, Hamilton.
Elite sales consultants: Frederic Cheng, of Mercedes-Benz North Shore, and Jia Yang, of Mercedes-Benz Botany.
Premium sales consultant: Jason Corlett, of Ingham Prestige.
Top-end vehicle sales consultant: David Wang, of Ingham Prestige.
Certified pre-owned sales consultant: Lee Li, of Mercedes-Benz Botany.
Parts manager: George Surgenor, of Mercedes-Benz North Shore.
Service manager: Jeremy Duffy, of Mercedes-Benz Christchurch.
Service adviser: Neil Kumar, of Mercedes-Benz Auckland, Newmarket.

MERCEDES-BENZ VANS

Retailer of the year: CablePrice Christchurch.
Parts manager: Blaine Minne, of Mercedes-Benz Wellington.
Service manager: Mark Dragovich, of CablePrice Christchurch.
Salesperson: Richard Field, of CablePrice Christchurch.

Richard Field, of CablePrice Christchurch

Mark Dragovich, of CablePrice

From left, David Wang, Cameron Chubb and Jason Corlett, of Ingham Prestige

From left, Petra Morley, Jon Aldridge, Ian Koen and Lee Li, of Mercedes-Benz Botany

Stephen Hermansen receiving the award from Annaliese Atina, managing director of Ford NZ, as staff watch on

Riding waves on way to top

Ocean Ford in Whakatane is the latest blue-oval dealership to earn Ford Guest Experience (FCE) accreditation.

It's also the first provincial franchise in Ford NZ's history to score a 100 per cent pass mark on assessment after the training period.

The perfect score to earn accreditation is another highlight and a big achievement for dealer principal Stephen Hermansen.

He began his career as a car groomer in 1997 at KB Ford in Dannevirke and worked his way up to apprentice technician before qualifying in that profession.

Hermansen then took on the sales side of the business and went on to fill various commercial roles to gain a full education across all dealership departments.

He bought into Ocean Ford in 2008 and moved to the Bay of Plenty. Eight years later, he took full ownership of the business before taking it to the next level.

In 2018, adjacent land was purchased to expand the yard and make way for a complete redesign of the original premises.

Demolition began in 2022 to make way for a new showroom and sales area, and by 2024 the rebuild was completed. It was opened officially with a karakia by local iwi.

"From early on in my working life, the ultimate dream was to own a Ford dealership, and to get the opportunity to do so is something I feel thankful for and proud of," says Hermansen.

"The entire team at Ocean Ford has put so much into the dealership over these past few years. It's amazing to get the accreditation and recognition for all our hard work.

"Ford is a fantastic brand and now, with an amazing new dealership and great people, we're in a really good position for the future."

FGE accreditation is a mark of distinction and excellence awarded by the marque to dealerships that pass rigorous assessments designed to test every facet of the customer experience.

To achieve it, franchises must meet a set of standards focused on delivering exceptional customer service throughout the car-buying journey from initial contact and the sales process to service appointments and post-sale follow-ups.

Key requirements include consistent customer-centric practices, employee training for Ford guest-experience standards, adherence to service protocols, measuring customer satisfaction through surveys and demonstrating continuous improvement initiatives.

Traders recognised by finance company

Nicole Pye, of Buythiscar, with Chris Lamers, MTF's chief executive officer

Reju Raj, operations manager of True Value Cars

Tem Huang, of Honda Store Christchurch

Giancarlo Moretti, of 1 Stop Motors

MTF has announced the winners of its 2024 dealer awards, which celebrate businesses and individuals exemplifying customer care, innovation and responsible lending.

Tem Huang, from Honda Store Christchurch, took out the honour for staff excellence, while the business excellence prize went to 1 Stop Motors in Auckland.

Buythiscar, also in Auckland, won the culture of responsibility award and the best performing new dealership was judged to be True Value Cars in Dunedin.

The winners were treated to a special celebration with MTF sales and board representatives among the wineries of Waipara, North Canterbury, including a wine tasting at Pegasus Bay and lunch at Greystone Wines & Restaurant.

Chris Lamers, MTF's chief executive officer, says the company has championed dealerships nationwide since 1970 and has sought to strengthen its presence with traders over the past three years.

He adds: "The winners of the 2024 awards embody customer care and innovation every day, upholding responsible-lending practices despite challenging economic conditions, while ensuring a seamless and positive customer experience at all times."

Purchaser failed to ask if new electric car came with connectivity app available overseas

The case: A new EV9 didn't come with the Kia Connect app. The buyer wanted it retrofitted or to be refunded $17,100 for the loss incurred in being unable to access it. The trader said its customer never asked about the application and didn't tell him the car had it. The hardware required for the app wasn't available for the New Zealand market.

The decision: The buyer's application under the Fair Trading Act (FTA) was dismissed. It was ruled there was no misleading or deceptive conduct by the trader.

At: The Motor Vehicle Disputes Tribunal via video link.

Background

Scott Lawrence bought a new EV9 from Waikato Kia on May 6, 2024. He expected it to include the Kia Connect app, but it didn't.

This feature was important to him so he could locate the car, assess its charge and lock it. He later discovered it was unavailable to Kiwi buyers.

Lawrence alleged Waikato Kia had been misleading or deceptive in breach of the FTA. He wanted $17,100 for the loss he claimed to have incurred in being unable to access the app or have it retrofitted. The dealer denied saying the EV9 came with the application.

Prior to purchase, Lawrence had seen the connectivity features advertised on Kia NZ's website, so the tribunal initially considered joining the company to this matter.

But the buyer disagreed because he was pursuing a remedy against it via the Commerce Commission.

The case

Lawrence viewed the EV9's basic specifications on Kia NZ's website and watched YouTube videos about it prior to purchase.

One article on the Kia NZ site, published in March 2023, was called "Kia EV9 reshapes SUV user experience with superior design and technology".

It added: "The Kia Connect store offers a wide array of options. This enables customers to keep their EV9 constantly updated by upgrading the SUV's digital features and services without any need to take the vehicle to a dealership."

Lawrence took this to mean the car came with the app, and he also watched promotional videos shared by Waikato Kia from Kia NZ's Facebook page.

When he inspected the vehicle, he didn't ask the dealer if it came with the app. He expected it would have it based on information he had seen.

Lawrence added there were others who had also assumed the EV9 had the app. Jevon Priestly, a witness for the buyer, said he had bought the same model from a different trader and thought it would have an app.

Gary Steward, Waikato Kia's general manager, pointed out Priestly had also not asked questions about the application.

Lawrence said the EV9's purchase price was $89,990 and, allowing for the trade-in value and accessories, he calculated his losses at $17,100. Alternatively, he wanted the app retrofitted.

The app's hardware wasn't available in this country, the Kia Connect store was only for the US and Steward explained his business had no control over Kia NZ's website.

He said buyers of cars, such as the EV9, should do due diligence and read the specifications. Lawrence asked no questions about connectivity features. The business had sold about 12 EV9s and nobody had queried about the app.

Steward added there was no difference in the car's value with or without the app and produced evidence from a Facebook group for New Zealanders who owned Kia EVs.

Lawrence stated he was looking for like-minded owners so they could "band together".

He added: "I haven't got a straight answer out of anyone. I bought the car assuming it would be available – no I didn't confirm – but coming from owning a Tesla Model 3 I didn't even think it wouldn't be available."

Craig Buckley, Kia NZ's service general manager, said an article Lawrence claimed he saw contained a link to the car and there was information that clarified various features weren't available in every country.

The buyer replied that he didn't think a customer should have to look through the fine print to find that information and disagreed the app couldn't be retrofitted.

The finding

The tribunal considered if Waikato Kia, by reposting Facebook videos, represented that the EV9 would come with the app.

The promotional videos made no reference to this. It found a reasonable consumer wouldn't view those videos and take them to mean that an application would be available for use with the vehicle in New Zealand.

Further, the tribunal considered that if a reasonable person happened to conclude that those videos somehow meant that the car would have an app, they would still do more research before buying it.

Therefore, it ruled there was no misleading or deceptive conduct on the part of Waikato Kia.

As for his claim it was misleading not to disclose the EV9 didn't come with the app, Lawrence had to show Waikato Kia had failed to disclose that was the case and the failure was misleading or deceptive conduct in breach of the FTA.

Section nine of the act states that silence or failure to disclose a material fact could constitute misleading or deceptive conduct when a reasonable consumer would expect it to have been disclosed.

The tribunal found that a reasonable person wouldn't expect the supplier to tell him the EV9 didn't come with the app.

It considered that a reasonable buyer of a new vehicle would do a reasonable amount of due diligence before making a purchase of this magnitude.

In relation to an app feature, the adjudicator said that was something they would ask about if it was important to them, especially if there was no reference to it in the car's brochure.

Order

The application was dismissed. The tribunal ruled that the dealer didn't engage in misleading conduct under the FTA by failing to disclose the EV9 didn't come with the app.

A Kia EV9

Dealer telling buyer to make insurance claim to fix fault ‘tantamount’ to refusal to repair

The case: The consumer noticed his Holden Barina jerked and shuddered while being driven at low speeds on the day of purchase. The trader twice tried to repair the car but the issue remained, so the buyer wanted to reject it under the Consumer Guarantees Act (CGA). The dealer requested a third opportunity to repair the vehicle.

The decision: The tribunal upheld the purchaser’s application. The trader was ordered to pay $6,285 to the buyer and uplift the Holden.

At: The Motor Vehicle Disputes Tribunal via video link.

A model-year 2014 Holden Barina

Background

Jonathan Thompson bought a 2014 Holden Barina from Autosave 2021 Ltd on February 29, 2024, for $5,490 plus $795 for mechanical breakdown insurance (MBI). It had an odometer reading of 124,032km.

On the day of purchase, he claimed the car had a faulty torque converter and the failure was substantial, so he wanted to reject it.

However, Autosave disagreed and asked for another chance to fix the problem.

The case

When Thompson left the trader’s yard on the day of purchase, he noticed the Barina would jerk and shudder at 50kph.

While it was driveable, he felt there was clearly something wrong with it, so he arranged for it to be returned to the dealer on March 4 last year for the issue to be dealt with.

On March 6, the trader told Thompson it had flushed the transmission fluid and it might take 1,000km of driving to notice an improvement.

Thompson collected the car but the jerking and shuddering was still there as he was driving home.

He conducted online research and discovered if a transmission flush was to make an improvement that it would be noticeable within a day.

Thompson arranged for the vehicle to be returned to the trader on March 19 to have the problem fixed for a second time.

On this occasion, the dealer told him to make a claim on his MBI to fix the issue and said it would pay the excess.

However, Thompson didn’t want to do this because he considered the issue was pre-existing and such conditions wouldn’t be covered. He asked for a refund or replacement vehicle, but the trader disagreed.

The buyer then took the Holden to Kaspa Transmissions on the trader’s recommendation.

The specialist was unsure what the fault was and wouldn’t guarantee it was an issue with the torque converter. The mechanic quoted $2,300 to $2,500 plus GST to replace it.

A written estimate was provided. It stated: “Transmission intermittently surging on light throttle. Suspect faulty torque-converter assembly. Cannot confirm if torque converter is faulty until removed and inspected.”

The trader again told Thompson he should make a claim on his MBI and that it would meet the excess. Instead, the Holden was rejected under the CGA on March 26.

That same day, the buyer filed a claim in the Disputes Tribunal, which was later transferred to the Motor Vehicle Disputes Tribunal.

On June 20, Thompson took the car to Firstgearboxes Ltd for assessment. By then, its odometer reading was 126,148km.

The repairer found that the torque converter seemed to have a “lock-up issue”. To remedy the issue, it would be necessary to remove the transmission and send the part away to be checked. It estimated $2,128 to rebuild the converter and replace fluids.

At the hearing, the trader apologised to Thomspon for how this matter was dealt with, which it accepted wasn’t well-handled from the outset.

The dealer said it was willing to fix the Holden at its own cost or replace the vehicle. It offered no substantive defence to the application.

The finding

In considering if a vehicle meets the CGA’s guarantee of acceptable, the tribunal must take into account quality elements as set out in section seven of the act from the perspective of a reasonable consumer.

The test is objective and isn’t a view of those factors from a purchaser’s subjective perspective.

Thompson’s Barina had high mileage and was relatively inexpensive. However, the tribunal didn’t consider a reasonable person would have expected to experience such a serious fault at the very start of its ownership.

Also, the buyer had been unable to drive the Holden while it was assessed and needed repairs.

It was clear to the tribunal that the car’s fault was pre-existing and meant it failed the CGA’s guarantee of acceptable quality.

The adjudicator accepted the problem might well have been the torque converter, but that couldn’t be confirmed until repairs were under way.

Therefore, Thompson was entitled to reject the Barina under section 18 of the CGA if the trader failed to remedy the issue within a reasonable time frame.

The tribunal found that the dealer was asked by the buyer to fix the fault on two separate occasions.

Following the first repair on March 6, the problem wasn’t remedied. On the second occasion, the buyer returned the car for repairs on March 19 and the trader said that Thompson would need to make a claim under his MBI policy for the fault to be fixed.

In the tribunal’s view, that was tantamount to a refusal to repair by the trader. It ruled that Autosave declined and failed to fix the fault within a reasonable time of request.

The adjudicator said Thompson was entitled to an order for rejection of the Barina in line with section 18 of the CGA.

The tribunal ruled the buyer was entitled to a refund of all amounts paid in respect of the vehicle, which in this case was the purchase price and cost of the MBI policy.

Orders

The trader had to pay back $6,285 to the buyer. It was also ordered to uplift the car.

Talks between brands canned

Negotiations about a possible merger between Honda and Nissan have ended less than two months after they started.

The outcome of preliminary talks between the two companies further highlights the mounting pressure on established marques from Chinese rivals.

The discussions between Honda, Japan's second-largest carmaker, and Nissan – the country's third biggest – were announced on December 23 but quickly became tested by disagreements over the balance of power.

The main reason for the deal falling apart on February 13 was Honda's proposal to make Nissan a subsidiary, report Japanese and global media outlets including Reuters.

A merger would have created the world's fourth-biggest automotive group by vehicle sales after Toyota, Volkswagen and Hyundai.

Nissan and Honda say they will now continue with an earlier agreement, which also includes Mitsubishi, to co-operate on software and electric vehicle-related technologies.

Toshihiro Mibe, Honda's chief executive officer, says while joining the two companies would have meant "quick pain", he became more worried about the fallout if talks dragged on without progress.

Makoto Uchida, left, Nissan's CEO, with Toshihiro Mibe, his opposite number at Honda

He adds it would have been better for Honda to have more control to make speedy decisions under a "one governance" structure so it proposed making Nissan its subsidiary.

"It's unfortunate we couldn't find the common ground to take a step toward the merger," says Mibe.

"It had great potential to bring significant effects in various areas ranging from platforms, purchasing, research and development, and back-office operations.

"We also came to realise it was necessary to swiftly and decisively implement painful decisions to achieve this."

Nissan believed the best way forward was the original plan to establish a joint holding company, says its CEO Makoto Uchida.

"It's difficult to keep up with competition just by Nissan itself so we had a serious discussion about the proposal by Honda," he explains.

"We were unable to have confidence in how much Nissan's independence will be ensured and whether our potential will be fully brought out if Nissan becomes Honda's wholly owned subsidiary."

Renault, which is Nissan's top shareholder, says the terms of the proposed merger, including the lack of any premium, were unacceptable.

Last month, Nissan reduced its full-year forecast for the third time and reported another big drop – of 78 per cent – in third-quarter earnings. It now intends to speed up a turnaround programme it unveiled last year.

The company aims to close a factory in Thailand by June and two more plants, which it has yet to name, after that. It previously reported it will cut 9,000 jobs and its global capacity by one-fifth.

Nissan will also look at new partnerships as part of the review and was expected to give an update on that this month.

Well-established marques and relative newcomers, such as Tesla, are facing increased competition from the likes of BYD, especially when it comes to EVs and sticker prices, while Japanese marques are also facing US tariffs on imports into that country on vehicles made in Mexico.

While Honda may be confident about its future on the worldwide stage, many commentators suggest Nissan is one of the most troubled of the big "legacy" carmakers.

That's because it has yet to fully recover from the crisis sparked by the 2018 arrest and ousting of Carlos Ghosn, its ex-chairman.

Mitsubishi, more than one-third of which is owned by Nissan, had adopted a wait-and-see approach to joining the talks.

When the three carmakers held a news conference in December to announce the possibility of a merger, they were aiming to finalise a deal by June and establish a new holding company by the summer of 2026.

Minister exits cabinet

Andrew Bayly faces a long spell on the government's backbenches after stepping down as Minister of Commerce and Consumer Affairs.

His departure comes after he "placed a hand" on a staff member's arm during an "animated discussion" on February 18, which he described as "inappropriate".

The MP for Port Waikato has also relinquished the ACC portfolio, with Scott Simpson, MP for Coromandel, being promoted to take on both cabinet positions previously held by Bayly.

It means the ministerial merry-go-round continues for the automotive industry with Chris Bishop taking over the transport from Simeon Brown in January.

Bayly was overseeing changes to the Credit Contracts and Consumer Finance Act before his departure, which have implications for the finance and car industries.


Andrew Bayly

He had already become a liability for National after having to apologise last year when a complaint was lodged about his behaviour at Marlborough winery.

It included that he had sworn at, ridiculed and mocked a worker there, including calling the man a "loser" and telling him to "take some wine and f*** off".

A statement from Bayly on February 24 regarding the incident states he had been "impatient to drive change" in his ministerial portfolios and, during an "animated discussion" with a staffer about work, "took the discussion too far".

He says: "I placed a hand on their upper arm, which was inappropriate. I have apologised to the staff member and regret placing them in an uncomfortable position.

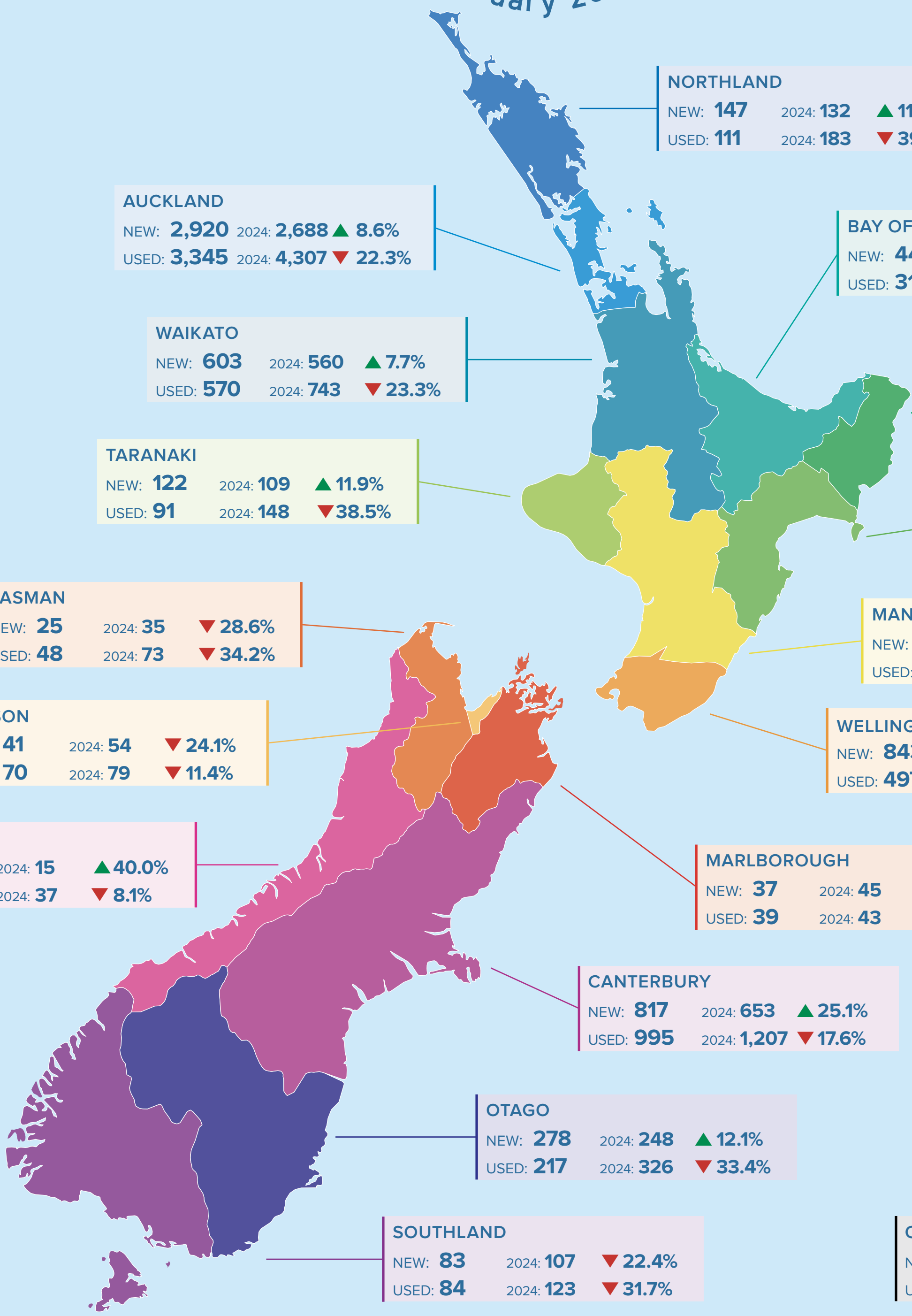
"There are times when you have to hold yourself to account. I made the personal choice to resign as a minister."

Simpson says: "I relish the chance to be a part of the broader coalition team that's working to get New Zealand's economy growing and thriving again. I'm excited by the opportunity the Prime Minister has given me to take on these two new portfolio roles."

AROUND THE COUNTRY
February 2025

Total new cars	
7,008	
2024: 5,922	▲ 18.3%

Total imported used cars	
6,793	
2024: 8,816	▼ 22.9%



NORTHLAND
NEW: 147 2024: 132 ▲ 11.4%
USED: 111 2024: 183 ▼ 39.3%

AUCKLAND
NEW: 2,920 2024: 2,688 ▲ 8.6%
USED: 3,345 2024: 4,307 ▼ 22.3%

BAY OF PLENTY
NEW: 442 2024: 327 ▲ 35.2%
USED: 316 2024: 400 ▼ 21.0%

WAIKATO
NEW: 603 2024: 560 ▲ 7.7%
USED: 570 2024: 743 ▼ 23.3%

GISBORNE
NEW: 41 2024: 31 ▲ 32.3%
USED: 48 2024: 50 ▼ 4.0%

TARANAKI
NEW: 122 2024: 109 ▲ 11.9%
USED: 91 2024: 148 ▼ 38.5%

HAWKE'S BAY
NEW: 250 2024: 160 ▲ 56.3%
USED: 117 2024: 171 ▼ 31.6%

TASMAN
NEW: 25 2024: 35 ▼ 28.6%
USED: 48 2024: 73 ▼ 34.2%

MANAWATU-WHANGANUI
NEW: 330 2024: 230 ▲ 43.5%
USED: 190 2024: 254 ▼ 25.2%

NELSON
NEW: 41 2024: 54 ▼ 24.1%
USED: 70 2024: 79 ▼ 11.4%

WELLINGTON
NEW: 843 2024: 518 ▲ 62.7%
USED: 497 2024: 644 ▼ 22.8%

WEST COAST
NEW: 21 2024: 15 ▲ 40.0%
USED: 34 2024: 37 ▼ 8.1%

MARLBOROUGH
NEW: 37 2024: 45 ▼ 17.8%
USED: 39 2024: 43 ▼ 9.3%

CANTERBURY
NEW: 817 2024: 653 ▲ 25.1%
USED: 995 2024: 1,207 ▼ 17.6%

OTAGO
NEW: 278 2024: 248 ▲ 12.1%
USED: 217 2024: 326 ▼ 33.4%

SOUTHLAND
NEW: 83 2024: 107 ▼ 22.4%
USED: 84 2024: 123 ▼ 31.7%

OTHERS (Chatham Islands, overseas, unknown)
NEW: 8 2024: 10 ▼ 20.0%
USED: 21 2024: 28 ▼ 25.0%

Imported Passenger Vehicle Sales by Make - February 2025

MAKE	FEB '25	FEB '24	+/-%	FEB '25 MKT SHARE	2025 YEAR TO DATE	2025 MKT SHARE
Toyota	2,521	3,426	-26.4	37.1%	5,168	36.5%
Nissan	914	1,219	-25.0	13.5%	1,886	13.3%
Mazda	827	1,223	-32.4	12.2%	1,730	12.2%
Honda	685	723	-5.3	10.1%	1,447	10.2%
Subaru	642	653	-1.7	9.5%	1,403	9.9%
BMW	257	237	8.4	3.8%	502	3.5%
Suzuki	193	246	-21.5	2.8%	406	2.9%
Mercedes-Benz	137	138	-0.7	2.0%	299	2.1%
Audi	136	151	-9.9	2.0%	278	2.0%
Mitsubishi	108	231	-53.2	1.6%	258	1.8%
Lexus	95	173	-45.1	1.4%	206	1.5%
Volkswagen	85	165	-48.5	1.3%	189	1.3%
Land Rover	33	35	-5.7	0.5%	75	0.5%
Ford	22	32	-31.3	0.3%	44	0.3%
Jaguar	18	22	-18.2	0.3%	33	0.2%
Volvo	18	14	28.6	0.3%	33	0.2%
Tesla	16	7	128.6	0.2%	34	0.2%
Jeep	10	16	-37.5	0.1%	27	0.2%
Chevrolet	9	12	-25.0	0.1%	15	0.1%
Mini	9	9	0.0	0.1%	19	0.1%
Porsche	8	13	-38.5	0.1%	17	0.1%
Hyundai	7	6	16.7	0.1%	11	0.1%
BYD	4	0	400.0	0.1%	4	0.0%
Daihatsu	4	6	-33.3	0.1%	6	0.0%
Dodge	4	9	-55.6	0.1%	8	0.1%
Range Rover	3	0	300.0	0.0%	5	0.0%
Renault	3	3	0.0	0.0%	6	0.0%
Alfa Romeo	2	5	-60.0	0.0%	2	0.0%
Chrysler	2	9	-77.8	0.0%	4	0.0%
Citroen	2	0	200.0	0.0%	3	0.0%
Ferrari	2	2	0.0	0.0%	3	0.0%
Buick	1	0	100.0	0.0%	3	0.0%
Fiat	1	1	0.0	0.0%	4	0.0%
Haval	1	1	0.0	0.0%	2	0.0%
Holden	1	2	-50.0	0.0%	3	0.0%
Others	13	27	-51.9	0.2%	34	0.2%
Total	**6,793**	**8,816**	**-22.9**	**100.0%**	**14,167**	**100.0%**

Imported Passenger Vehicle Sales by Model - February 2025

MAKE	MODEL	FEB '25	FEB '24	+/-%	FEB '25 MKT SHARE	2025 YEAR TO DATE	2025 MKT SHARE
Toyota	Aqua	708	957	-26.0	10.4%	1,403	9.9%
Toyota	Prius	504	778	-35.2	7.4%	965	6.8%
Toyota	Corolla	333	318	4.7	4.9%	692	4.9%
Honda	Fit	291	304	-4.3	4.3%	597	4.2%
Mazda	Axela	267	390	-31.5	3.9%	532	3.8%
Subaru	Impreza	229	270	-15.2	3.4%	492	3.5%
Toyota	C-HR	221	243	-9.1	3.3%	418	3.0%
Nissan	Note	218	340	-35.9	3.2%	447	3.2%
Nissan	X-Trail	199	279	-28.7	2.9%	427	3.0%
Subaru	XV	191	183	4.4	2.8%	393	2.8%
Mazda	Demio	180	301	-40.2	2.6%	378	2.7%
Suzuki	Swift	155	168	-7.7	2.3%	327	2.3%
Nissan	Serena	154	256	-39.8	2.3%	301	2.1%
Mazda	CX-5	142	197	-27.9	2.1%	309	2.2%
Honda	Vezel	115	147	-21.8	1.7%	255	1.8%
Nissan	Leaf	92	69	33.3	1.4%	202	1.4%
Subaru	Legacy	77	40	92.5	1.1%	162	1.1%
Toyota	Vitz	74	146	-49.3	1.1%	165	1.2%
Mitsubishi	Outlander	70	146	-52.1	1.0%	157	1.1%
Honda	Odyssey	65	35	85.7	1.0%	129	0.9%
Toyota	Vellfire	65	82	-20.7	1.0%	168	1.2%
Mazda	Premacy	62	103	-39.8	0.9%	130	0.9%
Toyota	Camry	61	88	-30.7	0.9%	123	0.9%
Subaru	Forester	60	56	7.1	0.9%	128	0.9%
Mazda	Atenza	56	99	-43.4	0.8%	131	0.9%
Honda	Accord	52	21	147.6	0.8%	99	0.7%
Toyota	Spade	50	95	-47.4	0.7%	113	0.8%
Volkswagen	Golf	47	106	-55.7	0.7%	110	0.8%
BMW	320i	42	44	-4.5	0.6%	83	0.6%
Audi	A4	39	36	8.3	0.6%	94	0.7%
BMW	Mini	38	38	0.0	0.6%	79	0.6%
Toyota	Alphard	37	52	-28.8	0.5%	97	0.7%
Toyota	Sai	36	73	-50.7	0.5%	79	0.6%
Nissan	Lafesta	35	33	6.1	0.5%	65	0.5%
Nissan	Skyline	34	38	-10.5	0.5%	65	0.5%
Others		1,794	2,285	-21.5	26.4%	3,852	27.2%
Total		**6,793**	**8,816**	**-22.9**	**100.0%**	**14,167**	**100.0%**

Company gets funding for growth

NZ Cheap Cars is opening a national distribution centre to streamline operations and support its expansion.

The facility in Penrose, Auckland, will be the "heart" of the company with the aim of improving logistics and enhancing customer experience. It will also house its head office.

The business, which has four branches across the city and reports having sold more than 5,000 cars, has secured bank funding towards its growth plans.

This backing will allow the company, which was founded about two years ago, to "accelerate growth and further enhance its service offering".

Michael Yang, chief executive officer, says: "Opening our national distribution centre is an exciting and pivotal moment.

"It will not only help us increase operational efficiency, but also enables us to better serve customers as we expand our reach across the country. The support from our banking partners has been instrumental in helping us to realise this vision."

In addition to the Penrose facility, preparations are under way for NZ Cheap Cars' new Tauranga branch, with plans for dealerships in Wellington and Christchurch being developed.

Sales down

Registrations of used-imported passenger vehicles amounted to 6,793 in February for a fall of 22.9 per cent when compared to 8,816 in the same month of last year.

Toyotas took out the top three spots with the Aqua on 708 units, Prius on 504 and Corolla with 333. In fourth place was the Honda Fit on 291 and Mazda's Axela came fifth on 267.

February's best-selling marque was Toyota on 2,521 units with Nissan second on 914.

HYBRID MOST STOLEN

Toyota's Aqua was New Zealand's most stolen car of 2024 to claim the unwanted gong for the third year in a row.

Data shows there were almost 12,000 vehicle theft claims, including those for attempted theft, lodged with AMI last year.

The Aqua made up eight per cent of all such claims. Next were Toyota's Corolla on six per cent and the Nissan Tiida with five per cent. The top five was completed by two Mazdas – the Demio and Atenza.

Wayne Tippet, AMI's executive general manager of claims, notes stolen car claims have started to fall for the first time in four years with those related to ram-raids down by 50 per cent in 2024 compared to 2023.

He adds AMI's ladder highlights Kiwis' "love" for Toyota with five models in the top nine. "The Hilux climbed four spots [to sixth] indicating its increasing value, rural and urban appeal, and strong resale values driven by high demand for its parts."

NETWORK TO EXPAND

The AA plans to expand its network of Auto Centres after reopening one in Whangarei.

Jonathan Sergel, chief mobility officer, says: "We're thrilled the Northland community can now access our motoring services without needing to drive a significant distance south.

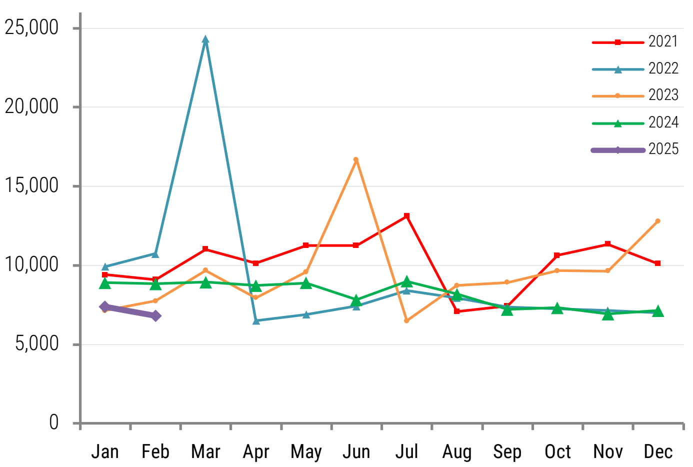
"With the addition of this AA Auto Centre, we now have 38 across New Zealand. Plans are under way for more to open in 2025."

CAR SPENDING DROPS

Retail-card spending on vehicles dropped by 1.4 per cent and $7.7 million in the last three months of 2024 when compared to the September quarter, says Stats NZ.

The seasonally adjusted total came in at $554m, the lowest level since the previous quarter's $488m.

Used Imported Passenger Registrations - 2021–2025



Used Imported Passenger Vehicle Sales by Motive Power - February 2025

MAKE	FEB '25	FEB '24	+/-%	FEB '25 MKT SHARE	2025 YEAR TO DATE	2025 MKT SHARE
Full battery electric	120	90	33.3%	1.8%	260	1.8%
Plug-in hybrid electric	50	102	-51.0%	0.7%	112	0.8%
Non plug-in petrol hybrid	3,147	4,093	-23.1%	46.3%	6,357	44.9%
Petrol	3,377	4,409	-23.4%	49.7%	7,217	50.9%
Diesel	99	121	-18.2%	1.5%	221	1.6%
Others (includes non plug-in diesel hybrid, fuel cell)	0	1	-100.0%	0.0%	0	0.0%
Total	**6,793**	**8,816**	**-22.9%**		**14,167**	

Lower spending impacts margins

The chairman of 2 Cheap Cars says there's no ignoring the cost-of-living crisis and few businesses avoid "some hurt" during tough times.

Michael Stiassny says the company is no longer expecting to match its profit levels of 2023/24.

High interest rates in 2024 affected people's ability to afford finance they often needed to make purchases although rates came down later last year.

In addition, further benefits from the company's vertical integration benefits and expansion initiatives will boost its performance with the board anticipating a "solid" full-year result for 2024/25.

Stiassny describes 2 Cheap Cars as a "no-frills business in tune with the times as New Zealand experiences a prolonged economic downturn".

He adds: "The business is agile. We will continue to respond quickly to changes in trading conditions at a nationwide level and site by site."

Angus Guerin, chief financial officer, says: "We've partnered with more shipping companies to eliminate the impact of shipping constraints on inventory levels.

"Our objective is getting vehicles onto yards as quickly and cheaply as possible to maximise margin and drive sales."

Traditionally, cost-of-living hikes boost demand for affordable cars as consumers seek to manage their budgets, explains Guerin.

"However, in the prolonged downturn, low-wage earners are disproportionately affected. Our potential customers have decreased purchasing power. Lower immigration rates can also reduce new customers.

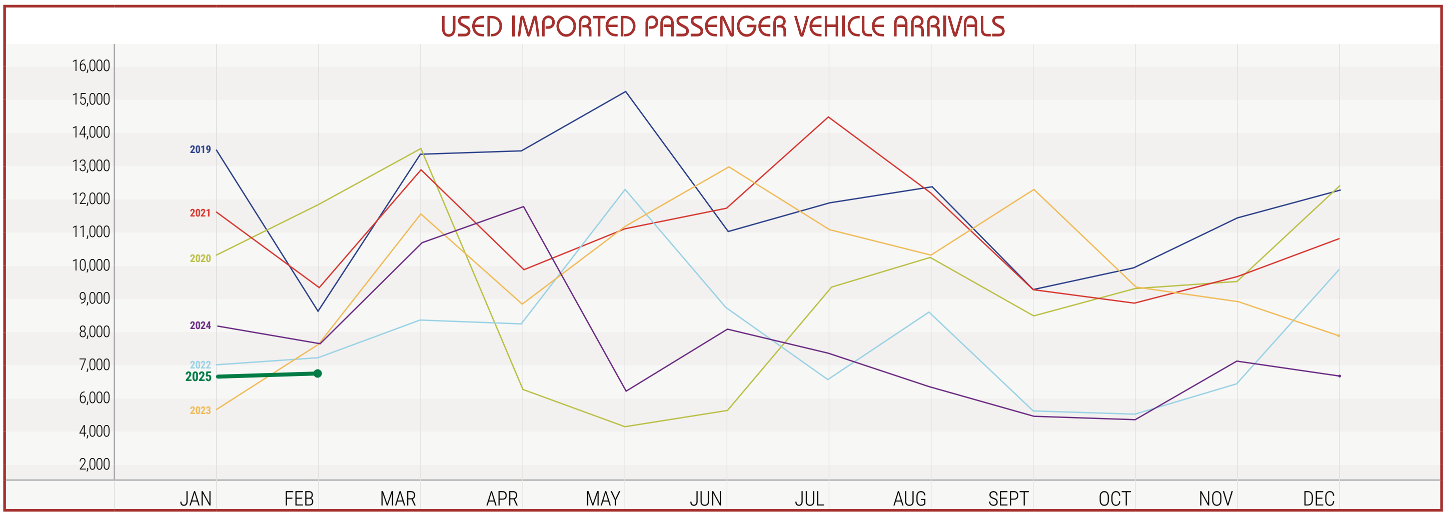
"As the recession continues to bite, many dealers are importing fewer vehicles and there's an inventory deficit in the country as a whole. 2 Cheap Cars maintains strong inventory levels and continues to trade well.

"The number of used-car dealerships is dropping as businesses go to the wall.

"Affordable cars are a necessity. While we anticipate weak market conditions persisting and immigration numbers to reduce, there are reasons for optimism in the medium term."

YEAR-ON-YEAR FALL

There were 6,745 used cars imported last month. That was a decrease of 9.5 per cent from 7,457 in February 2024.



Used Imported Passenger Vehicles By Country Of Export

COUNTRY OF EXPORT	2025 JAN '25	FEB '25	FEB MKT SHARE %	2025 TOTAL	2024 Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2024 TOTAL	MRKT SHARE	2023 2023 TOTAL	MRKT SHARE
Australia	88	138	2.0%	**226**	279	357	302	347	1,285	1.5%	1,263	1.1%
Great Britain	18	29	0.4%	**47**	56	49	54	96	255	0.3%	272	0.2%
Japan	6,484	6,536	96.9%	**13,020**	25,429	24,909	17,868	17,834	86,040	97.5%	113,462	98.0%
Singapore	21	8	0.1%	**29**	89	62	53	52	256	0.3%	250	0.2%
USA	39	23	0.3%	**62**	44	58	75	72	249	0.3%	265	0.2%
Other countries	29	0	0.2%	**29**	30	61	25	54	170	0.2%	241	0.2%
Total	**6,679**	**6,745**	**100.0%**	**13,424**	**25,927**	**25,496**	**18,377**	**18,455**	**88,255**	**100.0%**	**115,753**	**100.0%**

Inspection changes on table

The government wants to reduce the frequency of warrant of fitness (WOF) inspections for vintage light vehicles and certificates of fitness (COFs) on private heavy motorhomes.

A proposal by Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport, aims for inspections to be extended from every six months to once a year.

He says the government wants to reduce unnecessarily onerous compliance requirements for owners of cars and motorcycles more than 40 years old, and privately owned motorhomes.

"Everyone loves seeing a lovingly maintained vintage car out on the road for a Sunday drive and cruising around our beautiful country in a motorhome is a quintessential Kiwi dream," adds Bishop.

"There are around 128,000 vintage vehicles in New Zealand and about 39,000 private motorhomes.

"At present, the owners of these vehicles must spend time and money on WOF or COF inspections every six months.

"That's despite motorhomes and vintage light vehicles travelling much less per year compared to most modern cars, and evidence showing that faults in these vehicles are half as likely to have contributed to serious crashes involving these vehicles.

"That's true even when factoring in the smaller numbers of motorhomes and vintage vehicles on our roads."

Bishop says there's also evidence initial pass rates for vintage cars are higher than those for all vehicles less than 40 years old.

"Light vehicle WOF pass rates actually improve as vehicles age from 40 years showing that, with proper care, some things really do get better with age."

He continues that extending the time between WOF and COF inspections for vehicles over 40 and private heavy motorhomes is a "sensible approach to ensuring vehicles are safe while not going overboard on compliance".

Public consultation started on February 24 and the last day for feedback is April 4.

SALES & TRADE-INS UP

Dealers sold 15,112 second-hand cars to the public during February for an increase of 1.9 per cent from 14,836 in the same month of 2024.

There were 13,100 trade-ins for a 5.3 per cent year-on-year jump from 12,446.

SECONDHAND CAR SALES - February 2025

	DEALER TO PUBLIC				PUBLIC TO PUBLIC			PUBLIC TO DEALER		
REGION	FEB '25	FEB '24	+/- %	MARKET SHARE	FEB '25	FEB '24	+/- %	FEB '25	FEB '24	+/- %
Northland	502	483	3.9%	3.3%	1,728	1,909	-9.5%	196	179	9.5%
Auckland	5,140	5,096	0.9%	34.0%	12,931	14,409	-10.3%	5,744	5,406	6.3%
Waikato	1,515	1,522	-0.5%	10.0%	3,840	4,090	-6.1%	1,113	1,057	5.3%
Bay of Plenty	983	968	1.5%	6.5%	2,624	2,926	-10.3%	641	616	4.1%
Gisborne	132	127	3.9%	0.9%	392	399	-1.8%	56	34	64.7%
Hawke's Bay	598	509	17.5%	4.0%	1,329	1,568	-15.2%	415	358	15.9%
Taranaki	326	339	-3.8%	2.2%	1,072	1,103	-2.8%	161	179	-10.1%
Manawatu-Whanganui	783	808	-3.1%	5.2%	1,946	2,172	-10.4%	608	707	-14.0%
Wellington	1,460	1,418	3.0%	9.7%	3,037	3,301	-8.0%	1,107	1,117	-0.9%
Tasman	135	120	12.5%	0.9%	424	483	-12.2%	14	7	100.0%
Nelson	103	120	-14.2%	0.7%	366	412	-11.2%	182	133	36.8%
Marlborough	130	134	-3.0%	0.9%	447	448	-0.2%	41	70	-41.4%
West Coast	102	111	-8.1%	0.7%	290	323	-10.2%	38	41	-7.3%
Canterbury	2,144	2,108	1.7%	14.2%	5,706	5,617	1.6%	2,163	1,958	10.5%
Otago	692	655	5.6%	4.6%	1,985	2,123	-6.5%	486	435	11.7%
Southland	325	260	25.0%	2.2%	964	1,059	-9.0%	135	149	-9.4%
Other	42	58	-27.6%	0.3%	124	128	-3.1%	0	0	0.0%
NZ Total	**15,112**	**14,836**	**1.9%**	**100.0%**	**39,205**	**42,470**	**-7.7%**	**13,100**	**12,446**	**5.3%**

New Passenger Vehicle Sales by Make - February 2025

MAKE	FEB '25	FEB '24	+/-%	FEB '25 MKT SHARE	2025 YEAR TO DATE	2025 MKT SHARE
Toyota	1,518	1,127	34.7	21.7%	3,205	21.3%
Mitsubishi	781	580	34.7	11.1%	1,446	9.6%
Kia	674	422	59.7	9.6%	1,531	10.2%
MG	429	223	92.4	6.1%	750	5.0%
Suzuki	393	455	-13.6	5.6%	899	6.0%
Honda	322	308	4.5	4.6%	630	4.2%
Mazda	309	290	6.6	4.4%	640	4.2%
Ford	258	375	-31.2	3.7%	634	4.2%
Nissan	248	222	11.7	3.5%	485	3.2%
GWM	228	198	15.2	3.3%	549	3.6%
Subaru	167	126	32.5	2.4%	395	2.6%
Mercedes-Benz	161	123	30.9	2.3%	265	1.8%
Hyundai	157	207	-24.2	2.2%	426	2.8%
Lexus	140	117	19.7	2.0%	246	1.6%
Volkswagen	134	169	-20.7	1.9%	342	2.3%
BMW	126	98	28.6	1.8%	326	2.2%
BYD	106	37	186.5	1.5%	275	1.8%
Tesla	85	152	-44.1	1.2%	118	0.8%
Skoda	82	111	-26.1	1.2%	167	1.1%
Polestar	72	8	800.0	1.0%	110	0.7%
Land Rover	69	110	-37.3	1.0%	182	1.2%
Mini	66	45	46.7	0.9%	153	1.0%
Audi	63	96	-34.4	0.9%	145	1.0%
Jaecoo	63	0	6,300.0	0.9%	130	0.9%
Omoda	62	0	6,200.0	0.9%	126	0.8%
KGM	50	0	5,000.0	0.7%	124	0.8%
Volvo	36	25	44.0	0.5%	74	0.5%
Peugeot	35	48	-27.1	0.5%	130	0.9%
Jeep	30	15	100.0	0.4%	61	0.4%
Porsche	23	47	-51.1	0.3%	123	0.8%
Cupra	20	29	-31.0	0.3%	44	0.3%
Isuzu	15	3	400.0	0.2%	48	0.3%
Jaguar	15	20	-25.0	0.2%	58	0.4%
Leapmotor	14	0	1,400.0	0.2%	16	0.1%
Mahindra	12	52	-76.9	0.2%	71	0.5%
Can-Am	6	3	100.0	0.1%	7	0.0%
Smart	6	0	600.0	0.1%	6	0.0%
Fiat	5	3	66.7	0.1%	15	0.1%
Ineos	5	7	-28.6	0.1%	9	0.1%
Citroen	4	6	-33.3	0.1%	12	0.1%
Ferrari	4	2	100.0	0.1%	4	0.0%
Maserati	3	4	-25.0	0.0%	11	0.1%
Rolls-Royce	3	2	50.0	0.0%	5	0.0%
Alfa Romeo	2	4	-50.0	0.0%	9	0.1%
Others	7	53	-86.8	0.1%	58	0.4%
Total	**7,008**	**5,922**	**18.3**	**100.0%**	**15,060**	**100.0%**

New Passenger Vehicle Sales by Model - February 2025

MAKE	MODEL	FEB '25	FEB '24	+/-%	FEB '25 MKT SHARE	2025 YEAR TO DATE	2025 MKT SHARE
Toyota	RAV4	719	465	54.6	10.3%	1,739	11.5%
Mitsubishi	Outlander	426	218	95.4	6.1%	641	4.3%
Kia	Seltos	285	124	129.8	4.1%	646	4.3%
Mitsubishi	ASX	245	175	40.0	3.5%	569	3.8%
MG	ZS	194	144	34.7	2.8%	358	2.4%
Toyota	Land Cruiser Prado	182	15	1,113.3	2.6%	339	2.3%
Suzuki	Swift	178	206	-13.6	2.5%	427	2.8%
Nissan	X-Trail	177	104	70.2	2.5%	294	2.0%
Mazda	CX-5	144	128	12.5	2.1%	255	1.7%
Toyota	Corolla Cross	144	131	9.9	2.1%	266	1.8%
MG	MG3	143	49	191.8	2.0%	256	1.7%
Kia	Stonic	142	29	389.7	2.0%	315	2.1%
Ford	Everest	132	220	-40.0	1.9%	329	2.2%
Toyota	Corolla	132	94	40.4	1.9%	200	1.3%
Honda	Jazz	105	82	28.0	1.5%	146	1.0%
Kia	Sportage	95	156	-39.1	1.4%	238	1.6%
GWM	Haval H6	90	98	-8.2	1.3%	234	1.6%
Honda	HR-V	90	0	9,000.0	1.3%	153	1.0%
Mitsubishi	Eclipse Cross	84	142	-40.8	1.2%	185	1.2%
Toyota	Yaris Cross	84	83	1.2	1.2%	149	1.0%
Suzuki	Jimny	75	105	-28.6	1.1%	186	1.2%
Suzuki	Vitara	75	25	200.0	1.1%	152	1.0%
MG	HS	73	18	305.6	1.0%	103	0.7%
Subaru	Outback	73	41	78.0	1.0%	205	1.4%
GWM	Tank	71	9	688.9	1.0%	128	0.8%
Honda	CR-V	69	99	-30.3	1.0%	145	1.0%
Hyundai	Kona	69	68	1.5	1.0%	159	1.1%
Polestar	Polestar 2	65	3	2,066.7	0.9%	95	0.6%
Toyota	Yaris	65	9	622.2	0.9%	131	0.9%
GWM	Haval Jolion	63	82	-23.2	0.9%	148	1.0%
Jaecoo	J7	63	0	6,300.0	0.9%	130	0.9%
Tesla	Model Y	58	145	-60.0	0.8%	78	0.5%
Volkswagen	Tiguan	58	58	0.0	0.8%	138	0.9%
Nissan	Qashqai	55	77	-28.6	0.8%	131	0.9%
Ford	Puma	53	40	32.5	0.8%	97	0.6%
Toyota	Land Cruiser	53	63	-15.9	0.8%	81	0.5%
Kia	Sorento	51	29	75.9	0.7%	121	0.8%
Omoda	C5	51	0	5,100.0	0.7%	102	0.7%
BYD	Atto 3	49	23	113.0	0.7%	133	0.9%
Kia	Niro	47	48	-2.1	0.7%	74	0.5%
Mazda	Mazda2	47	22	113.6	0.7%	84	0.6%
Suzuki	Ignis	44	75	-41.3	0.6%	91	0.6%
Toyota	Highlander	44	153	-71.2	0.6%	101	0.7%
Hyundai	Santa Fe	43	41	4.9	0.6%	121	0.8%
Mercedes-Benz	EQE	43	5	760.0	0.6%	49	0.3%
Others		1,760	2,021	-12.9	25.1%	4,338	28.8%
Total		**7,008**	**5,922**	**18.3**	**100.0%**	**15,060**	**100.0%**

Marque's ad spend up six spots

Nissan significantly ramped up its advertising spend in this country last year despite the industry facing challenges and falling sales.

Data from Nielsen Ad Intel and Nielsen Consumer & Media Insights (CMI) shows cars ranked seventh among New Zealand's top advertising categories in 2024 as marques forked out $122 million in total.

While the overall figure was down year on year, marques such as BMW, Toyota and Nissan boosted their investments. They made up 35 per cent of the automotive advertising share, up from 20 per cent a year ago.

Nielsen says Nissan was the standout brand after leaping from ninth to third in automotive advertising spend as it more than doubled its investment in adverts.

Toyota topped the ladder. It was followed by Kia, Nissan, BMW and Hyundai. Next up were, in order, Suzuki, Ford, Mazda, Mercedes-Benz and Volkswagen.

Rose Lopreiato, Nielsen Ad Intel's Pacific commercial lead, says: "The competition in New Zealand's automotive advertising space is intensifying.

"The increased spending by leading players underscores their determination to connect with consumers and adapt to evolving market trends."

The CMI figures also show the percentage of people planning to buy a new car rose from 20 per cent in 2023 to 22 per cent last year.

Interest in hybrid and electric vehicles has remained steady over the past two years with 28 per cent of Kiwis indicating they will consider lower-emissions options for their next purchase.

Helene Maurer, Nielsen's commercial director for New Zealand agencies and advertisers, adds: "As the automotive landscape continues to shift, it's essential to get the jump on the competition by better understanding how changing advertising and consumer trends are influencing preferences and driving brand loyalty."

BRAND ON MISSION

BYD will introduce 15 new electrified models in New Zealand over the next 18 months after renewing its sales and distribution contract with the Ateco Group.

The joint announcement was formalised last month during a visit by Xueliang Liu, general manager of BYD Auto Asia-Pacific.

Liu says: "The partnership between BYD and Ateco has been instrumental in bringing high quality, innovative electric vehicles to New Zealand. We are excited further expand our presence in the market."

BYD's range will be expanded with the Shark plug-in hybrid ute and Sealion 7 electric SUV.

Warren Willmot, BYD NZ's general manager, says: "We are committed to investing in the future of BYD in New Zealand, including the development of dedicated showrooms and expanded service locations across the country.

"Our goal is to establish BYD as a brand for all Kiwis, mirroring the widespread appeal that Holden once enjoyed at the pinnacle of the brand."

In Australia, BYD is distributed by EVDirect and sold through Eagers Automotive outlets in each state. There are 131 BYD sales and service centres across the Tasman.

Numbers jump

Sales of new cars came in at 7,008 during February for an 18.3 per cent increase compared to 5,922 in the same month of 2024.

Toyota's RAV4 was the top model on 719 units. It was followed by Mitsubishi's Outlander with 426 and Kia's Seltos on 285. New entrants on last month's year-on-year ladder included Honda's HR-V with 90 sales, Jaecoo's J7 on 63 and Omoda's C5 with 51.

The launch of MG's deal with the Blues

GETTING BEHIND BLUES

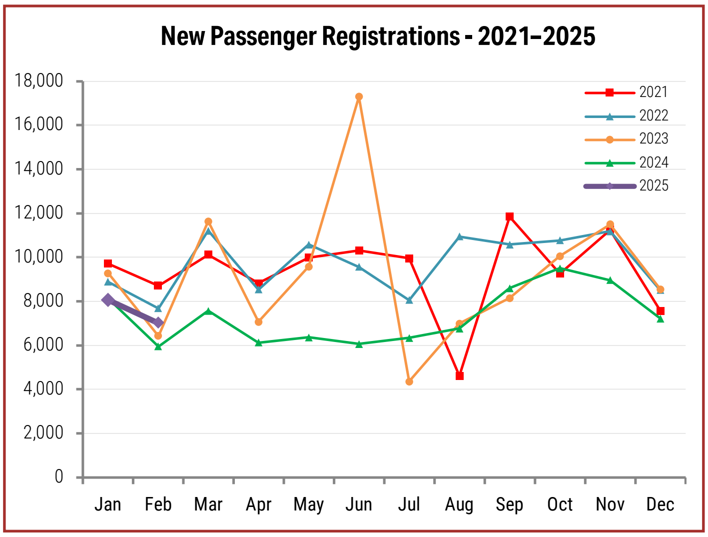
MG has become the official vehicle partner of the defending champions in the Super Rugby Pacific championship.

When the full-time whistle blew on the Blue's victorious final over the Chiefs last year, it confirmed to Peter Ciao, MG Motor Australia and New Zealand's president and CEO, that becoming a partner was too good an opportunity to miss.

"Our sporting sponsorships in New Zealand have always had a strong community and grassroots focus," he says. "I'm confident this association will result in similar success."

The partnership was announced in Auckland by MG New Zealand's chief operating officer, Harrie Yan, alongside Andrew Hore, the Blues' chief executive officer, and chairman Don Mackinnon.

Hore says: "We're thrilled to have MG as our newest partner and our official vehicle supplier."



New Passenger Vehicle Sales by Motive Power - February 2025

MAKE	FEB '25	FEB '24	+/-%	FEB '25 MKT SHARE	2025 YEAR TO DATE	2025 MKT SHARE
Full battery electric	548	361	51.8%	7.8%	1,109	7.4%
Plug-in hybrid electric	504	166	203.6%	7.2%	787	5.2%
Non plug-in petrol hybrid	2,569	1,881	36.6%	36.7%	5,529	36.7%
Petrol	2,918	2,886	1.1%	41.6%	6,594	43.8%
Diesel	469	628	-25.3%	6.7%	1,041	6.9%
Others (includes non plug-in diesel hybrid, fuel cell)	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0.0%
Total	**7,008**	**5,922**	**18.3%**		**15,060**	

Boost for electric across Tasman

Electric utes, vans and sports cars from a variety of brands are set to hit the Australian market during 2025 in what's expected to become a milestone year for zero and low-emissions vehicles there.

Industry experts say the race will be triggered by legislation that sets a pollution cap on new models across the ditch for the first time.

That said, a late start for enforcement and tough economic conditions could slow Australia's progress towards EV targets.

The country's new-vehicle efficiency standard (NEVS) is now in force. There are separate categories for passenger vehicles and light commercials.

The NEVS' limits are designed to encourage carmakers to balance sales of high polluters with electric and hybrid models.

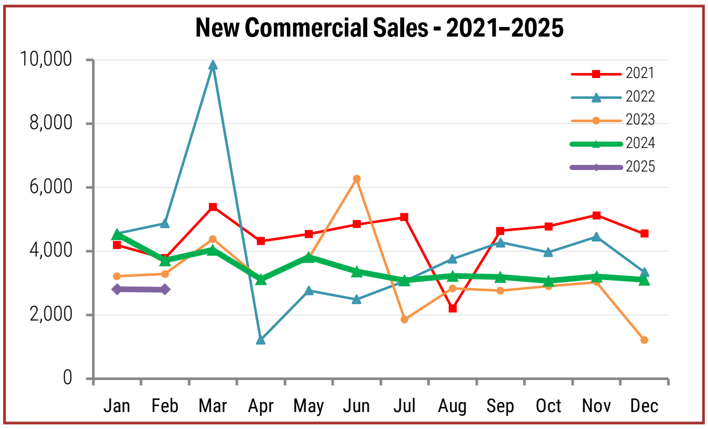
The standard affected the market there before its launch according to the Australian Electric Vehicle Association with many emerging and established brands announcing plans to import EVs and plug-in hybrids (PHEVs).

National president Chris Jones says: "It's going to be an exciting year, and there will be lots more makes and models hitting our shores. We've always been a diverse, competitive vehicle market."

Hussein Dia, professor of future urban mobility at Swinburne University in Melbourne, adds: "There will be an influx of cheaper vehicles and models from China.

"They are challenging many of the established brands and we've already started to see their impact in Australia."

New BEVs and PHEVs slated to touch down in Australia this year include Volkswagen's ID.Buzz, Zeekr's X, Hyundai's Inster and Kia's EV3.



New Commercial Sales by Make - February 2025

MAKE	FEB '25	FEB '24	+/-%	FEB '25 MKT SHARE	2025 YEAR TO DATE	2025 MKT SHARE
Toyota	785	896	-12.4	28.1%	1,547	27.7%
Ford	634	1,091	-41.9	22.7%	1,276	22.8%
Mitsubishi	265	435	-39.1	9.5%	518	9.3%
BYD	178	0	17,800.0	6.4%	371	6.6%
Isuzu	171	218	-21.6	6.1%	298	5.3%
Nissan	166	219	-24.2	5.9%	334	6.0%
LDV	117	55	112.7	4.2%	183	3.3%
Volkswagen	61	118	-48.3	2.2%	118	2.1%
Mercedes-Benz	50	71	-29.6	1.8%	117	2.1%
Fuso	42	92	-54.3	1.5%	85	1.5%
GWM	37	0	3,700.0	1.3%	58	1.0%
Scania	37	52	-28.8	1.3%	76	1.4%
Hyundai	32	22	45.5	1.1%	48	0.9%
Hino	31	38	-18.4	1.1%	92	1.6%
Fiat	29	40	-27.5	1.0%	60	1.1%
Kenworth	18	27	-33.3	0.6%	47	0.8%
Iveco	15	51	-70.6	0.5%	54	1.0%
Volvo	14	33	-57.6	0.5%	31	0.6%
UD Trucks	13	12	8.3	0.5%	24	0.4%
KGM	12	0	1,200.0	0.4%	20	0.4%
Others	89	237	-62.4	3.2%	232	4.2%
Total	**2,796**	**3,707**	**-24.6**	**100.0%**	**5,589**	**100.0%**

New Commercial Sales by Model - February 2025

MAKE	MODEL	FEB '25	FEB '24	+/-%	FEB '25 MKT SHARE	2025 YEAR TO DATE	2025 MKT SHARE
Toyota	Hilux	601	692	-13.2	21.5%	1,214	21.7%
Ford	Ranger	526	953	-44.8	18.8%	1,079	19.3%
Mitsubishi	Triton	265	435	-39.1	9.5%	518	9.3%
BYD	Shark 6	178	0	17,800.0	6.4%	371	6.6%
Nissan	Navara	166	219	-24.2	5.9%	334	6.0%
Toyota	Hiace	143	159	-10.1	5.1%	263	4.7%
Isuzu	D-Max	117	106	10.4	4.2%	196	3.5%
Ford	Transit	108	138	-21.7	3.9%	197	3.5%
Toyota	Land Cruiser	41	45	-8.9	1.5%	70	1.3%
GMW	Cannon	37	0	3,700.0	1.3%	58	1.0%
LDV	T60	35	7	400.0	1.3%	53	0.9%
Mercedes-Benz	Sprinter	35	51	-31.4	1.3%	90	1.6%
Fiat	Ducato	29	40	-27.5	1.0%	60	1.1%
LDV	Deliver 9	29	25	16.0	1.0%	55	1.0%
Isuzu	N Series	28	48	-41.7	1.0%	51	0.9%
Hyundai	Staria Load	25	14	78.6	0.9%	37	0.7%
Volkswagen	T6	23	3	666.7	0.8%	25	0.4%
LDV	G10	22	6	266.7	0.8%	30	0.5%
Volkswagen	Amarok	19	87	-78.2	0.7%	57	1.0%
Isuzu	F Series	16	46	-65.2	0.6%	33	0.6%
Others		353	633	-44.2	12.6%	798	14.3%
Total		**2,796**	**3,707**	**-24.6**	**100.0%**	**5,589**	**100.0%**

Newer brands could set price records for EVs that fell in 2024, says Dia, and boost sales for entry-level and luxury vehicles.

He adds: "With some of the models we're expecting from China for AU$50,000 or AU$60,000 you might be able to get what's comparable to a luxury brand. That could take off."

SAVE THE DATE

T-Tech, the country's leading transport technology conference, returns to Auckland in 2025.

The event is being co-hosted by ITSNZ and the University of Auckland's transportation research centre.

Running from July 9-10, its theme will be "positive impact through smarter transport" and it's being held at the university's faculty of engineering.

T-Tech is the place to learn about and discuss the latest in emerging technology-enabled transport solutions disrupting and changing the way we plan, understand and manage outcomes with leading innovators, experts and decision makers.

There will be two full days of programmes, networking, an exhibition, international experts and government updates. About 200 delegates and 50 speakers are expected to go along.

Topics for the conference include data, artificial intelligence, analytics and cyber security, shared, public and integrated mobility, and electric, connected and automated transport.

Other subjects are demand management and transport pricing, smart, safe and resilient infrastructure, and smart transport modelling and operations.

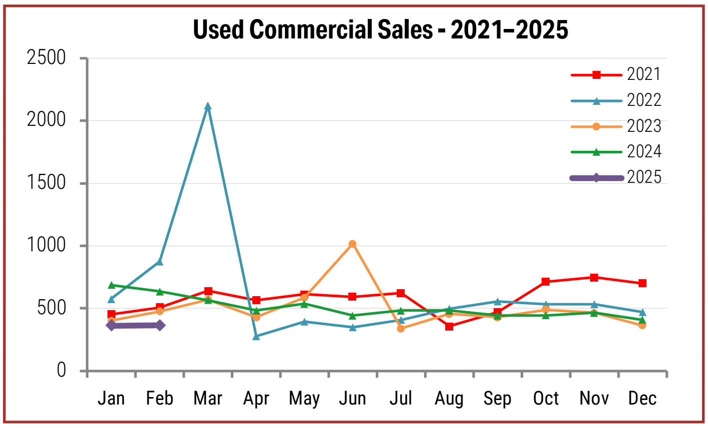
HILUX TOPS LADDER

Registrations of new commercial vehicles came in at 2,796 last month, which was down by 24.6 per cent from 3,707 during the same month of 2024.

The top model was Toyota's Hilux on 601 units. Ford's Ranger came second with 526 and Mitsubishi's Triton was third on 265.

BYD's Shark 6 finished fourth with 178. Fifth spot was claimed by the Nissan Navara on 166 with Toyota's Hiace sixth on 143.

In addition, there were 365 used commercials registered for a year-on-year drop of 44.1 per cent from 653.



Used Commercial Sales by Make - February 2025

MAKE	FEB '25	FEB '24	+/-%	FEB '25 MKT SHARE	2025 YEAR TO DATE	2025 MKT SHARE
Toyota	192	309	-37.9	52.6%	371	50.7%
Nissan	57	146	-61.0	15.6%	137	18.7%
Isuzu	23	33	-30.3	6.3%	42	5.7%
Hino	21	29	-27.6	5.8%	40	5.5%
Ford	19	42	-54.8	5.2%	38	5.2%
Mitsubishi	13	34	-61.8	3.6%	27	3.7%
Chevrolet	6	6	0.0	1.6%	8	1.1%
Suzuki	4	6	-33.3	1.1%	14	1.9%
Dodge	3	3	0.0	0.8%	3	0.4%
Factory Built	3	0	300.0	0.8%	4	0.5%
Iveco	3	0	300.0	0.8%	3	0.4%
Mazda	3	9	-66.7	0.8%	6	0.8%
Mercedes-Benz	3	2	50.0	0.8%	7	1.0%
Peugeot	3	0	300.0	0.8%	3	0.4%
Daihatsu	2	4	-50.0	0.5%	3	0.4%
Fiat	2	2	0.0	0.5%	4	0.5%
Land Rover	2	1	100.0	0.5%	2	0.3%
Renault	2	1	100.0	0.5%	2	0.3%
LDV	1	2	-50.0	0.3%	2	0.3%
Ram	1	1	0.0	0.3%	2	0.3%
Others	2	23	-91.3	0.5%	14	1.9%
Total	**365**	**653**	**-44.1**	**100.0%**	**732**	**100.0%**

Used Commercial Sales by Model - February 2025

MAKE	MODEL	FEB '25	FEB '24	+/-%	FEB '25 MKT SHARE	2025 YEAR TO DATE	2025 MKT SHARE
Toyota	Hiace	145	234	-38.0	39.7%	292	39.9%
Nissan	NV350	29	95	-69.5	7.9%	54	7.4%
Toyota	Dyna	16	19	-15.8	4.4%	21	2.9%
Hino	Dutro	13	22	-40.9	3.6%	29	4.0%
Nissan	NV200	13	12	8.3	3.6%	36	4.9%
Toyota	Toyoace	11	9	22.2	3.0%	18	2.5%
Isuzu	Elf	10	26	-61.5	2.7%	22	3.0%
Ford	Transit	9	30	-70.0	2.5%	22	3.0%
Nissan	Caravan	9	24	-62.5	2.5%	29	4.0%
Toyota	Regius	9	41	-78.0	2.5%	20	2.7%
Fuso	Canter	8	29	-72.4	2.2%	17	2.3%
Isuzu	Forward	7	4	75.0	1.9%	11	1.5%
Hino	Ranger	6	6	0.0	1.6%	9	1.2%
Chevrolet	El Camino	4	0	400.0	1.1%	4	0.5%
Ford	Ranger	4	6	-33.3	1.1%	8	1.1%
Suzuki	Carry	4	6	-33.3	1.1%	14	1.9%
Isuzu	D-Max	3	1	200.0	0.8%	4	0.5%
Isuzu	Giga	3	1	200.0	0.8%	5	0.7%
Peugeot	Boxer	3	0	300.0	0.8%	3	0.4%
Toyota	Hilux	3	0	300.0	0.8%	8	1.1%
Others		56	88	-36.4	15.3%	106	14.5%
Total		**365**	**653**	**-44.1**	**100.0%**	**732**	**100.0%**

Aiming to maintain expansion

Stock dwindling

New car imports in February came in at 5,937. This was up by 1.3 per cent when compared to 5,862 units in January, but down 22 per cent from the 7,608 recorded in the same month last year.

Registrations of 7,008 new passenger vehicles were completed last month, which was 13 per cent fewer than January's total. However, it was up by 18.3 per cent from 5,922 units in February 2024.

The numbers have resulted in the stock of new cars still to be registered falling for a sixth consecutive month, dropping by 1,071 to 68,795. Daily sales, as averaged over the previous 12 months, stand at 242 units per day – down from 298 a year ago.

February's results mean stock at-hand has fallen to 284 days if sales continue at the current rate. In the same month of 2024, it stood at 232 days.

Dekra, the world's largest non-listed testing inspection and certification company, is looking to celebrate its 100th anniversary this year by continuing to grow despite potentially volatile geopolitical and economic conditions.

The company, which is part-owner of VTNZ along with the Motor Trade Association, is planning a double-digit million-euro investment to fund a battery testing and certification laboratory in Germany.

It already offers a patented test that enables precise measurement of used EV battery condition in a few minutes for more than 130 models.

A new wi-fi testing laboratory started operating in Stuttgart last year where Dekra offers customers, particularly those in the car industry, services to test the reliability, interoperability and security of components.

Another growth area is the hydrogen economy, which it says is vital for achieving climate targets.

Although the development of the green hydrogen economy may be slower than once anticipated, Dekra sees enormous potential in it.

It has already launched its first AI services. For example, it has supported a leading company in the field of advanced driver-assistance systems to ensure the quality of its labelling processes.

It involves precisely labelling large datasets, such as indicating if an image depicts a vehicle, person or traffic sign. These labels help the AI to recognise patterns and learn to respond safely in real-world scenarios.

JOINT VENTURE

The AA and Mevo, the on-demand car-sharing company, have teamed up to promote sustainable mobility.

The partnership, which sees AA members receive up to $100 free Mevo credit in their first year, provides new ways to get around Auckland, Wellington and Hamilton.

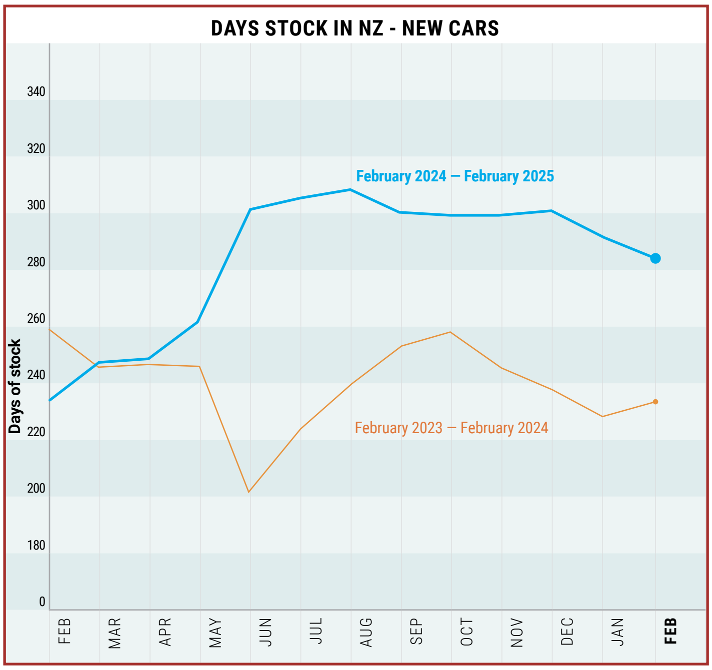
"Our members use a variety of transport options," says Jonathan Sergel, the AA's chief mobility officer. "While most have their own car, they also use public transport, walk, ride and micro-mobility.

Mevo's chief executive, Erik Zydervelt, says the partnership with the AA promotes efficient travel to a wider audience as car-sharing gets more mainstream.

Using an app, members can locate a vehicle near them and reserve it from their phone.

Dealer stock of new cars in New Zealand

	CAR SALES IMPORTED	CAR SALES REGISTERED	VARIANCE	STOCK	DAILY SALES - 12-MONTH AVERAGE	DAYS STOCK AT HAND
Feb '24	7,608	5,922	1,686	69,224	298	232
Mar '24	8,882	7,538	1,344	70,568	287	246
Apr '24	6,180	6,110	70	70,638	285	248
May '24	7,800	6,350	1,450	72,088	276	261
Jun '24	8,006	6,056	1,950	74,038	245	302
Jul '24	9,313	6,334	2,979	77,017	251	307
Aug '24	7,205	6,751	454	77,471	250	310
Sep '24	6,739	8,576	-1,837	75,634	251	301
Oct '24	8,331	9,489	-1,158	74,476	250	298
Nov '24	6,771	8,953	-2,182	72,294	243	297
Dec '24	6,949	7,187	-238	72,056	239	301
Jan '25	5,862	8,052	-2,190	69,866	239	292
Feb '25	**5,937**	**7,008**	**-1,071**	**68,795**	**242**	**284**
Year to date	11,799	15,060				
Change on last month	1.3%	-13.0%		-1.5%		
Change on Feb 2024	-22.0%	18.3%		-0.6%		
	LESS IMPORTED	MORE SOLD		LESS STOCK		



"Mevo takes care of all parts of the journey including fuel or energy, insurance, parking in the pick-up and drop-off zone, and vehicle maintenance," says Zydervelt.

"For every car-share vehicle on our network, an average of 11 private vehicles are taken off the road not to mention offsetting our network's full life-cycle carbon footprint by 120 per cent."

GEELY ENTERS MARKET

The Giltrap Group has become the distributor of Geely Auto's vehicles in New Zealand. The Chinese marque joins the company's broader Geely portfolio, which includes Lotus, Volvo and Polestar.

Michael Giltrap, joint managing director, says: "The combination of our great team, and expertise as a distributor and retailer, will deliver the best experience to Kiwis.

"To give customers choice across every type of energy-efficient vehicle has never been more important as our country has unique requirements with distances travelled and sometimes remote locations Kiwis live or holiday in."

Geely offers a range of powertrains here including hybrid, plug-in hybrid, range-extended, petrol and fully electric.

"New Zealand is crucial to our global expansion," says Li Lei, chief executive officer of Geely Auto Australia. There are plans to establish a network of showrooms across major cities and regional areas to support the brand's long-term commitment to this country.

EX-BOSS OF PORT FINED

Tony Gibson, former chief executive of Port of Auckland Ltd (POAL), has been fined $130,000 and ordered to pay $60,000 costs in relation to the death of a stevedore.

Pala'amo Kalati died in August 2020 at the Fergusson Container Terminal. Maritime NZ subsequently filed two alternative charges against Gibson under the Health and Safety at Work Act (HSWA) alleging a breach of his duties as an officer.

Judge Steve Bonnar KC found that by failing to comply with his duty under section 44 to exercise due diligence to ensure POAL complied with its duties under the act, Gibson exposed stevedores to a risk of death or serious injury, namely the risk of being struck by objects falling from cranes.

The company was also charged and previously pleaded guilty to two charges under section 48 of the HSWA and fined $561,000 late last year.

Gibson, POAL's chief executive from 2011-21, attended Auckland District Court on February 21 to be sentenced over his category-one offence, which is solely punishable by a fine.

Judge Bonnar said Gibson was generally a "hands-on CEO in relation to health and safety issues at the port". However, the judge added that in this instance he "failed to exercise the care, diligence and skill" required of a reasonable officer.

Registrations fall

There were 6,745 used cars imported last month, an increase of one per cent from January when 6,679 units crossed our borders.

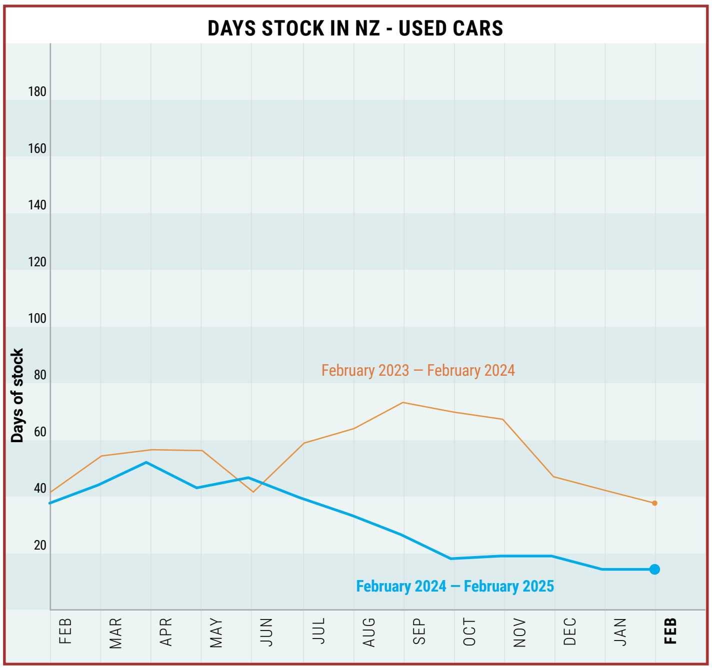
However, the latest figure was down by 9.5 per cent from 7,457 in February 2024.

Some 6,793 were registered in February, a fall of 22.9 per cent from the 8,816 units registered in the same month of 2024 and a 7.9 per cent drop from 7,374 in January this year.

With 48 fewer used cars imported than registered last month – the seventh drop in the past eight months – unregistered stock on dealers' yards or in compliance shops came to 4,183 units.

This was 66.3 per cent lower than the 12,397 units a year ago and down by 1.1 per cent from 4,231 at the end of January.

Average daily registrations for February were 258, compared to 322 a year ago, and there is 16 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 '24	7,457	8,816	-1,359	12,397	322	38
Mar '24	10,353	8,933	1,420	13,817	320	43
Apr '24	11,551	8,721	2,830	16,647	323	52
May '24	6,070	8,878	-2,808	13,839	321	43
Jun '24	7,875	7,821	54	13,893	297	47
Jul '24	7,176	8,989	-1,813	12,080	303	40
Aug '24	6,156	8,174	-2,018	10,062	302	33
Sep '24	5,045	7,200	-2,155	7,907	297	27
Oct '24	4,714	7,318	-2,604	5,303	291	18
Nov '24	7,024	6,916	108	5,411	283	19
Dec '24	6,650	7,135	-485	4,926	268	18
Jan '25	6,679	7,374	-695	4,231	264	16
Feb '25	**6,745**	**6,793**	**-48**	**4,183**	**258**	**16**
Year to date	13,424	14,167				
Change on last month	1.0%	-7.9%		-1.1%		
Change on Feb 2024	-9.5%	-22.9%		-66.3%		
	LESS IMPORTED	LESS SOLD		LESS STOCK		