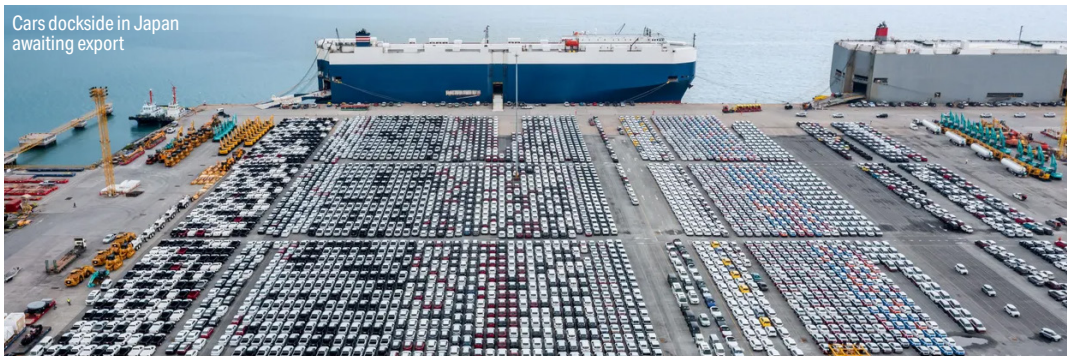


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'Long-awaited' shift over clean car rules

Association says amendments in new legislation better reflect realities of sourcing vehicles overseas



Organisations representing the automotive industry have broadly welcomed coalition proposals to revamp the clean car standard (CCS) and make the scheme's approach to cutting emissions fairer.

The government's plans include scrapping the weight-adjustment system for passenger and light commercial vehicles entering the country's fleet.

In addition, carbon credits will be allowed to be traded between the used imports and new-vehicle sectors to create more flexibility for importers.

And the lifespan of credits will be extended from three to four years so businesses benefit from more certainty when managing compliance.

Legislation outlining the coalition's plans was introduced to parliament last month and is now open for submissions.

The proposals in the Land Transport (Clean Vehicle Standard) Amendment Bill (No 2) have been long-awaited, says Greig Epps, chief executive of the Imported Motor Vehicle Industry Association (VIA).

He adds they will ensure the CCS is more transparent when it

comes to setting carbon dioxide (CO2) targets.

"VIA has consistently advocated for adjustments because they will help create a more workable framework that better reflects the realities of vehicle supply into New Zealand.

"The removal of weight adjustment, in particular, has been a long-standing issue for our members.

"It lifts CO2 targets for heavier vehicles and tightens them for lighter ones. That distorts outcomes for used importers bringing in efficient Japanese hybrids and family cars.

[continued on page 4]



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GUEST EDITORIAL

Lower lifespans mean transfer of emissions

'Designed obsolescence' is now amounting to disposable vehicles, argues Ben McFadgen

You could be forgiven for thinking that the plethora of new vehicle brands entering the market means rental companies are spoilt for choice. Sadly, you would be wrong.



BEN McFADGEN
CEO, Rental Vehicle Association of NZ

American, South Korean, Japanese, European and Chinese carmakers are all telling us why their sub-two litre, three or four-pot, usually turbocharged, cookie-cutter knock-offs are different. Some are hybrids and few want full electric.

There are hundreds of models, but they all look the same. They have the same technology, same parts and now lifespans measured in single-digit years instead of decades – even in the luxury segment.

It's fine for operators who buy new vehicles and recycle them into the private fleet quickly because they are still under warranty for the inevitable engine or electrics failure.

However, it's not so good for second-tier rental companies that rent vehicles three to 10 years old. Or private owners, usually with less disposable income, who want to own newer and safer cars with less emissions but can't afford to purchase new.

It appears designed obsolescence has got its teeth firmly into automotive manufacturing right when the world is in the midst of an environmental meltdown and increasing resource scarcity.

We are getting what amounts to disposable vehicles – a

commodity that just happens to be the second most expensive thing most people will ever buy.

Some carmakers are manufacturing their wares with engines that are tuned to produce the power people think

they need – thanks a lot, Top Gear – but at the same time have to deal with increasingly strict emissions regulations.

Enter the highly strung three or four-pot engine. While the two-litre hits the magical 500cc four-cylinder format in the name of stability, the way these engines are made just isn't.

I've seen this myself in the workshop. For example, four-cylinder engines that have less than 50,000km on them with collapsed cylinder heads.

I mean, whoever thought that a wet belt was a good idea? No one. Or no one who designs a car to last, at least. Or plastics that lose substantial integrity due to heat exposure in an engine bay? Again, no one with any sort of conscience or shred of sustainable thinking.

Sustainability no longer seems to be in the automotive industry's vocabulary. There's a big hurrah about how tailpipe emissions have come down, but nothing is said about the fact that the vehicles are only designed to last five to seven years in the name of returns or bright shiny things.

Emissions have been transferred to more frequent manufacturing using a very finite resource base. Nice one. ☺

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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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“The mechanism tilts the field towards bulk and away from genuine efficiency. VIA has pushed to end weight adjustment for passenger vehicles to remove this bias.

“It has become a distortion, not a fairness tool. It penalises the very efficiency we’re trying to deliver to Kiwi families.”

Epps believes removing the weight adjustment will level the playing field, simplify compliance planning and stop the perverse incentive to “chase mass”.

“It gives importers clearer targets for pricing and procurement. Dropping this adjustment means one clear target and rewards genuine efficiency. That’s exactly what the market needs.”

As for permitting the trading of carbon credits between importers of new and used vehicles, that should add liquidity to the system.

“Credits are drying up in the pay-as-you-go segment, which is predominantly used importers, while there is a good chunk of



Greig Epps, VIA

credits sitting in annual accounts,” Epps told Autofile.

“With a scarcity of used EVs for importing, we would like to see mechanisms that generate more credits, such as placing a credit value on vehicles exiting the fleet.”

While recognising the government’s plans, VIA says further work is required around the clean-vehicle regulations.

It has always argued CCS targets are unrealistic and have dropped faster than affordable, efficient used supply – especially from Japan – can be sourced.



Larry Fallowfield, MTA

“Per-gram penalties compound quickly to add hundreds of dollars to landed prices and narrow model choice,” explains Epps.

“Today’s targets and penalties are ahead of what the used-import supply chain can realistically deliver affordable, family-car prices at.

“The settings continue to place significant pressure on the industry, restricting supply and increasing costs for consumers. The result is fewer options and higher prices for everyday New Zealanders.”

EXTRA FINANCIAL PRESSURE
The Motor Industry Association (MIA) warns the new-vehicle sector faces uncertainty from the potential removal of the weight-adjustment factor for calculating CCS targets.

Aimee Wiley, chief executive officer, believes the proposal – if it goes ahead – will significantly increase financial pressure on many importers.

Changes tabled in the amendment bill will enable this adjustment to be withdrawn at any point within the next five years, “compounding the risk profile facing the industry”.

She notes changes to the CCS have been awaited “for some time” and the MIA has been advocating for more flexibility.

The association was expecting to see credit trading opened up between the new and used-imports sectors, for the life of credits to be extended to four years and deferring fleet-average account balances forward one year.

“We welcome all this. However, we would characterise this as a step in the right direction only.

“The CCS is currently operating in a way that’s likely to deliver outcomes opposite to those it was designed to achieve. More changes will be needed to correct this.

“The MIA is engaged with industry and government stakeholders. We continue to work to ensure the CCS remains credible, ▶

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Tailpipe goals elusive

The MIA says importers will face high costs and will struggle to hit CCS emissions targets because of a “policy imbalance”.

Chief executive Aimee Wiley describes the standard as the “most urgent and pressing challenge” facing the country’s light-vehicle sector.

“Despite the best efforts of importers, New Zealand isn’t on-track to meet 2025’s carbon-dioxide targets,” she adds.

“The issue isn’t vehicle supply. Manufacturers are delivering cleaner, lower-emissions vehicles.

“The constraint is consumer demand. Simply put, not enough zero and low-emissions vehicles are being purchased to materially shift fleet emissions.”

Wiley stresses economic and environmental consequences are mounting, and importers are spending tens of millions of dollars purchasing CCS credits to remain compliant and avoid substantial penalties.

“Yet, since the repeal of the clean car discount [CCD] – the primary policy lever that drove consumer uptake – there has been little to no measurable emissions gains.

“The CCS was introduced as a supply-side mechanism, paired with the CCD as a demand-side policy. Together, these were intended to accelerate fleet decarbonisation.

“But with demand falling away, supply-side action alone is insufficient. The current policy imbalance is delivering high costs with limited benefit.”

◀ effective and aligned with real-world market dynamics.”

STATE OF CURRENT FLEET

The Motor Trade Association (MTA) supports the overall direction of the government’s plans for the CCS, but will continue to raise concerns about the fleet’s age and condition.

Larry Fallowfield, sector manager for dealers, says: “With more than 40 per cent of our in-service fleet being over 15 years old, we need to think about how we limit the age of the cars coming into the country – not just the emissions they produce.

“The bill could go further in supporting smaller, later model, low-emissions used imports. The MTA is currently getting significant work done to look at the fleet and will be developing data-driven policy from there.

“Lowering the age of our fleet would align with our emissions-reduction goals and see cleaner cars using our roads.”

That said, amendments in the bill reflect a “more pragmatic and flexible approach” to achieving carbon-reduction goals.

“These changes will help reduce costs, improve market efficiency and maintain momentum towards a lower-emissions fleet,” Fallowfield told Autofile.

“As the market continues its drive to hybrid, plug-in hybrid and battery-electric vehicles, the connection between emissions and weight doesn’t tell the full story, especially when you see small low-emissions cars being penalised.

“Our members have shared feedback that some vehicles they were bidding on in Japan have incurred additional costs due to inequities in the weight-adjustment system, making them uneconomical to import.

“Examples are cars at the lower end of the market with small engines. Low emitters are attracting additional costs. This is disadvantaging low-income families. The higher increases in the cost of the current scheme will only add to our emissions problems as more people hang onto older, higher emitters for longer.”



Fallowfield notes new and used importers being able to trade credits will create a more dynamic and fair compliance environment, allowing businesses to manage their obligations more effectively and encouraging broader participation in the CCS.

He adds allowing credit trading between all importers and removing the weight adjustment will better align with the realities of supply and consumer demand.

VIEW FROM THE BEEHIVE

The government says it is updating the CCS so importers have more flexibility in how they meet annual CO2 targets and ensure consumers can access more fuel-efficient models that cost less at the pump.

The amendment bill, which covers the changes, passed its first reading on August 21.

It’s now open for consultation with submissions closing on September 26. The transport and infrastructure select committee is then due to report back to parliament on December 22.

Chris Bishop, Minister of Transport, says: “The government will allow credits to be transferred between used and new-vehicle importers. To reflect the greater fuel-saving potential of new vehicles over their lifetime, importers will need two credits earned on used vehicles to offset a charge on a new vehicle.

“We are also extending the lifespan of credits from three years to four. To allow importers to respond to the market, they will be able to offset their charges from one year by supplying and selling more low-emissions vehicles the following year.

“Finally, we are enabling

CO2 targets to be set that aren’t adjusted by vehicle weight because the relationship between weight and emissions is breaking down.

“It used to be that heavier cars would often have higher emissions. But as more hybrids and EVs have entered the market, that’s no longer the default assumption. A weight-based approach was only designed to be temporary.”

The bill explains enabling uniform targets to be set rather than adjusting them for vehicle weight recognises that as importers supply more EVs and

hybrids, the traditional positive relationship between weight and CO2 emissions is disrupted.

It adds that at some point in the next five years heavier light vehicles will no longer need to be given higher, and therefore easier, CO2 targets under the standard than smaller light vehicles.

Bishop notes the changes to the CCS will also give importers more versatility in how and when they comply with targets, which he describes as “critical” because they have little control over market factors such as supply and demand.

“Overall, the improvements will support importers to bring in vehicles that are more fuel efficient and cheaper for Kiwis to run,” he adds.

“The government supports the clean vehicle standard to ensure New Zealand has an affordable mix of clean vehicles.

“We are making it more flexible for importers to achieve their targets so less costs are passed onto Kiwis buying cars.” ⊕





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User charges to disrupt sales

The popularity of low and zero-emissions models may face fresh disruption as the government presses ahead with plans to introduce electronic road-user charges (eRUC) for all light vehicles.

Industry bodies have largely welcomed proposals to transition the fleet to a new system over the coming years.

The overhaul will have significant impacts for the New Zealand vehicle industry, consumers and motorists, says Aimee Wiley, chief executive officer of the Motor Industry Association (MIA).

"We agree with Transport Minister Chris Bishop when he states this is the biggest change in 50 years to how the roading network is funded," she told Autofile.

"The MIA also believes this is the single biggest change for all Kiwi motorists because it will impact



every light vehicle in New Zealand.

"The 3.5 million petrol vehicles and motorists will arguably face the biggest change with a shift from paying for their road-cost contributions at the pump to needing to comply with and budget for an entirely new weekly or monthly bill called eRUC.

"The minister advises it will be like a power bill or Netflix subscription, but it is still a considerable change for owners of petrol vehicles."

Owners of diesel cars and EVs will also face adjustments as eRUC will be a new system for light vehicles from the current one.

The reasons the MIA supports the move include:

- ▶ Fairness and equity for all light vehicles.
- ▶ Distance-based cost overcomes fuel-consumption differences.
- ▶ Equality of cost regardless of drivetrain across all light vehicles.

Another reason is ensuring future funding for the network means safer roads. In turn, that will increase efficiency and productivity outcomes associated with travel and transport to help the economy and businesses thrive.

However, the MIA remains cautious about what an eRUC system will cost and how it will meet the country's needs for many years to come.

In the shorter term, eventual settings for eRUC are likely to influence what vehicles consumers choose.

"For example, the current regime favours hybrids, which can travel longer distances on less petrol," explains Wiley.

"If they no longer enjoy that advantage it could possibly influence a move away from

these vehicles in the same way we've seen EV sales fall since their inclusion in the RUC system.

"Vehicles that enjoy advantages under the current regime will possibly be less attractive to consumers, and model, fuel type or powertrain will not be the determining factors they are now in how people choose if all vehicles are subject to the same charging regime."

Universal RUC may also impact other buying factors, such as whether a vehicle is being acquired for business or personal use.

Beyond this, the MIA says it's difficult to predict how changes to road-use charging will affect the new-car market because it's unclear how much fuel-excite duty (FED) versus RUC affects people's purchasing decisions.

Currently, owners of light diesels, battery EVs and plug-in hybrids (PHEVs) pay RUC, with the latter two categories added to the system in April last year. Other road users pay FED, which is included in the price of petrol.

Revenue from these sources is dedicated to the National Land Transport Fund (NLTF) and helps pay for new roads, improvements and maintenance, public transport and road-safety measures.

The government announced last month that cabinet has agreed to legislative changes to scrap petrol tax and move all light vehicles – whether they be petrol, diesel, electric or hybrid – to eRUC.

The Minister of Transport says making vehicle owners pay for roads based on distance and weight is the biggest change in five decades to funding the network.

Key law changes include removing the requirement to carry or display RUC licences, allowing for digital records instead and enabling a broader range of eRUC devices to be used, including those already built into many modern vehicles.

The overhaul will also support flexible payment models, including post-pay and monthly billing, and allow bundling of other road



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◀ charges such as tolls and time-of-use pricing into a single payment.

The MIA says the technology choices the government makes for introducing universal eRUC could also potentially impact what models the new-vehicle sector brings to New Zealand and what cars consumers seek.

“However, the technology that may be used for this purpose is available now, so introduction in new vehicles should not be a hugely complicated matter,” adds Wiley.

As for how much notice original equipment manufacturers and the broader industry are given if specific technology is mandated in rolling out a new charging regime, the MIA says the longer the better.

Wiley says: “The government has indicated it will not proceed with timetabling and implementing the new system until the key matter of digital technology is settled. We strongly support this approach of taking the time to do it once and right.”

Motorists who currently pay RUC



The government is removing the need to display RUC licences, allowing for digital records instead

buy a paper licence electronically or over the counter at outlets, such as NZ Post Shops, VINZ or the AA.

The MIA notes the move to digital systems will automate purchasing, renewals, payments and monitoring distance travelled, while reducing manual effort and associated costs.

TIME TO REVISIT RATES

Drive Electric backs RUC applying to all light vehicles instead of the current two-tiered programme

whereby diesel units and BEVs are charged a higher rate than PHEVs.

The industry group supports owners of EVs paying fees for road usage but hopes the charges for electrified vehicles will be reconsidered as part of the system’s overhaul.

Kirsten Corson, Drive Electric chair, explains Simeon Brown, when Minister of Transport, said in April last year that the fees for BEVs would be adjusted when universal RUC was introduced.

[continued on page 8]

Breakdown of costs

Currently, 70.024c from every litre of petrol paid for by consumers goes into the National Land Transport Fund (NLTF), which is used to build and maintain roads.

Owners of diesel models and vehicles with a plug pay into the fund via RUC because diesel prices don’t include fuel-excite duty and electrified models have zero or less need to fill up at the pump.

At the moment, diesel and battery EVs weighing less than 3,500kg attract a fee of \$76 including GST per 1,000km, while PHEVs are charged \$38. These figures may be subject to revision once charges are applied universally across the light fleet.

The current RUC to drive 12,000km – a year’s driving for many – comes to \$912 for diesel and BEV drivers.

The contribution to the NLTF made via fuel tax depends on a car’s efficiency. The owner of a vehicle that averages 10l/100km would pay slightly more than \$840 when covering 12,000km.

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“At the time, as a new minister, he felt it would be relatively simple to set up so we are hopeful that a fairer system will be created from these changes,” she says.

“We need the government to think very carefully on how it implements these changes to universal RUC because, with the FED contribution being removed from fuel, it has to create rates that support low and no-emissions vehicles.”

Six industry groups – Drive Electric, AA, the MIA, Motor Trade Association (MTA), Imported Motor Vehicle Industry Association (VIA) and Better NZ Trust – joined forces and aligned for the first time when providing feedback to the government on the review of RUC last year.

Corson says it was unprecedented for the industry to come together on one issue like this and the groups “presented to the select committee as a collective voice”.

“We suggested a fair and equitable RUC rate for EVs,” she told Autofile. “The government chose not to listen to the industry and created a ‘penalty for a plug’ and now tax BEVs at the same rate as diesels. We most definitely would like the government to revisit the RUC rate and listen to industry.”

Also, the primary sector has signalled to the coalition that simply planting trees isn’t the



Drive Electric says fees for BEVs, such as Tesla’s Model 3, need reviewing in the move to universal RUC

answer to address climate change and that means transport presents the best option for New Zealand to reduce emissions.

“This is a once-in-a-decade opportunity for the government to get it right,” says Corson. “The government has indicated it needs to recover costs for roads and healthcare, which Drive Electric supports.”

“There is a social cost of \$10.5 billion each year from hospitalisations and so on, and more than 2,200 Kiwi deaths each year directly related to transport emissions. As a result, we would like to see RUC based on emissions.”

“There’s a lot of commentary that heavy EVs are impacting our roads. The information we have received from the AA is that vehicles 10 tonnes and above create the negative impacts on roads, not the light fleet.”

“It’s also important to note, when considering universal charges, that a Toyota Hilux is heavier than a Tesla 3.”

TECHNOLOGY ISSUES

VIA has welcomed the government’s steps towards replacing FED with eRUC, but says the changes will have broad implications for motorists and the industry.

Greig Epps, chief executive, notes a number of used imports coming into New Zealand have no built-in telematics or road-charging hardware. As a result, any proposal to retrofit such technology at the border will carry costs for the devices, labour and systems integration at compliance.

“These costs must be taken into account if we want a system that’s fair and doesn’t make everyday transport less affordable for families,” he adds.

VIA also supports the coalition’s willingness to partner with the private sector to deliver a system, although it notes robust privacy protections will be essential.

Epps adds: “Collaboration with private providers can unlock innovation, but it must be underpinned by strong safeguards

for individual privacy and data security.”

Meanwhile, the MTA is pleased with the universal RUC proposals, which it advocated for last year in response to the draft government policy statement.

James McDowall, head of advocacy, says: “It’s a more equitable tool to charge for road use, which will confront the reality of increasing fuel efficiency resulting in less revenue from road tax on a per-kilometre basis.”

“We strongly endorse the implementation of an e-RUC system, and are heartened to see the minister share our views and signal a move away from messy paper-based systems.”

“Our fleet is changing and it’s appropriate the way we pay for the upkeep of roads we all travel on changes too.”

Also welcoming the government’s plans is transport technology services company Eroad, which says the move represents a “smarter, fairer and

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◀ more sustainable approach to road funding”.

Eroad has played a role in rolling out eRUC to commercial fleets and believes the country is well-positioned to lead the way in rolling out a charging solution for all vehicle types.

“As New Zealand transitions away from fuel-excite taxes, eRUC offers a future-ready and proven solution that reflects how we actually use roads,” adds Mark Heine, co-chief executive officer.

“The technology to do this is well-established. For example, Eroad’s GPS-based platform helps thousands of commercial-fleet operators in New Zealand and abroad reduce compliance costs, improve safety and gain real-time insights into road use.”

CHANGING TIMES

Chris Bishop says petrol tax has acted as a rough proxy for road use for decades, but the government is now taking action because the relationship between petrol

consumption and road usage “is fast breaking down”.

“For example, petrol vehicles with better fuel economy contribute less FED per kilometre towards road maintenance, operations and improvements,” he explains. “We’re also seeing a fast uptake of fuel-efficient petrol hybrids. In 2015, there were 12,000 on our roads, while today there are more than 350,000.

“As our vehicle fleet changes, so too must the way we fund roads. It isn’t fair to have Kiwis who drive less and who can’t afford a fuel-efficient car paying more than people who can afford one and drive more often.”

The minister adds the legislation changes will eventually mean all vehicles pay based on actual road use, regardless of fuel type.

At this stage, no definite date has been set for the full transition of the light fleet to eRUC, but Bishop says the move will “future-proof how we fund our roads for decades to come”.



Chris Bishop

“The current RUC system is a hassle. It’s manual and paper-based. It requires you to constantly monitor your odometer, and manually buy and display paper licences on the windscreen. That is not a system fit for today, let alone the future.”

The transition will happen in stages, beginning with legislative and regulatory reform to modernise the current RUC system and enable private-sector innovation.

“We’re not going to shift millions of drivers from a simple

system at the pump to queues at retailers,” says Bishop.

“Instead of expanding a clunky government system, we will reform the rules to allow the market to deliver innovative, user-friendly services for drivers.

“A handful of eRUC companies already do this for about half of our heavy fleet and there are several companies, domestic and international, with innovative technology that could make complying with RUC cheaper and easier.”

The minister expects to pass legislation to amend regulations in 2026, and introduce an updated code of practice for RUC retailers and customer service providers.

Next year, the government will engage with the market again to assess likely market solutions, costs and timeframes.

“In 2027, the RUC system will be open for business with innovative tech and a range of retail offerings able to operate and compete in the market,” says Bishop. ☺

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Police issue compliance alert

NZ Police will be enforcing laws relating to Tesla's full self-driving supervised (FSD-S) technology when operational in the marque's EVs.

Inspector Peter McKennie, manager of infringement transformation, says the police consider the system may provide enhanced driver-assistance features beyond those already commonplace, such as autonomous emergency braking, lane-keeping assist or adaptive cruise control.

That said, "the driver remains legally responsible at all times for the safe operation of the vehicle, and for complying with all relevant laws and regulations".

McKennie told Autofile: "This is consistent with current practice where drivers remain accountable even when using conventional assistance technologies.

"For example, if the speed limit is exceeded while a vehicle's cruise control is engaged, the driver is still liable for the offence."

As a level-two semi-autonomous system, FSD-S is legal under Kiwi law, which requires the motorist to always be "in control" of the vehicle and responsible for it.

Hands-on-wheel operation is not mandatory in this country, but fully autonomous cars aren't yet legal here.

An NZTA spokesman says under current legislation that vehicles



– such as Teslas running in FSD-S mode – "are permitted on New Zealand roads".

They do not require specific approval from the agency or director of land transport "provided they meet standard vehicle requirements", such as warrants of fitness.

"Responsibility for on-road enforcement of vehicles using FSD-S functionality remains with NZ Police," adds the NZTA.

Tesla bringing FSD-S down under means New Zealand and Australia are the first right-hand-drive markets to get the system.

It goes beyond the company's existing Autopilot feature, which primarily handles highway driving.

That's because FSD-S is designed for more complex environments, such as city streets, turns, traffic signals, intersections and roundabouts.

It relies on eight exterior cameras

connected to Tesla's in-house FSD computer. This "vision-based artificial intelligence" approach to processing data builds a three-dimensional model of the road.

In addition, an infrared camera monitors the driver's head and eye movements, escalating alerts if inattention is detected and potentially disabling the feature.

Unlike many competitors, lidar or radar are not incorporated into Tesla's system.

The company's official launch of FSD-S in New Zealand and Australia prompted a frenzy in the mainstream media and elsewhere on both sides of the Tasman last month.

However, the system's down-under arrival isn't "new news".

Thom Drew, Tesla's country director for Australia and New Zealand, announced in mid-July the company had been working with local authorities in both countries and there were "no

regulatory blockers" for FSD-S.

"We are running through the final stages of validation prior to public release," he added at the time. "Looking to start with HW4 [Hardware 4] on certain vehicles and then release in phases from there."

Globally, Tesla has faced a backlash over the "full self-driving" moniker with "supervised" being added in April 2024 before which it was known as Full Self-Driving (Beta).

Last month in the US, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) announced it was investigating the company for incorrectly reporting accidents involving Autopilot and FSD-S in addition to having several open investigations into Tesla.

Notification of such an incident is usually sent to Tesla within minutes because an automated collision snapshot is sent to its server.

The NHTSA claims the marque has sometimes waited months to report crashes. Tesla says this was due to an "error" in its systems, which has been fixed. The agency may investigate further.

In New Zealand, FSD-S will be available for \$11,400 if purchased outright, while Tesla is considering options for a subscription model and a 30-day free trial for new deliveries.

The initial rollout will prioritise the latest Model 3 and Model Y as they are equipped with the brand's most recent H4 suite. ☹

No is 'short answer' to takeover

Turners Automotive Group has scotched suggestions about acquiring 2 Cheap Cars, saying it wouldn't be the right move for the business.

A shareholder at Turners' annual meeting on August 21, which Autofile attended, asked if it was likely to attempt such a move.

"No, is the short answer," chairman Grant Baker replied.

"We are growing at 14 per cent

year-on-year, quite fast. We're always on the lookout, but haven't found the right thing."

Baker added 2 Cheap Cars was operating in a different part of the market with Turners being in the \$10,000-and-up bracket.

"I'm not sure what their parameters are but it could be \$10,000 and down, as their name would suggest, so it's not a market we want to play in."

The message to shareholders reiterates remarks he made at Turners' 2022 AGM when he said there was no advantage in making a move for 2 Cheap Cars, which was then known as NZ Automotive Investments.

Earlier at the meeting, Baker highlighted that 2024/25 delivered a fifth consecutive record result despite Turners operating in a challenging macro-environment.

"Three out of four of our businesses are materially ahead of the previous year and the other had its second-best year ever.

"Automotive retail remained our largest division and the pressure it faced in the first half was no small matter.

"In what were arguably conditions worse than the GFC, we proved demand for used vehicles is resilient and, although margins were squeezed for a period, our ability to proactively improve margins during the recovery in the second half was pleasing." ☹

Driving protection forward with Assurant and Wheeler Motor Company

Global innovation meets local excellence with Assurant announcing a strategic partnership with Wheeler Motor Company (WMC). WMC is a Christchurch-based dealership renowned for its strong and trusted presence in New Zealand's used-vehicle market.

With Assurant now successfully onboarded as a key business partner, this marks a significant milestone in WMC's growth journey. This strategic partnership reflects the dealership's deep commitment to delivering high-quality vehicles, supported by comprehensive insurance solutions and exceptional customer service.

Furthermore, it enables WMC to deliver enhanced motor vehicle insurance solutions, offering extensive cover and greater peace of mind for every customer buying a used car.

"We're proud to partner with Assurant. Their full suite of innovative protection products, from mechanical breakdown insurance to guaranteed asset protection, allows us to deliver greater customer value and peace of mind. When the unforeseen occurs, our customers can trust they're covered long after they leave the showroom," says Nick Wheeler, managing director at WMC.

Beyond product offerings, Assurant provides in-dealership training and development expertise including product and compliance support. This training has now been conducted across WMC's five locations in Christchurch to ensure staff are equipped with the tools and knowledge needed to deliver exceptional service and trusted protection to every customer.



Nick Wheeler



Wheeler Motor Group's newest showroom

A legacy of trust and community impact

Founded in 2004 by Nick Wheeler, WMC has grown into a trusted name in New Zealand's automotive landscape. With a team of over 75 staff and more than 1,000 quality used vehicles, including electric and premium, WMC has sold over 30,000 cars nationwide. Every vehicle is independently checked by WMC, reinforcing the company's commitment to quality and transparency.

WMC's commitment to the community is equally impressive. From sponsoring local basketball teams, like the Canterbury Rams and Mainland Pouākai, to supporting marine biologists, schools and grassroots sports, WMC continues to invest in Christchurch's future. In fact, the dealership is currently developing a sponsorship fund to encourage reciprocal community support through its sponsoring portal.

WMC continues to evolve

In July 2024, WMC unveiled a new, welcoming and accessible showroom designed to display a collection of premium and higher-end

models, including Range Rovers, Porsches and BMWs. The space was intentionally chosen for its character, offering customers a relaxed and inviting atmosphere that reflects the company's customer-first philosophy.

Just like all Wheeler outlets, customers will find the same excellent service the company is known for. Will Hayde, general manager, says the intention with the new site is to make them stand out.

"Our primary aim is to offer a positive experience when buying a car. We understand that it isn't something everyone enjoys and we want to make the entire process enjoyable from the moment you step into the dealership," says Hayde.

When global expertise meets local excellence

Assurant Global Automotive boasts more than 60 years of industry experience. It protects more than 55 million vehicles, including heavy trucks and equipment, across 19 countries.

Its innovative solutions include a full suite of automotive care products, all supported

by dealer performance management, training and participation options.

Assurant's commitment to innovation has earned it a place on Fortune's list of America's Most Innovative Companies. This recognition reflects the company's forward-thinking approach to growth, leveraging technology and strategic insight to enhance its offerings, support its partners and stay ahead of industry trends.

By continuously evolving to meet the changing needs of clients and customers, Assurant reinforces its leadership in the vehicle protection space and beyond.

Steering ahead together to ensure success

The partnership between Assurant and WMC represents a strong and strategic blend of global innovation and local dedication underlined by a shared commitment to delivering exceptional customer service. **Together, they are committed to setting a new standard for vehicle protection and customer experience in New Zealand's automotive market.**



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Get connected for safer future

Automotive cities don't come more famous than Detroit, Michigan – a place so synonymous with cars that it's known the world over as Motor City.

Since Henry Ford and his Model T and Ransom E Olds' first mass-produced car in the US, Detroit has shaped the world.

And since day one, innovation has played a huge role.

In 1913, Ford introduced the moving assembly line, cutting the time it took to make a car from more than 12 hours to about 90 minutes and putting the price of a vehicle within reach of the masses.

Chrysler wasn't founded until 1925, but within a few years it was a world leader in aerodynamics.

Cars brought success. Detroit's population went from 300,000 in 1900 to more than 1.8 million some 50 years later. During the period, organised labour became a powerful force and the gains it brought were shared across America.

During World War II, the city's factories were retooled to produce military vehicles and post-war the demand for cars rocketed, not just in the US but around the world.

However, times change and by the early 2000s the already struggling automotive giants were only saved from collapse by government bailouts, restructuring, plant closures and lay-offs.

Since then, Michigan has staged a comeback led by innovation and new technologies, particularly electric and autonomous vehicles.

The state remains critical to automotive innovation and is home to cutting-edge research in EVs, battery technology and autonomous driving systems. Ford, General Motors, Stellantis and others are investing billions in the mobility revolution.

Michele Mueller, a civil engineering graduate of Michigan Technological University, is helping lead the charge as the state's Department of Transportation connected, automated vehicles and



Speakers and ITSNZ members at July's conference



Michele Mueller addressing delegates at T-Tech 2025

electrification manager. The mother-of-two has served the department for more than 30 years, specialising in advanced transportation technologies.

She's an expert in project planning, implementation and execution by leading initiatives that enhance safety, mobility and sustainability, and works closely with varying stakeholders spanning non-profit, corporations, government and academia.

"Collaboration is the key," she told the T-Tech 2025 conference at the University of Auckland.

"Everybody has to be at the table. Michigan is just like everywhere else. Ageing infrastructure and constrained budgets make it a challenge to keep up with public expectation.

"What we are seeking to do is build a sustainable model for

innovation and problem-solving."

The evidence suggests the state is making a good fist of it. It's the number-one ranked US carmaker and exporter of transport equipment, it leads the way in energy-sector job growth, and is responsible for one-third of the US' battery production and development.

It has built America's first public wireless-charging road, which features in-ground charging coils buried under the asphalt so cars, vans, shuttles and buses that use it can charge on the go, while delivery vehicles can get topped up while parked and unloading.

Not far away, it's also opened the first connected and automated vehicles (CAVs) corridor with Cavanaugh making up a stretch of Interstate 94. None of it has happened by accident.

"We move a lot of people and goods because we are so close to Canada," said Mueller.

"We've never been shy of adopting technologies that provide benefits, and we take a whole of network approach – land, sea and air.

"That's why today we use drones for shore-to-ship work, for search and rescue, to deliver medical supplies, and to carry time-critical freight within the US and over the Great Lakes."

It's all part of the dedicated Michigan Mobility Plan, with its three supporting pillars of transition and growing the mobility industry's workforce, of leading the world in mobility and electrification policy and innovation, and in providing safer, greener and more accessible transport infrastructure and systems.

"The long-term vision is founded on an inter-modal model," she told delegates at the conference organised by ITS New Zealand. "Roads are critical, but they aren't the only transport mode. Everyone has to work together.

"Our biggest challenges tend to be in operability. That's to say we have advancing technology that can't communicate with all vehicles because not everyone goes out and buys a new car with all the latest tech in it. It takes time for the fleet to catch up.

"But we do have an end-to-end focus. We identify what the

◀ challenges are and work to resolve them, and sometimes that can be very simple. Not everything has to be complex.

“That said, things such as ensuring seamless integration of CAV technology with existing infrastructure, keeping pace with evolving tech and operability standards, balancing the needs of mixed traffic and addressing public trust aren’t easy fixes.”

Every time the state makes progress it helps provide residents with a stronger state economy through safer, more equitable and environmentally conscious transport options.

Few transport experts, though, deal with quite the load that comes across Mueller’s desk.

Michigan’s mobility prototype grants initiative, she explained, allows the state to focus on different transport modes so that research isn’t too narrow.

One arm is the National All-Domain Warfighting Centre grant, which can be utilised to fund air,



Nick Collins

land and sea-defence initiatives.

“The grants allow us to partner with companies, mostly in the mobility and electrification area, that are interested in deploying tech solutions.”

All of which Mueller said has helped contribute to making Michigan a national leader in clean energy investment.

“We have programmes with research based around CAVs, mobility for the disability sector, for our older population. We’re working with the freight industry

on truck stops of the future. We’re invested in charging systems, real-time messaging and a lot more.

“But ultimately, everything we do has a common goal – improving the quality of life for our residents.”

REAL-TIME INFORMATION

The more you know, the safer you and other road users are. It’s a simple premise and it is one that’s difficult to deliver on because receiving real-time information while driving is no easy feat.

But the goal of delivering

information that benefits users and makes the road network safer remains in the sights of Nick Collins.

He’s a transport technology specialist and programme director of the Victorian Department of Transport and Planning’s co-operative intelligent transport systems (C-ITS) harmonisation project.

With a background in government and academia, Collins leads one of Australia’s most advanced urban C-ITS deployments, co-ordinating efforts across traffic-signal infrastructure, connected vehicles and secure digital networks.

Working with all Australia’s mainland states, public and private interests, and the University of Melbourne, the project has the goal of significantly reducing accidents.

To achieve that Collins and his team believe quality information has to be processed in real time to allow motorists to make better decisions.

[continued on page 14]

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Silas Wong at Siemens' stand

"We are working across four major road corridors in Melbourne with almost 30 prominent intersections, including notable blackspots where serious injuries have occurred," he said.

"If you take one intersection where the driver of a car is perhaps distracted, runs a red light and consequently hits and injures a pedestrian, then how do we get information to that driver in time to allow them to make better decisions and what does that information look like?"

"Some intersections involve multiple modes where we have the added danger of tram traffic on top of vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle travel. Intersection accidents involving collisions with trams on our shared networks are common."

Collins, who gave a presentation at T-Tech 2025, said many drivers are already using technology, in the form of traffic apps and GPS, to receive information.

"Our maps tell us if there are major incidents and identify delays on networks, so it's not too much of a stretch to envision them delivering driver information on a much more specific basis.

"But because New Zealand and Australia combined are still only a tiny part of the world's car market, it raises questions of how we invest in the technology needed and who makes those investments."

Like any investment, governments are looking for a return. That would come through fewer accidents and the flow-on savings in terms of death and

injury, medical care and often lengthy rehabilitation programmes.

The Melbourne study uses motorists who have volunteered to have equipment fitted to their vehicles that transmits data about road conditions and monitors driver behaviour over time.

"It's also about finding out what data can be useful, what the messages need to be and their level of detail. Sending too many messages could be a problem because drivers might switch off and there are obvious risks around distraction too.

"But if you could send a message to a driver approaching a roundabout that there was heavy pedestrian use, or that extreme caution was needed because of high traffic volumes, the benefits are obvious.

"You can't send too much. It's a case of keeping your powder dry so that people believe and trust in the system."

Collins remains convinced the potential benefits make continuing the research and planning worthwhile.

"You can imagine the benefits in terms of what happens if it allows emergency service vehicles to respond more quickly, something measured in human lives, not dollars.

"On the other side of the coin, the productivity gains by ensuring public transport benefits by delivering faster trips and in everyday vehicles getting along critical paths faster are enormous."

It's a view supported by

Siemens APAC's business manager Silas Wong, who told T-Tech 2025 attendees that with sophisticated technology already widely in place, making better use of it would bring positives.

"We've all heard the train stories, leaves on the line, weather delays and even in Brisbane an instance of a possum bringing down an electric network," said Wong.

"Telling people is critical and there are organisations already doing it well through real-time alerts that allow passengers to respond and use alternative modes.

"Siemens has invested heavily in real-time disruption management messaging tools that can now operate effectively across multiple digital channels.

"Artificial intelligence can even monitor sites to alert operators of potential disruption on road, rail and air networks. Expanding those systems to connect more road users is critical because passenger and driver expectations are increasing but disruptions remain inevitable.

"AI monitoring social networks, where the first news of disruptions often appears, can pick that up, generate an incident and inform system operators that alerts are needed."

Ben Ransley, managing director of Smart City NZ, agrees. His company uses data collection as the basis to inform road messaging that is a common sight along Auckland's roads.

However, it's more than just a sign. "We are using data collection and congestion monitoring to deliver messages that are a step to a more responsive system.

"We use A to B sensors to allow us to accurately predict travel times, which we can integrate into the public-transport system, and we can use our systems for simple messages around roadworks, the need to seek alternative routes or potential delays."

Smart City uses technical advancements itself with solar widely utilised, something Ransley said leads to smart, effective and cheaper ways to make improvements.

The company even claims credit for increasing bus use on Auckland's northern busway, which runs alongside the Northern Motorway.

"Our signs were and are there every day telling motorists stuck in traffic that the busway is way quicker than the commute. That's been a factor in the uptake."

Signs of things to come.

CHANGING OUR BEHAVIOUR

Susan Harris, chief executive of Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) Australia, was proud to state she made an emissions-free trip to T-Tech 2025 at the University of Auckland's transportation research centre.

"I walked across the park to the university to be here, a zero per cent emissions trip, which is the very best kind but also very unusual," she told delegates.

The confessed data geek explained that ITS involves looking at using a wealth of data to create safer, smarter and cleaner travel.

"We know some people have concerns about data, so we are looking at using data that already exists to improve transport systems and outcomes to create a future that is embraced by society."

Australia's Integrated Connected Data for Safer, Efficient Transport Management project analysed existing data from multiple sites, such as lights, traffic vision cameras, state-highway management controls and emissions monitoring.



Susan Harris

◀ These areas came under the microscope for driver behaviour and road safety, active transport and emissions.

"There were some interesting and sometimes counter-intuitive findings," Harris said.

"Most of us perceive trucks as being dangerous but data from lights showed heavy-vehicle driver behaviour was much better than that of light-vehicle drivers. Truckies appeared to be more aware of the potential risks and acted accordingly.

"We also saw that congestion made things worse. Light-vehicle driver behaviour during signal phases when there was congestion became even more dangerous, something most of us will have experienced as drivers.

"What that tells us is that it might be better when traffic management can detect near-misses and heavy-braking patterns to initiate the needed controls, rather than waiting for accidents to happen."

Data showed how congestion, the bane of every driver's life, impacted on emissions.

Harris explained: "It has the effect of lowering speeds and emissions are highest when there's frequent acceleration. The modelling showed it was at its worst during the flow into congestion and especially while accelerating out of it."

Her colleague, ITS Australia policy manager Stacey Ryan, told the conference behavioural change is clearly needed.

"Most people who drive spend their time locked in traffic, not

actually going anywhere," said Ryan. "Our research shows most journeys undertaken in every major Australian city are just a few kilometres.

"Decarbonising by moving from fossil-fuel powered vehicles to electric ones won't solve all our problems. We must take people with us. There's a wise old saying: 'Nothing about us, without us.'"

With about one-third of the world's emissions coming out of the transport sector, it's clear change is critical but achieving it in a world so in love with driving is challenging.

Ryan said the situation was equally grim around the world. For example, in Europe the average car is parked for more than 90 per cent of its life, mostly in cities where about half of the available land is taken up by the transport sector.

"The truth is that people massively underestimate the cost of owning a vehicle. A 2016 study showed the cost to a two-car Sydney household was A\$419

[about NZ\$465] a week. That won't have gone down and it will be in-line with the costs here in Auckland, where almost every home has two cars."

Ryan added the more people understand the true costs, the more attractive alternative choices become.

"Covid-19 changed where and how we work, so how do we shift people from cars to other modes? The answer is through planning, regulation economics and information technology.

"We will increasingly focus on moving more people to transport hubs, which is already the long-term strategy being adopted in most cities worldwide, including Auckland.

"Behaviour change can't happen in isolation. It must be accompanied by capacity creation, good network management and hopefully continuing changes to the way we live through mechanisms, such as varying school and work times." ⊕

Forum bid success

A major international conference is coming to Auckland after a successful bidding process.

Intelligent Transportation Systems NZ (ITSNZ) has secured the hosting rights for the ITS Asia-Pacific Forum, which will take place from May 5-7, 2027, at the NZ International Convention Centre.

It is expected to attract more than 1,000 delegates and will tackle advancing the future of ITS with the theme of "navigating tomorrow – advancing intelligent transport together".

Winning the vote was the culmination of months of planning, and years of developing international relations and government support on behalf of ITSNZ members.

The bid, which was presented in the city of Suwon, was backed by New Zealand's ambassador to South Korea, Dawn Bennet, and a delegation from government and industry.

ITSNZ's application secured support from Prime Minister Christopher Luxon, Mayor of Auckland Wayne Brown, NZTA chairman Simon Bridges and Rene de Monchy, Tourism NZ's chief executive officer.

Its presentation focused on the ideas of working together, and collaborating across borders and sectors, to advance technology-enabled transport solutions.

Key ideas communicated included New Zealand being open for business, being open to investment, new international ideas and innovation, and sharing its own transport and technology.

The bid was aligned with the government's Going For Growth agenda and Brown's Manifesto For Auckland as our biggest city strives to become a global hub for technology innovation.

ITSNZ was up against a "formidable bid" put forward by the Intelligent Transportation Society of Singapore. ⊕

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Group launches new division

The Giltrap Group has created a new division called NordEast Vehicle Distributors to represent all six Geely Group brands in this country.

It's the first time globally the brands – Geely, Farizon, Lotus, Polestar, Volvo and Zeekr – have come under one distributor.

The announcement made on August 21 follows news that the all-electric performance brand Zeekr was to soon make its debut in New Zealand.

NordEast has 14 locations in Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga, Wellington and Christchurch, and 29 showrooms nationwide.

Five Zeekr dealerships have been confirmed across these locations, while the new Geely, Farizon and Zeekr network is due to start operating from September 15.

Michael Giltrap, joint managing director of Giltrap Group, says NordEast will set a benchmark for sustainable, electrified mobility in New Zealand.

"We're delighted to partner with the Geely Group for the range and quality their brands will deliver to Kiwis," he adds.

"We believe this is a once-in-a-generation moment for New Zealand motoring. We have added Farizon and Zeekr to the portfolio, and officially launched Geely.

"With NordEast, we're building on decades of distribution heritage to set a new benchmark for the adoption of electrification."

NordEast's range will include battery EVs, plug-in hybrids (PHEVs) and hybrids across high-volume to premium EVs, vans designed for fleet decarbonisation and a fully electric ute.

It has also announced its goal is to deliver 5,000 fully electrified vehicles within three years, "bringing some of the most innovative, electrified vehicles in the world" to our shores.

Dane Fisher, group general manager of NordEast Vehicle Distributors, wants consumers



From left, William Zhou and Frank Li, of Zeekr Australia, with Michael Giltrap and Dane Fisher

here to see the merits of new-energy vehicles.

"We are redefining what Kiwis expect from electrification," he says. "We're offering low-emissions vehicles at price parity with combustion-engine vehicles, making electrified vehicles more affordable for New Zealand consumers and businesses and ensuring electrification and the latest technology is accessible for everyone."

NordEast's market research shows buyer interest and demand for low and zero-emissions vehicles is rebounding after a dip after the government scrapped the clean car discount last year.

The Geely Group is China's third-largest automotive group and the fastest-growing with cumulative sales of 1.93 million units in the first six months of 2025, a year-on-year increase of 30 per cent.

Electrified vehicles accounted for one million units, up by 73 per cent over the same period.

"Chinese brands have proven

that affordable, high-quality EVs are in demand," says Fisher. "New Zealand consumers are warming up to these brands due to competitive pricing and features."

The Giltrap Group has also signed Zeekr's distribution rights and anticipates it will be a disruptor in the luxury EV market.

"This is the Geely Group's premium electric brand that's redefining what luxury EV driving means," enthuses Fisher.

"Zeekr delivers cutting-edge technology, high performance and refined craftsmanship that until now has been the preserve of top-tier luxury models. It offers Kiwi drivers a new choice in premium, zero-emissions performance."

MODELS & DEALERS

Zeekr plans to sell vehicles in global markets and has an ambitious roll-out plan over the next five years to satisfy EV demand.

Its models launching in New Zealand include the X from \$59,900, the X AWD from \$69,900, the seven-seater 009, which starts

at \$149,900, and the six-seater 009 from \$154,900. Pricing for the Zeekr 7X is due to be confirmed this month.

NordEast's "strategically curated national network is pairing complementary brands in destination dealerships" across New Zealand.

In the country's biggest city, they are owned by the Giltrap Group. They include Geely and Zeekr at different locations on Great North Road, Grey Lynn,

Then there's Volvo, Polestar and Lotus in Great South Road, Greenlane, with Volvo and Polestar North Shore in Porana Road, Wairau Valley.

The Ebbett Group has two dealerships in Hamilton – Geely, Zeekr and Farizon at The Base, and Volvo and Polestar in Kowhai East Road, Burbush.

Farmer Auto Group has Geely, Zeekr and Farizon in Hewletts Road, Mount Maunganui, while Ebbett's Volvo and Polestar branch is close by.

Bay Prestige has Volvo and Polestar Hawke's Bay in Carlyle Street, Napier, while there are three dealerships in Wellington.

These are the Gazley Auto Group with Geely, Zeekr and Farizon in Cambridge Terrace, Armstrong's with Volvo and Polestar on the same road, and Gary Cockram with Geely, Zeekr and Farizon on the corner of Saint Asaph and Durham Street South.

Christchurch has two dealerships – the Miles Group with Volvo in Montreal Street in the city centre and the Giltrap Group's Polestar branch in Waterloo Road, Islington. ☺



Pushing from click to customer

Before you spend another dollar on digital campaigns or roll out a seasonal promotion, ask yourself if you're showing up where your customers are already looking.

In 2025, the buyer journey starts with a scroll, not a visit.

Today's consumers explore first. They watch TikTok reviews, browse listings, compare models on YouTube and check dealership reviews online, often before your sales team even knows they're in the market.

NEW BUYER JOURNEY

Some 92 per cent of car buyers research online before going to a dealership.

If you're still mainly relying on just marketplace listings, walk-ins and traditional media advertising, you are missing out on most of the action.

Here's how the journey typically plays out:

- ▶ TikTok or influencer content sparks the idea.
- ▶ YouTube comparisons affect the decision.
- ▶ Listings on Trade Me or Auto Trader narrow choices.
- ▶ Google reviews and online forums influence trust.

▶ The buyer visits brand and dealer websites.

▶ They either call directly or submit a lead form via your site or Meta.

At any point, a poor experience, slow website, unclear information or delayed reply sends them elsewhere. It's not just a bounce, it's a buyer gone.

WORKING SMARTER

Leads responded to within five minutes are 20 times more likely to convert than those contacted after 30 minutes.

That's why top dealers should enforce a 15-minute response rule. It's a fast win. Set it, track it and make someone accountable.

But speed isn't everything because smarter lead-handling matters too.

You can use AI tools to segment leads. Facebook enquiries might benefit from a follow-up sequence, while referrals or past buyers should get a personal call that same day. This saves your team time and increases conversion.



JAMES HENDRY
Director, sales and operations
AdTorque Edge NZ

AUDIT ONLINE FOOTPRINT

Before buyers meet your team in the showroom, they meet your brand online.

Start with your Google Business profile. Is it up to date? Do you have recent reviews? Use

free tools such as Google Analytics (GA4) and Hotjar to monitor how customers interact with your website.

You need to find out if they are dropping off too quickly. Are key tools such as finance or trade-in

forms easy to find? Can they put a deposit on a vehicle?

Now check your content. User-generated videos deliver 50 per cent lower cost per click and 28 per cent higher engagement than slick, studio-produced ads. Nominate a team member to film short, local videos weekly.

Your digital presence is your most important salesperson so ensure that it's performing. One dealer increased lead volume by 36 per cent simply by updating broken website links and improving mobile speed with no additional ad spend required.

NOW'S TIME TO MOVE

Today's buyers won't wait. The dealership that shows up first, responds fast and makes the online journey smooth will win the lead and the sale.

Start small and take one step. Then take another and keep going. If you're unsure where to begin, reach out to your digital partner. With the right tools and mindset, converting scrolls into sales becomes second nature.

When you respond like a business that wants their attention, buyers don't just engage, they choose you. 📞

FIVE DEALER ACTIONS FOR THIS MONTH

- 1** Enforce a 15-minute lead response rule across all digital platforms.
- 2** Introduce AI lead scoring to prioritise enquiries by intent.
- 3** Audit your Google, Meta and website presence.
- 4** Use GA4 and Hotjar to monitor online performance.
- 5** Track what sources generate sales, not just traffic.

These actions don't necessarily require a bigger budget, just a clear focus.

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Industry movers

GREG MACDONALD has joined Ford NZ as its new network strategy director. He is responsible for creating, developing and implementing commercial growth opportunities for the marque's dealer network and customers.



MacDonald's 20-year career in the industry includes establishing the Isuzu network in this country, and being general manager of sales and marketing for Fiat Chrysler NZ and marketing manager at the Ateco Group.

Most recently he spent five-and-a-half years as GM of sales and marketing at Kia NZ, helping the brand to double its market share.

Annaliese Atina, Ford NZ's managing director, says: "Greg's eager to get stuck in and support the work being led out by the team in strengthening the foundations of our business."

DEAN SHEED has become country business manager for MG Motor NZ.

Sheed, who previously spent nearly 26 years with European Motor Distributors (EMD), says: "In this role, I'll be partnering with our dealer network and fleet customers to drive sales growth, strengthen showroom performance, and build our presence and customer proposition nationwide."



He spent this year working as a business consultant after ending his association with EMD in October 2024 following 15 months as manager of branded finance and mobility manager.

BRAD LANG has joined Avanti Finance as group chief financial officer. He has more than two decades of strategic and financial leadership experience.

Lang was previously at Partners Life for 12 years where he held senior roles and was most recently its chief strategy officer.



His career began at BDO NZ and he later moved to the UK where he spent nearly a decade in financial services. During his career, he has led capital-raising initiatives and managed complex corporate acquisitions.

JARROD HO has started in the new role of business intelligence and systems manager for the Motor Industry Association.

Ho previously spent more than 23 years at EMD in Auckland. He was head of business quality for the past two years and before that was group manager of business quality development.



His other roles with the group included sales operations manager for Audi, product manager for Volkswagen and Audi, and VW's marketing manager, business development co-ordinator and market analyst.

SHANE MILLAR has joined MTF as manager of national sales operations. He was previously head of commercial at Yoogo Fleet for five years after being head of sales.



Before that he was business development manager at Cartrack NZ and dealer principal at Winger North Shore, Auckland. His career includes positions at the Prestige Motor Group and Giltrap.

Armstrong's chairman takes on training role

The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) has announced members of the establishment advisory group (EAG) for the automotive, transport and logistics industries.

They are Mark Darrow, chairman, and Jennifer Moxon and Sherelle Kennelly. The group will be established in January 2026.

The appointments were taken from nominations received from industry, and the EAG's role will include finalising the coverage details for an industry skills board (ISB) and recruiting a chief executive-designate.

The TEC says appointing members to EAGs is a key milestone for achieving the redesign of the vocational education system, and ensuring that training aligns with industry needs and priorities.

Their members are expected to transition across to form part of the membership of the ISBs' boards.

The EAGs have been designed to ensure the eight ISBs being set up by the government to support work-based learning hit the ground running from day one.

It's all part of the coalition's decision to disestablish Te Pūkenga, the New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology, and provide industries with more influence over training.

The EAGs will work with Penny Simmonds, Minister for Vocational Education, and the TEC on forming ISB boards and employing an executive team.

The automotive, transport and logistics ISB will be responsible for setting standards for vocational education and training, endorsing programmes to ensure they meet industry needs, and ensuring training is relevant and aligned with workforce demands.

The Motor Trade Association (MTA) has welcomed Darrow's

appointment ahead of the sector's ISB starting to operate from January next year.

James McDowall, head of advocacy, describes it as an informed decision because Darrow has experience in a range of governance roles.



Mark Darrow

"Mark is a real powerhouse and as a former director of MITO completely understands the importance of automotive industry work-based training," he says.

"The industry has heartily welcomed his appointment. Mark will provide real leadership, not only to the EAG but beyond."

Darrow has knowledge of industry training having previously chaired Primary ITO, which leads work-based training in the food and fibre sector, and has led large-scale change and workforce development initiatives.

His current roles include chairman of Armstrong's, MTF Finance, the Civil Aviation Authority, TSB Bank, and Inland Revenue's risk and assurance committee. Previous positions he has held include being a director of the MTA and NZTA.

Joining Darrow on the automotive EAG are Jennifer Moxon, a professional director in the private and public sectors, and Sherelle Kennelly, chief executive of the Freight Forwarders Federation of New Zealand and NZ Customs Brokers.

"The MTA and others advocated for MITO to return to industry ownership and for the standard-setting body to be industry-led," adds McDowall. "We are pleased government took our advice and progress so far is promising."

An automotive industry taskforce, which is being led by the MTA, is now encouraging suitable candidates to apply to join the ISB. ☺

Aiming to strengthen relationships

It's that time of year again when the MTA invites franchise dealers across New Zealand to participate in its annual industry feedback initiative, now officially known as the dealer-distributor relationship index (DDRI).

Formerly called the dealer attitude survey, it was renamed in October 2024 to better reflect its true purpose of fostering constructive dialogue between dealers and distributors.

The DDRI concept represents a collaborative tool designed to strengthen relationships, identify areas for improvement, and ultimately enhance the performance and cohesion of the industry's franchise sector.

WHAT'S NEW IN 2025

This year marks a significant expansion of the DDRI with moped, motorcycle and heavy-vehicle dealers officially being included in the survey for the first time.

This move reflects the growing importance of these segments in New Zealand's transport landscape, and acknowledges the unique challenges and opportunities they face.

By broadening the scope, the MTA aims to ensure that all voices in the franchised dealer network are heard and represented.

Additionally, the 2025 DDRI will continue to build on the

enhancements introduced last year thanks to expanded content around electric vehicles.

Advanced driver-assist systems are now mainstream, so the survey includes new targeted questions to better understand how distributors are supporting dealers through training, software and tooling requirements.

The DDRI is not about winners and losers. It's a confidential, independent platform that allows dealers to provide honest, unfiltered feedback about their relationships with distributor partners.

It covers a wide range of topics including communication, support, product availability, marketing and after-sales service.

By maintaining consistency in core questions year-on-year, the MTA ensures that trends can be tracked over time. This long-term insight helps both dealers and distributors measure the impact of changes or initiatives.

Importantly, the MTA safeguards the integrity of the survey results with no public



LARRY ALLOWFIELD
Sector manager - dealers,
Motor Trade Association

Changes have laid the groundwork for a more successful survey

promotion or ranking of brands allowed.

All findings are only shared privately with participating dealers, and it is circulated to all importers and manufacturers in New Zealand. This approach

encourages openness and trust, allowing for genuine reflection and improvement.

In 2023, the survey underwent a major transformation by moving from its traditional paper format to a fully digital platform.

Last year, we made several refinements to the DDRI, such as an auto-save option, clearer navigation, more responsive design, and improved communication around its purpose and value. These changes have laid the groundwork for a more successful survey in 2025.

The report provides valuable insights into dealers' perceptions and distributor engagement. It's a great way to understand how franchises compare to other brands in the marketplace, and to identify areas of discussion between yourself and your franchise.

MAKE YOUR VOICE COUNT

It's important to participate in the 2025 DDRI because your feedback matters. It is your opportunity to shape the future of your relationship with your distributor and help drive positive change across the industry.

Whether you're a long-time participant or new to the process, your insights are invaluable.

If you haven't taken the survey for a spin before and want to know what's under the hood, feel free to request last year's DDRI report.

Flick me a message and I'll send it your way but remember, like handing over the keys to a V8 Supercar, don't put it in the sand trap at turn one because there's no such thing as a free ride because – in return – I expect you to hit the 2025 survey like its race day or, at the very least, give me your feedback on the report.

Think of the survey as qualifying at Taupo Motorsport Park in that if you want to be on the front row of the insights, you've got to put in a hot lap.

The survey will be live from 9am on October 1 and will close at 11.59pm on November 16.

Keep an eye on your inbox because your unique survey link will be speeding its way toward you soon. When it does, take a few minutes to complete the DDRI and ensure your voice is heard. 🏁



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The month that was... September

September 21, 1998

Distributorship brand changes imminent

Just how the local distributorship of Mercedes-Benz and Chrysler would operate once their merger overseas was concluded was set to be known in the next few weeks.

Shareholders of Daimler-Benz and Chrysler Corporation had already voted to approve the planned merger.

Here, Daimler-Benz product – Mercedes-Benz and Freightliner – was distributed by the Giltrap-owned German Motor Distributors and run by John Steele.

Chrysler and Chrysler Jeep was distributed by Astre NZ, a subsidiary of the Australian company Automotive Group, which was responsible for Chrysler across the Tasman.

Daimler-Benz and Chrysler had already set the stage for the integration process, which was expected to help them grow into one of the world's most successful automotive companies.

What this would mean for both brands in New Zealand and Australia was unclear. Across the Tasman, the Mercedes-Benz distributorship was factory-owned while the Astre Group distributed Chrysler.



September 22, 2006

Strengthened dollar good for importers

The New Zealand dollar's rapid rise was likely to continue in the short term, experts said.

After the Reserve Bank stated that another interest rate increase might be necessary to control inflation, the kiwi rose sharply to be sitting at around US66 cents in mid-September.

The prospect of the dollar rising was good news for importers, who could compete better on the global market.

"The strengthened dollar makes it much easier for us to buy again," said Peter Johnston, of Genuine Vehicle Imports in Auckland.

"It will help us compete internationally, especially against countries such as Russia, which have recently been able to offer good prices for a variety of vehicles."

The kiwi was strong against the yen, up to around 78c, which was a trend reflected across all the major currencies.

"The New Zealand dollar is currently going up in great strides against the yen," said Nick Tuffley, senior economist at Westpac. "A lot of that has to do with what's been happening with our dollar in general, which has been gaining across the board of late."

He added the Reserve Bank's recent "stern" warnings were the main reason for the dollar's strengthening.



September 19, 2008

Electric car tests for NZ

Mitsubishi Motors Corporation (MMC), along with Mitsubishi Motors New Zealand (MMNZ), was set to show the zero-emissions i-MiEV in this country.

MMC said the move was a preparatory step toward a possible future introduction to the local market and to create greater public awareness of electric vehicles.

The initiative would be carried out with state-owned Meridian Energy. As New Zealand's largest energy provider, it generated 100 per cent of its power through renewable resources, such as hydroelectric and wind.

MMNZ and Meridian were planning to launch a promotional tour of the country sometime after February 2009. Representatives from national and local government would be given the chance to drive it to spur discussions about possible subsidies, infrastructure and marketing.

MMC was working to bring the i-MiEV to market in Japan during 2009. Because New Zealand was also right-hand drive, it would be considered for early introduction here if market conditions proved favourable.

The five-door i-MiEV was the world's first modern highway-capable mass production EV. Based on the marque's i kei car, it had a driving range of 130km with the 16kWh lithium-ion battery pack.



September 18, 2009

Auction website goes live

If your stock was depleted and your yard was looking empty, instead of heading to an auction house all you needed to do was log on from October.

That was the message from Autoterminal, which was set to start streaming its auctions live via its website motohound.co.nz where it had vehicles at wholesale prices. All cars were inspected and complied by the AA, VSS Ltd and the government.

"Now dealers don't need to leave their desks to buy stock," said Darryl McGifford, Auto Terminal's general manager.

The company had more than 3,000 used imports with stock from Japan's auction house IBC. There was a mindset to restructure the business soon after McGifford took over the GM role a year prior.

"We're doing the same amount of business this year as last," he said. "But some dealers are finding margins aren't as big as they expected."

"They may only be getting a \$1,200 margin. For some that's not good enough and for others it's not. I ask them, 'if you saw \$1,200 in the middle of the road, would you step over it?'"



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Repositioning as fleet optimisers

For decades, used imports have simply been viewed as a way of getting cars to Kiwis at prices they can afford.

However, what if that definition hasn't only limited our influence but has boxed us into a regulatory framework built for new-car distributors? What if we became a key part of managing the fleet.

The "substitutable" new-vehicle sector hasn't rushed in to fill the gap from decreasing used imports because high prices and limited choice prevent this.

Our real leverage isn't over what gets built next year, but over what's coming and already here. We can't tell OEMs to start making more EVs or hybrids, but we can control what we import and which vehicles are kept in the fleet or taken out.

This different role changes our obligations and rights. As fleet optimisers, our core responsibility would be to ensure the fleet improves over time. This can happen in two ways.

One is that every vehicle we import should be, on average, better than what's in the fleet in terms of emissions, safety and efficiency. We already do this informally in that market forces drive us toward the best models available at prices New Zealanders can afford, but policy could formalise and reward it.

Secondly, we can identify vehicles that are the biggest liability for emissions, safety or maintenance costs and get them out of circulation. That might mean dismantling them here, recycling their parts or exporting them elsewhere.

The key for this to work is policies that encourage all of this, and incentives that make it commercially viable to retire bad cars and replace them with better ones rather than just penalising non-compliance.

If we take this approach, the used-imports industry will look much broader than today because it's no longer just about importers and dealerships. It will also be about in-fleet resellers operating in the domestic market and depending on demand and availability, and scrappers and recyclers turning end-of-life vehicles into resources.

Then there are remanufacturers, which rebuild or upgrade cars for extended use, and logistics and inspection companies.

All these businesses contribute to the goals of improving the fleet, keeping it affordable and extending the usefulness of resources. In many ways, this also aligns with circular-economy principles.

IN CATCH-UP MODE

Whether all of this is realistic depends on whether government policy catches up. At the moment, we're often held to the same obligations as OEMs for recalls, repair documents and even compliance with schemes such as the clean car standard that assume



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

We can't tell OEMs to start making more EVs or hybrids

we have control over vehicle production.

If we reframe ourselves as fleet managers, the debate changes. Instead of debating why we're not supplying more EVs that were never built, the focus shifts to imports that

improve the fleet.

Then there's dealing with the worst vehicles fairly and efficiently, and supporting affordability so consumers can access better cars.

That last point is crucial. No matter how noble the emissions target, if available stock is priced beyond what most people can pay, the policy fails.

Our industry's decisions are constrained by what the public can afford on a weekly basis. We see this in consumers' financing decisions and any fleet-improvement model that ignores

that reality will collapse under its own weight.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

If the industry presented itself as a fleet-management partner rather than just a supplier, the government might develop incentives for retiring the worst vehicles and structure them to make economic sense for operators.

It could use performance-based thresholds, such as emissions and safety ratings, for compliance rather than blunt rules that block

otherwise high-quality imports.

Then there's recognising used imports and in-fleet sales as part of the improvement process, and not as a loophole or secondary market to be ignored.

The government could treat design-origin obligations – recalls, technical documents – as OEM responsibilities, not importer liabilities.

By aligning obligations with what we can influence, the Beehive would get better outcomes for the same regulatory effort.

The recent trend has been to significantly increase regulation on used imports. While that may not always be the case, we should plan as though the pressure will remain.

If we keep accepting a definition of our role that sets us up to fail by being measured against targets meant for manufacturers, we'll keep being penalised for things we can't control.

Repositioning as fleet optimisers gives us a stronger, fairer foundation for our responsibilities and rights.

A system of continual improvement and progression would align us more with the values of Japan, our key source market, rather than mismatch standards with our colonial, eurocentric past.

It also fits the global push toward circular economies and forces policies to measure us by what we can do, which is improving the fleet and not by what we can't.

The real question is if we have the will to take this step. If we do, the government must work with us as genuine partners. ☺



Advocate ▪ Advise ▪ Connect



Revving up to be bestseller

Audi is forecasting the new Q5 will be its biggest volume seller in New Zealand this year.

The midsize-segment SUV is the marque's first based on its premium platform combustion (PPC) and is powered by petrol engines that are more economical thanks to MHEV-plus technology.

PPC allows the company to launch high-volume models with high technical standards in different segments.

"As the second model in our new generation of highly efficient internal combustion engines [ICEs], the Q5 represents an important step in bringing the latest technology and performance to our top-selling SUV," says Greg Leet, general manager of Audi NZ.

The new Q5 range commands a launch price of \$111,990, excluding on-road costs, and the marque is offering it in an S Line variant with a two-litre TFSI engine.

This delivers 150kW of power and 340Nm of torque. It will also be equipped with quattro all-wheel drive as standard.

Arriving at the same time were the SQ5 SUV from \$149,990 and the SQ5 Sportback from \$153,990.

These are the top models in



Top, the Q5, left, and SQ5, and the SUV's cabin

the series with three-litre V6 TFSI engines for 270kW of power and maximum torque of 550Nm.

ULTRA-MODERN ENGINES

All Q5s boast MHEV-plus technology with a 48-volt electrical system supporting the ICE. This reduces carbon-dioxide emissions, and boosts performance and driving comfort.

Purely electric manoeuvring and parking are possible to a limited extent. The powertrain generator provides extra drive torque of up to 230Nm and up to 18kW of power.

The 48v system also enables the use of an electrically driven air-conditioning compressor.

This offers the advantage that even when the engine is switched off – for example, when coasting or

at a red light – the air conditioning continues to operate at full power.

The lithium-ion battery is based on lithium-iron phosphate chemistry and has a storage capacity of 1.7kW hours. The new powertrain generator enables electric driving, relieves the ICE and helps reduce fuel consumption.

When decelerating, the powertrain generator feeds up to 25kW of energy back into the battery. The PPC enables gradual electrification in the form of mild hybrids.

Later in the lifecycle of the new Q5, plug-in hybrids with a large battery and external-charging options will be available.

The SUV has enhanced progressive steering and dynamically tuned steel suspension as standard. Alternatively, a sports suspension – standard on the SQ5 and SQ5 Sportback – is available.

The steel spring suspension, in combination with the passive damping system and a more agile front axle, gives the Q5 a firmer ride on the road.

Adaptive damper control is available in the optional

air suspension with its basic configuration able of being adapted to individual requirements via Audi drive select.

Compared to the predecessor model, it offers a more noticeable spread between comfort and sport modes.

INSIDE AND OUT

The latest generation Q5's rear seat is fully adjustable. It can be moved lengthways and tilted to increase the trunk volume or comfort for rear passengers.

Three people can be seated on the rear bench. With the back seats down, volume increases up to 1,473 litres.

There's a larger storage compartment under the centre armrest compared to the previous model, an inductive and cooled charging tray with 15 watts of charging power in the front-centre console, and two USB-C ports in the front and two in the rear.

The car's shoulder line creates a powerful silhouette, connects the front and rear lights, and makes the vehicle appear longer.

Above the sill, a rising line runs over the wheel arches and into the rear bumper, while the single frame sits high and is flanked by vertical air curtains. The sculpturally shaped headlights create a focused look.

The exterior of the S Line impresses with striking and sporty body components, such as air-curtain tubes with matt anthracite chrome-look accents. On S models, these elements have a matt-silver chrome look. ⊕

The all-new SQ5



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'More efficient than competitors'

Suzuki says its "superbly equipped and keenly priced" Fronx will make a strong statement on our shores.

The mild hybrid is not only a new name for the marque, but an "ideally sized compact SUV package" falling in overall length between the Swift hatchback, and Ignis and Vitara.

"As a compact SUV, the top-grade Fronx is set to make a significant impression in our market," says Aaron Wales, automobile sales manager for Suzuki NZ.

"Starting at an introductory price of \$29,990, it's set to shake up the compact SUV segment with market-leading features at this price point.

"Highlights include a head-up display, 360-degree camera, wireless phone charging, heated front seats and an electric parking



The all-new Fronx

brake, which are all part of a lengthy spec list. Additionally, the full suite of Suzuki's active safety features is included."

The contrasting black and burgundy interior gives a premium impression, and the seats have a three-dimensional contour. Silver trim is complimented with leather-like inserts on the doors.

The self-charging Fronx is a "highly economical" car with

its 12-volt lithium-ion battery paired with the marque's hybrid integrated starter generator system that combines with the 1,462cc engine and six-stage automatic transmission.

An independent 200km test in the Auckland region, which covered city, urban, motorway and country roads, resulted in overall fuel consumption of 4.7l/100km.

The Suzuki is capable of a range

of more than 700km from its 37l fuel tank. Another advantage is the ability to the Fronx run on 91 octane fuel or higher.

Its official combined fuel consumption is 5.4l/100km while emissions are a 125g/km on the 3P-WLTP test cycle making it "not only easy on the wallet, but also considerably more efficient than key competitors in the compact SUV segment".

The engine turns at around 1,600rpm at 80kph, rising to little more than "a quiet and relaxed" 2,000 revs at 100kph.

Five years after the launch of the Swift Hybrid, Wales says the marque has been highly regarded for its fuel-efficient vehicles and the Fronx's arrival further enhances that reputation. He adds it embodies a high degree of refinement in terms of ride, noise and vibration. ☺

Turning new Leaf

Nissan's all-new Leaf will offer an increased maximum range, enhanced charging speed and more technology.

It is set to arrive at retailers in the US sometime after September with other regions to follow.

The all-new, three-in-one electric powertrain – with an integrated motor, inverter and reducer – is 10 per cent smaller than its predecessor.

Paired with a new, high-rigidity motor-mount bracket, it supports a 75 per cent reduction in motor vibration compared to the outgoing model.

The all-new Leaf will be available with two liquid-cooled lithium-ion

battery options, both of which offer thermal conditioning functionality.

Select models are powered by batteries with 52kWh of usable capacity, supporting an output of 130kW and 345Nm of torque. Larger 75kWh batteries provide 160kW and 355Nm.

The interior boasts an almost entirely flat floor courtesy of its CMF-EV platform and a monolith-style display features either dual 12.3-inch or dual 14.3-inch integrated screens depending on grade and region.

Nissan says its driver-assist technologies will make daily driving easier and more intuitive. ☺



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Aiming for seat in F1 Academy

Rianna O'Meara-Hunt has risen through the ranks of karting, racing against the likes of Liam Lawson and Supercars star Matthew Payne.

She competed in Toyota New Zealand's Toyota 86 Championship, and has attracted support from circuit owner and racer Tony Quinn.

The Wellingtonian has raced an Aston Martin in GT4 America for The Heart Of Racing team, logging podiums in the pro-am category and taking a win at Indianapolis' Brickyard, and she has completed Aston Martin Racing's academy.

O'Meara-Hunt now has her sights set on international single-seaters by aiming to become the first Kiwi

to secure a drive in the F1 Academy, the female-only F4 championship founded by the Formula One Group.

Currently in its third season, the F1 Academy also has its own Netflix series alongside the acclaimed Drive To Survive.

From there, the talented 23-year-old's aim is to become the first woman from this country to take part in the prestigious 24 Hours of Le Mans.

Like most top drivers, O'Meara-Hunt began her career in karting. Raised as an only child, she wasn't born into a racing family but when her father Martin went, she tagged along.

"I ended up falling in love," she says. "They could see how my eyes lit up and how passionate I was at four years old about trying to help the mechanic, cleaning the car and helping them out in any way I could."

Aged eight, she saw a kart for sale at Kaitoke in Upper Hutt. She tried it out and by the end of the day it was hers.

Seasons of racing came under the eyes of coach and mentors

Rianna O'Meara-Hunt with her collection of trophies from the 2024 GT Cup Championship in the UK



In action with The Heart Of Racing Aston Martin GT4



O'Meara-Hunt in the Rotax Pro Tour across the Tasman in 2017



On the top of the podium at Indianapolis with team-mate Hannah Grisham

Arie Hutton and Ryan Urban with success in each category.

Next it was off to Australia, a natural progression for O'Meara-Hunt. As a 15-year-old, it was a step up in class and intensity.

"It was eye-opening. It was a lot more aggressive, fiercer and coming in as a Kiwi I wasn't loved. It was really wild."

She was the first junior female to become an Australian state-karting champion, the first female winner of the Rotax Max Challenge rounds in New Zealand and has

won the NZ SuperKart Grand Prix multiple times.

In 2017, O'Meara-Hunt confirmed her potential as one of Australasia's best up-and-coming talents with an impressive debut in the senior ranks at the final round of the Rotax Pro Tour at Wodonga, Victoria. She scored a top 10 finish against seasoned competitors.

She then represented New Zealand in 2019 at the ROK Cup world finals in Italy and has an impressive karting CV.

O'Meara-Hunt was the first junior woman to secure a Rotax Max Pro Tour state title in Australia and win Rotax Max Challenge events here. In the same year, she claimed victory in the senior ROK class of the North Island karting championship.

She was selected as New Zealand's representative again in 2020 for the ROK finals in Italy, but was unable to attend due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

From that point on, her focus has been increasingly on endurance racing. In 2022, she took her first steps into car racing in the Toyota 86 series.

Later that year came another "huge" opportunity when O'Meara-Hunt entered The Heart Of Racing shootout, which would provide two female drivers the chance to compete in the American GT4.

She sought the support of the legendary Greg Murphy and they worked together for two days at Hampton Downs.

"It was amazing. He sat in the passenger seat and coached me through the laps. We went from

10 seconds off the pace to two seconds off his lap time, which was really cool."

O'Meara-Hunt was one of nine who were selected from more than 100 applicants to move to the next stage of selection, three days of intensive testing in Phoenix, Arizona.

The decision came through three nervous weeks later – she had been

chosen as one of two winners alongside American Hannah Grisham.

The duo made history in 2023 by becoming the first all-female team to win a race driving their own vehicle and that came at Indianapolis' famous track.

O'Meara-Hunt continued her development overseas from her base in the UK the following year, collecting more podiums driving a BMW GT4 and competing in her first 24-hour race in Dubai. That experience has cemented her ambition to drive at Le Mans.

"That's the moment I knew this was exactly what I wanted to do, this is what it's all about.

"My end goal is still to be the first Kiwi female to go and do 24 hours at Le Mans, but I'm finding the road that I thought I needed to take to get there was probably not the fastest. My eyes opened to the idea of the F1 Academy about last November." ☺

Leitch wins class at Imola

Hot on the heels of class wins in Lamborghini Super Trofeo, GT racing all-rounder Brendon Leitch finished second overall and won his class on debut in the Italian Gran Turismo Championship at Imola.

The New Zealander was joined by American Tony McIntosh in a Ceccato Racing BMW M4 GT3 in the amateur class as part of a 40-vehicle grid that featured some of the world's best GT3 drivers.

They qualified ninth for the three-hour race and what followed was a near-perfect performance.

Leitch and McIntosh stayed out of trouble and worked their way forward to lead their class and eventually come second overall.

The Kiwi set the fastest lap of any driver in the field by clocking a 1:41.559.

Neither driver had driven a straight-six, turbocharged BMW before the weekend.



Brendon Leitch in action at Imola. Photo: Motorsport NZ

It was also their first GT3 race together after several years competing in Lamborghini Super Trofeo at circuits across Europe and North America.

"Going into the weekend, there was a little bit of an unknown with the team and also the car," explains Leitch.

"Fortunately, it didn't take long to get up to speed with the BMW and the crew.

"What a weekend. The car was perfect and it's easy to see why

this team has had the success it has had in close to a decade of running GT3s.

"Imola is such a rewarding circuit where the car can ride the kerbs well and the BMW was faultless.

"That was one of the most fun and enjoyable race meetings of my career to date. It was really cool to meet racing legend Roberto Ravaglia too."

The Italian GT Championship appearance marked Leitch's first

race in Europe since last year's season-ending Lamborghini Super Trofeo world finals where he raced with McIntosh and won the pro-am.

Despite being based in Australia, Leitch hopes the return to Europe isn't a one-off and will kickstart more opportunities.

He says: "It was good to be back racing in Europe in a GT3 again. I've won in a Lamborghini Huracan, an Audi R8 and now a BMW M4, so it's good to add that to the CV." ☺

The Armco safety barriers are gone, the pit garages have been dismantled and the safety marshals' stands are no more.

Pukekohe's long involvement with motorsport effectively ended when the chequered flag was dropped for the venue's final Supercars Championship race in 2022 and the series shifted to Taupo.

What then followed was a final race meeting when fans gathered to farewell the circuit south of Auckland.

However, there's now another "final" because Pukekohe Park will host round three of the D1NZ



Photo: Motorsport NZ

National Drifting Championship in early 2026.

The event from February 13-15 will use part of the original 2.91km circuit to pay tribute to two decades of the series there.

The Friday will feature pro-sport

qualifying and elimination runs followed by a pro-championship competition on Saturday. A special champions showcase will be held on Sunday.

The circuit's high-speed turn one is considered to be the world's

fastest competition drift corner.

Motorsport activity at the venue ceased in 2023 but this event has been approved as a one-off with Auckland Thoroughbred Racing, which now operates Pukekohe Park as a racing and training venue. ☺



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Consumer allowed to reject van after seller had one opportunity to remedy peeling roof paint

Background

Karli Richardson purchased a 2010 Toyota Vellfire van for \$14,400 from Grande Motors Ltd on April 27, 2024.

A month later, she discovered the paint on its roof was coming off. At the time of the purchase, she had inspected the vehicle but was unable to view its roof due to its height.

The trader stated Richardson had checked the Vellfire at purchase and hadn't raised any issues about it.

The dealer was prepared to repair the peeling paint. But after an initial substandard repair, the buyer wanted to reject the vehicle.

The case

Richardson said it wasn't until she viewed the roof from the second storey of a house that she noticed it was peeling and it appeared there had been a previous repair because there were brush marks where the paint was coming off.

The tribunal noted there had been issues with the painting of Toyotas made between 2010 and 2014.

Richardson took the Vellfire back to Grande Motors for repair. It arranged for Right Touch Panel & Paint Ltd to remedy the issue. The work cost \$518.

When the van was returned to Richardson, she claimed the work was substandard. She provided photos that showed poor surface preparation, overspray, paint runs, dirt or debris under the paint and over-spraying of reversing sensors.

Richardson raised her concerns with Grande Motors. The trader accepted the paint finish wasn't up to an acceptable standard and asked her to return the van for further repairs.

However, Richardson was unwilling to do so unless she had assurances as

to who would carry out the work and what the quality of it would be. She then filed a claim to reject the van after getting her own quotes.

The trader submitted it had always been willing to fix the issue. It noted quotes she obtained for work to be done were for a complete repaint and submitted that was unreasonable because areas not part of the original issue were included.

It added the van wasn't in its original condition because the back seat had been removed and the interior modified to allow Richardson to transport dogs as part of her business.

Richardson stated the seats had been removed by a mechanic, were kept in storage and rear interior could be returned to its original state.

The finding

The tribunal was satisfied the van was in breach of section six of the CGA because it wasn't acceptable in appearance or free from minor defects at the time of sale.

That was apparent from earlier repairs that had been completed with a paint-brush finish.

The adjudicator said the failure of the paint system in the area of the earlier repair so soon post-purchase was substantial.

While Grande Motors said Richardson should have been familiar with the vehicle's state

from her pre-purchase inspection, the work was on the roof of the van and it was unlikely to have been visible to Richardson at the time.

The tribunal found it more likely that Grande Motors should have been aware of the repair attempt and there was an issue with the vehicle's quality.

The right to rejection under the CGA can arise when a supplier has failed or refused to remedy a breach or when the breach is of substantial character.

Grande Motors attempted repairs but the result was substandard. It asked for another opportunity to repair the vehicle, but the tribunal didn't consider it should be given one.

Remedial work often requires more than one attempt and that's usually in the context of an issue that's difficult to diagnose and to apply the appropriate repair.

In this case, what needed to be remedied was evident and there were no reasons why the work couldn't have been carried out to an acceptable standard in the first instance.

On that basis, the tribunal considered Grande Motors had had its opportunity to repair the van under the CGA but didn't do so within a reasonable period of time.

It followed that Richardson could reject the van under section 18 of the act.

However, under section 20(c)

The case: The buyer wanted to reject her Vellfire about a month post-supply when she discovered that its roof was peeling.

The trader offered to remedy the issue, but the new paint was substandard. The dealer asked the purchaser to return the vehicle so it could attempt a second repair, but by that stage the buyer wanted to reject the van.

The decision: The application to reject the van under the Consumer Guarantees Act (CGA) was upheld by the adjudicator.

At: The Motor Vehicle Disputes Tribunal via video link.

a consumer can lose the right to reject a vehicle if the goods are damaged after delivery to the consumer for reasons not related to their state or condition at the time of supply.

The van had been altered by the buyer post-purchase. Because of that, the tribunal needed to consider whether section 20(c) of the CGA applied.

Alterations to the vehicle involved the removal of the rear seats and modification of the rear of the van.

After the hearing concluded, the tribunal was provided with photographs of the back of the Vellfire and of the seats having been removed.

The buyer's photos showed that the back of the van and the seats were in good condition, and the tribunal was satisfied its interior could be returned to the state it was in at purchase.

Therefore, the tribunal found that Richardson hadn't lost the right to reject her vehicle under the CGA.

Orders

The rejection of the van was upheld. The buyer had to reinstate its rear seats and remove any modifications she had installed.

The trader was ordered to refund the \$14,400 purchase price and uplift the vehicle. ☺



A 2010 Toyota Vellfire van

Dealer refused to refund vehicle's delivery fee after agreeing to pay back its purchase price

Background

Jodie Molloy purchased a 2013 Nissan Elgrand for \$11,285 from Auto Spot Whangarei on November 1, 2024. Soon after purchase, she rejected it, returned it to the dealer and received a refund.

When Molloy bought the car, she paid a \$950 delivery fee which the trader didn't refund and she wanted that money back.

The dealer said it was the buyer's decision to have the Nissan delivered and the cost wasn't connected to any of its alleged faults.

The case

The sole issue requiring the tribunal's consideration was whether the consumer was entitled to a refund of the delivery fee.

Soon post-supply, the buyer said the Nissan developed multiple problems including worn tyres and a faulty wheel bearing. It jolted while being driven and stalled at traffic lights.

The car's transmission was assessed by KM Automotive at a cost of \$193 to Auto Spot Whangarei.

While it found no obvious fault, it recommended the system be serviced. It noted the right-front wheel bearing needed to be replaced and the rear tyres were worn to an unsafe level.

KM Automotive told the hearing it was unable to replicate the Nissan's jolting and recommended the transmission be flushed.

The dealer said that it was prepared to repair the wheel bearing and replace the tyres, but there were no faults with the transmission.

It said it only offered Molloy a full refund "to appease the situation" – not because it considered it was required to do so under the Consumer Guarantees Act (CGA) – and in such circumstances the buyer should

A model-year 2013 Elgrand



bear the original delivery charge.

The trader added the minimum warrant of fitness requirement was 1.5mm for the rear tyres, which had 3mm at its pre-sales inspection.

"Although the tyres are at the lower scale of wear, this is a used vehicle and in no way was it advertised with new tyres or any indication of wear," it said.

KM Automotive noted on its report that after purchasing the car back from Molloy that it had checked the wheel bearing and found the noise came from a tyre.

The dealer said the Nissan had subsequently been sold and its new owner hadn't alleged there were any faults with the car, but it provided no supporting evidence of this.

Auto Spot Whangarei added the only change it made to the Nissan, prior to its subsequent sale, was to replace its rear tyres. It didn't service the transmission or replace the faulty wheel bearing as recommended by KM Automotive.

The finding

Molloy might have been entitled to a refund of the vehicle delivery fee if she could have proved the Nissan had faults that breached the CGA.

When considering this, the tribunal applies civil-law standards and expectations. It is for the applicant to establish their claims "on the balance of probabilities".

Independent witnesses, corroborating documents, reports and photos can be an important part of discharging the burden of proof.

The tribunal was satisfied that the car's worn rear tyres and faulty front-wheel bearing were breaches of the legislation's guarantee of acceptable quality.

While the adjudicator acknowledged Auto Spot Whangarei's claim that neither were faults with the vehicle, it was assisted by an independent report, which was supported by evidence from a witness of the buyer at the hearing.

When parties are conflicted in their claims about a vehicle – as they were in this case – the most reliable evidence for the tribunal is that of an independent party with no vested interest in the outcome.

For that reason, the tribunal accepted the report from KM Automotive, which diagnosed the two faults with the Nissan.

However, the tribunal didn't have adequate evidence regarding the car's alleged transmission fault.

Aside from Molloy's evidence, there was no other evidence confirming the alleged fault, which hadn't been diagnosed by a third party.

The tribunal, therefore, was unable to find that the alleged transmission fault was a breach of the CGA's guarantee of acceptable quality.

The case: The buyer wanted the trader to reimburse the \$950 vehicle delivery fee she had paid after getting a refund for her 2013 Nissan Elgrand. The dealer, however, refused to pay back the charge and said it was unrelated to the car's faults.

The decision: The tribunal dismissed the purchaser's application because the supplier allowed her to reject the people mover when it wasn't required to do so and the transport fee wasn't a foreseeable loss resulting from the Nissan's failures.

At: The Motor Vehicle Disputes Tribunal via video link.

As the adjudicator had found, there were two faults with the Nissan that breached this guarantee so it had to consider whether the buyer was entitled to be refunded the delivery fee.

Section 18(4) of the CGA provided that if the Nissan had failed to comply with the guarantee of acceptable quality, the purchaser might have been able to obtain damages for any reasonably foreseeable loss resulting from the failure.

However, the tribunal ruled that the cost of the delivery fee didn't result from the rear tyres and wheel-bearing failures.

That was because they were relatively minor and capable of repair, and the buyer's remedy under the CGA would have been for the trader to fix the vehicle.

On that basis, had the problems been considered as repaired, then Molloy would have been required to keep the Nissan and the transportation charge would have been a sunk cost.

The fact that Auto Spot Whangarei allowed the buyer to return the vehicle when it was not required to do so didn't mean the transport fee was a reasonably foreseeable loss resulting from the car's two proven failures.

Order

The buyer's application for a refund of the \$950 fee to transport the vehicle was dismissed. ☹

Powering up with old batteries

Mercedes-Benz has opened Europe's first battery recycling plant to create a "closed loop" by having its own in-house facility.

It means valuable and scarce raw materials, such as lithium, nickel and cobalt, are now being reused in new batteries for future all-electric vehicles.

The hydrometallurgical plant in Kuppenheim, Germany, boasts an expected recovery rate of more than 96 per cent.

The marque's technology partner for the scheme is Primobius, which in turn is a joint venture between German engineering company SMS and Australian process technology developer Neometals.

The plant receives funding from the country's Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action as part of a scientific research project with three universities, which are investigating the process chain for recycling including logistics and reintegration concepts.

Mercedes-Benz's facility covers all steps from shredding battery modules to drying and processing active materials. Plastics, copper, aluminium and iron are sorted and separated on site.

The downstream operation is dedicated to what's known as "black mass", active materials that make up battery cells' electrodes. Valuable metals of battery quality are extracted individually to use in making new cells.

Unlike pyrometallurgy, the low temperatures of the hydrometallurgical process mean it consumes less energy and wastes less materials.

Like all the marque's factories, the plant is net-carbon neutral. It's supplied with 100 per cent green electricity and the 6,800sqm roof has a photovoltaic system with a peak output of more than 350kW.

The facility has an annual capacity of 2,500 tonnes. That level of recovered materials will feed into making more than 50,000 EV battery modules, while the knowledge gained from it could



Inside Mercedes-Benz's battery recycling plant in Kuppenheim, Germany

help scale up medium to long-term volumes.

With its design for a circularity approach, Mercedes-Benz's plant takes the entire battery technology's value chain into account.

At the company's eCampus in Stuttgart-Untertürkheim, such thinking flows into developing new battery cells and local battery production is seen as a key factor for the success of its sustainable business strategy.

It offers reconditioned batteries as spare parts for all its EVs. In addition, its energy subsidiary operates large-scale stationary storage applications. Batteries no longer suitable for use in cars can have a second life in energy-storage systems.

DELVING INTO SCIENCE

Early humans took an essential step toward the Metal Age when they discovered copper could be melted and casted into moulds, and that metals could be separated from metal-bearing minerals.

Eventually, our ancestors figured out they needed to add iron oxide to the process of melting copper to maintain its separation from other minerals.

Thus, they discovered flux. This substance is mixed with a solid to lower its melting point, used especially in soldering and brazing.

These early stages of metallurgy primarily involved working with



copper, gold, bronze, iron, brass and other precious metals to make weapons and jewellery.

Nowadays, metallurgy involves examining microstructures of metals so engineers can use them for different purposes, such as welding or metalworking.

Production starts with extracting metals from ores through mineral processing and often involves mixing metals to create alloys.

The two main methods used in metallurgy are pyrometallurgy and hydrometallurgy, with the latter being used in Mercedes-Benz's battery recycling factory.

Pyrometallurgy involves the use of heat or thermal treatment of minerals and ores. The heat causes a physical or chemical transformation of materials so metals can be extracted. The most common processes are roasting, smelting and converting.

Hydrometallurgy involves using water in processes to extract metals or compounds from ores. This can be done through leaching, precipitation of insoluble compounds and pressure reduction.

With the global increase in EVs and portable battery production, mining precious metals for lithium-ion batteries is often not environmentally viable and supply chains supporting mining can be unstable.

This presents the issue of what process should be used when recycling batteries for green and cost benefits.

Many studies have found hydrometallurgy is more suitable from an environmental and resource point of view. It allows for a higher recovery of elements with lower energy consumption, significantly lower greenhouse gas emissions, minimal air emissions and purification.

Battery recycling initially involves discharging – and partly dismantling larger batteries – and sorting them. Then there's separation and mechanical treatment including shredding to produce the black mass.

This is followed by the hydrometallurgical process, a chemical refinement method to recover the metals in ion form from the black mass.

Materials are extracted via purification, and extraction rates mean they are materially and commercially viable for reuse.

Hydrometallurgy is now used to produce more than 70 metallic elements. It includes selective separation in battery recycling, which leads to extracting salts.

Primobius, Mercedes-Benz's technology partner for its hydrometallurgical recycling factory in Germany, says its sustainable approach is a safe way of extracting metals at ordinary temperatures with recirculating liquid solvents to bring high-purity chemicals back into the battery supply chain.

It adds: "The pyrometallurgical approach can be seen as a sunset technology for recycling while hydrometallurgical is the sunrise approach, poised to do heavy lifting to reduce the high carbon footprint of lithium-ion batteries." ☺

AROUND THE COUNTRY

August 2025

Total new cars

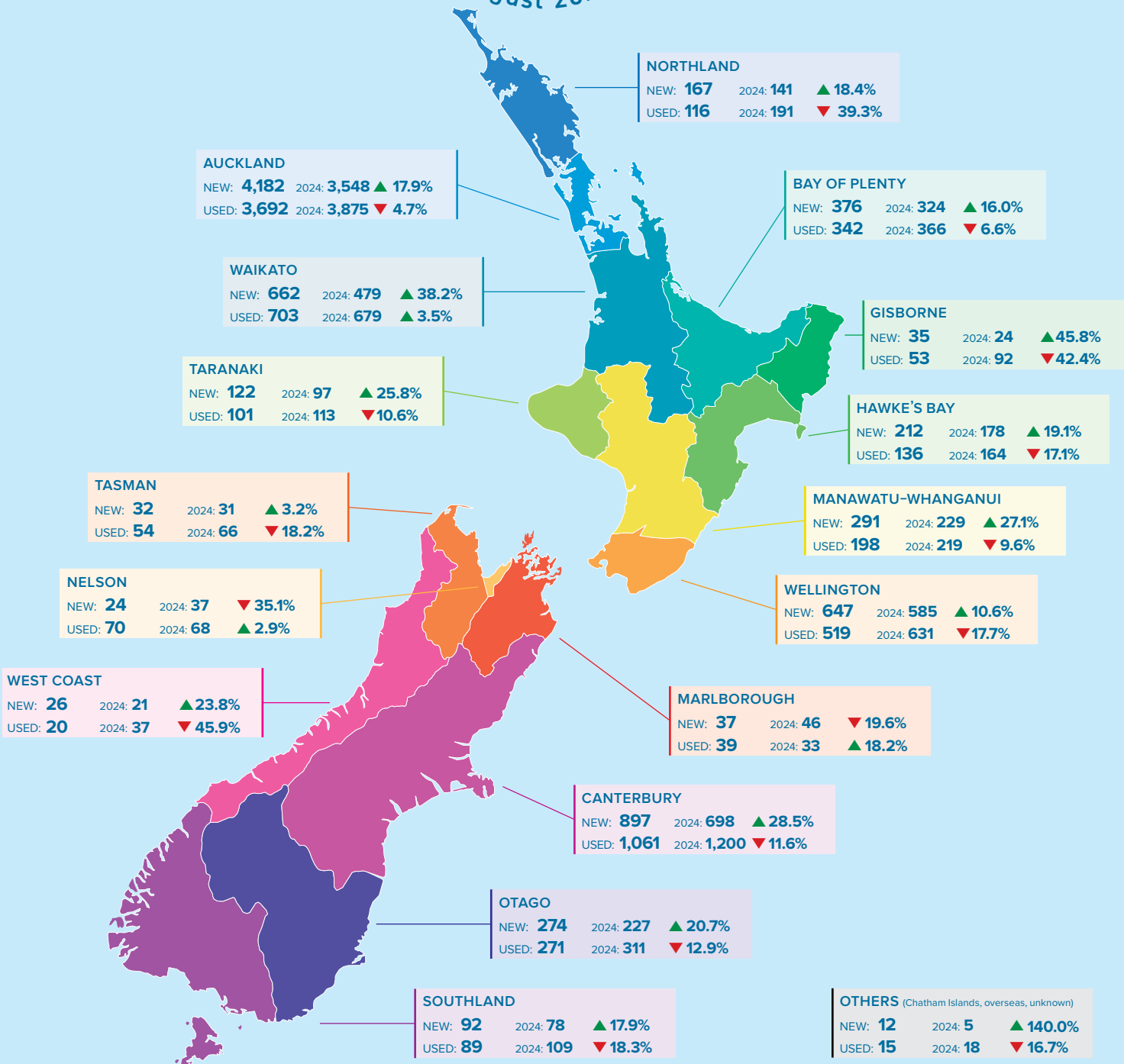
8,088

2024: 6,748 ▲ 19.9%

Total imported used cars

7,479

2024: 8,172 ▼ 8.5%



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BLACKBIRD FINANCE

Imported Passenger Vehicle Sales by Make - August 2025

MAKE	AUG '25	AUG '24	+/-%	AUG '25 MKT SHARE	2025 YEAR TO DATE	2025 MKT SHARE
Toyota	2,838	2,903	-2.2%	37.9%	21,298	37.1%
Mazda	1,099	1,102	-0.3%	14.7%	7,769	13.5%
Nissan	993	1,118	-11.2%	13.3%	8,042	14.0%
Honda	675	682	-1.0%	9.0%	5,393	9.4%
Subaru	587	783	-25.0%	7.8%	5,056	8.8%
BMW	259	278	-6.8%	3.5%	2,061	3.6%
Suzuki	182	248	-26.6%	2.4%	1,497	2.6%
Mercedes-Benz	151	166	-9.0%	2.0%	1,201	2.1%
Mitsubishi	126	215	-41.4%	1.7%	980	1.7%
Lexus	123	156	-21.2%	1.6%	862	1.5%
Audi	122	148	-17.6%	1.6%	1,004	1.7%
Volkswagen	98	133	-26.3%	1.3%	694	1.2%
Land Rover	40	48	-16.7%	0.5%	304	0.5%
Ford	23	24	-4.2%	0.3%	162	0.3%
Tesla	20	15	33.3%	0.3%	115	0.2%
Jaguar	19	17	11.8%	0.3%	140	0.2%
Volvo	17	13	30.8%	0.2%	119	0.2%
Chevrolet	14	14	0.0%	0.2%	70	0.1%
Mini	13	9	44.4%	0.2%	109	0.2%
Jeep	12	16	-25.0%	0.2%	85	0.1%
Porsche	11	5	120.0%	0.1%	87	0.2%
Hyundai	6	5	20.0%	0.1%	41	0.1%
Peugeot	5	7	-28.6%	0.1%	18	0.0%
MG	4	2	100.0%	0.1%	9	0.0%
Land Rover	4	1	300.0%	0.1%	19	0.0%
Dodge	4	10	-60.0%	0.1%	34	0.1%
Kia	3	5	-40.0%	0.0%	19	0.0%
Daihatsu	3	3	0.0%	0.0%	33	0.1%
Citroen	3	2	50.0%	0.0%	9	0.0%
Chrysler	3	6	-50.0%	0.0%	32	0.1%
BYD	3	0	300.0%	0.0%	16	0.0%
Lincoln	2	1	100.0%	0.0%	8	0.0%
TVR	1	0	100.0%	0.0%	2	0.0%
Triumph	1	0	100.0%	0.0%	4	0.0%
SsangYong	1	0	100.0%	0.0%	1	0.0%
Others	14	37	-62.2%	0.2%	190	0.3%
Total	7,479	8,172	-8.5%	100.0%	57,483	100.0%

Imported Passenger Vehicle Sales by Model - August 2025

MAKE	MODEL	AUG '25	AUG '24	+/-%	AUG '25 MKT SHARE	2025 YEAR TO DATE	2025 MKT SHARE
Toyota	Aqua	822	805	2.1%	11.0%	5,977	10.4%
Toyota	Prius	563	532	5.8%	7.5%	4,196	7.3%
Toyota	Corolla	386	329	17.3%	5.2%	2,836	4.9%
Nissan	Note	324	273	18.7%	4.3%	2,367	4.1%
Mazda	Axela	307	322	-4.7%	4.1%	2,314	4.0%
Honda	Fit	280	238	17.6%	3.7%	2,287	4.0%
Toyota	C-HR	273	251	8.8%	3.7%	1,922	3.3%
Subaru	Impreza	227	280	-18.9%	3.0%	1,872	3.3%
Mazda	Demio	206	261	-21.1%	2.8%	1,490	2.6%
Mazda	CX-5	197	183	7.7%	2.6%	1,378	2.4%
Nissan	Serena	176	208	-15.4%	2.4%	1,245	2.2%
Nissan	X-Trail	169	283	-40.3%	2.3%	1,621	2.8%
Honda	Vezel	164	133	23.3%	2.2%	1,080	1.9%
Subaru	XV	153	168	-8.9%	2.0%	1,455	2.5%
Suzuki	Swift	124	180	-31.1%	1.7%	1,070	1.9%
Nissan	Leaf	120	71	69.0%	1.6%	924	1.6%
Toyota	Yaris	86	31	177.4%	1.1%	414	0.7%
Mitsubishi	Outlander	84	129	-34.9%	1.1%	608	1.1%
Toyota	Vellfire	76	75	1.3%	1.0%	586	1.0%
Toyota	Camry	75	91	-17.6%	1.0%	515	0.9%
Mazda	Atenza	74	109	-32.1%	1.0%	540	0.9%
Mazda	Premacy	70	94	-25.5%	0.9%	544	0.9%
Toyota	Vitz	61	100	-39.0%	0.8%	624	1.1%
Volkswagen	Golf	57	86	-33.7%	0.8%	426	0.7%
Mazda	CX-3	54	53	1.9%	0.7%	345	0.6%
Toyota	Sai	48	44	9.1%	0.6%	325	0.6%
BMW	Mini	48	33	45.5%	0.6%	355	0.6%
Subaru	Legacy	44	109	-59.6%	0.6%	475	0.8%
Mazda	CX-8	44	13	238.5%	0.6%	234	0.4%
BMW	320i	44	62	-29.0%	0.6%	387	0.7%
Subaru	Outback	42	60	-30.0%	0.6%	318	0.6%
Subaru	Levorg	41	27	51.9%	0.5%	228	0.4%
Toyota	Spade	40	68	-41.2%	0.5%	372	0.6%
Nissan	Skyline	40	46	-13.0%	0.5%	290	0.5%
Toyota	Alphard	38	70	-45.7%	0.5%	385	0.7%
Others		1,922	2,355	-18.4%	25.7%	15,478	26.9%
Total		7,479	8,172	-8.5%	100.0%	57,483	100.0%



WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM YOUR VEHICLE SUPPLIER?

Court action over illegal imports

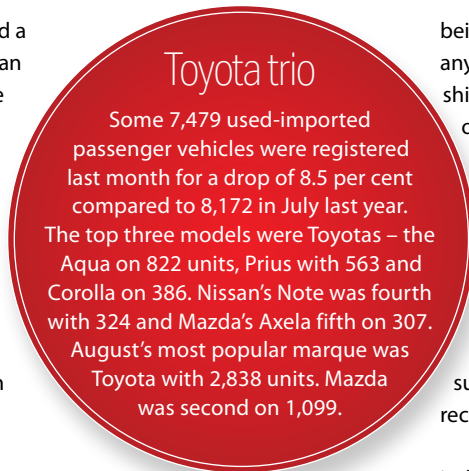
The police have launched a civil court case against an alleged crime syndicate claiming hundreds of cars with clocked odometers have crossed the border in recent years.

The action in the high court at Auckland alleges the syndicate, with members in this country and Japan, imported 303 vehicles between March 2020 and March 2024.

At least 252 had altered odometers and forged export certificates, the court has been told.

The civil action launched by the police, which has arisen after they tried to locate dozens of missing ignition keys and an unregistered Nissan Atlas, has been taken against three individuals and two companies.

It follows a Customs and NZTA investigation last year that found a businessman based in Auckland had allegedly brought in 133 second-hand vehicles from



Japan with understated odometer readings and using falsified documents.

It was on July 25, 2024, that Autofile Online reported the man in question had been arrested and charged.

The probe found he allegedly brought in the vehicles, mainly trucks, between 2020 and 2024.

The 36-year-old appeared in Waitakere District Court on July 24 last year charged with

being knowingly concerned in any importation, transportation, shipment, unshipment or landing of prohibited imports. The charge carries a maximum penalty of six months behind bars or a \$10,000 fine.

Customs started its investigation in April 2024 after being approached by the NZTA about imported vehicles suspected of having incorrect records.

"The investigation identified the individual and his company which imported the vehicles for on-sale," said Customs at the time.

"Imports from Japan require an export certificate from Japanese authorities.

"In this case, a comparison of certificates and import documents used by the defendant identified discrepancies with odometer records, years of manufacture and gross vehicle mass."

Customs carried out search warrants at the man's home and

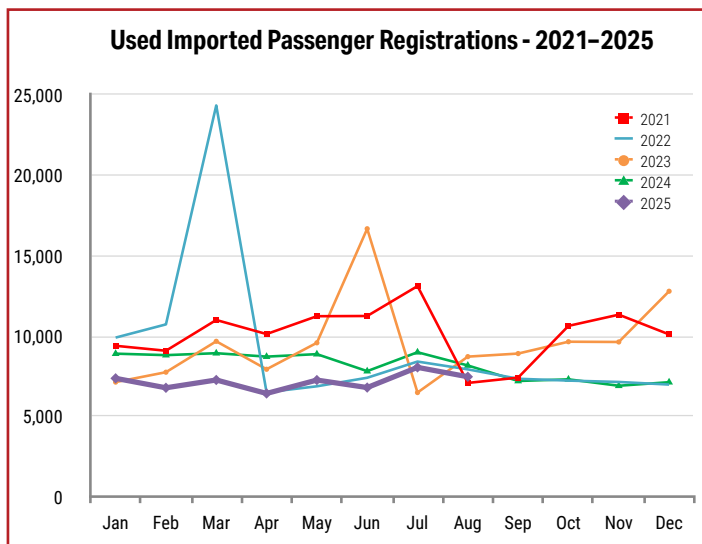
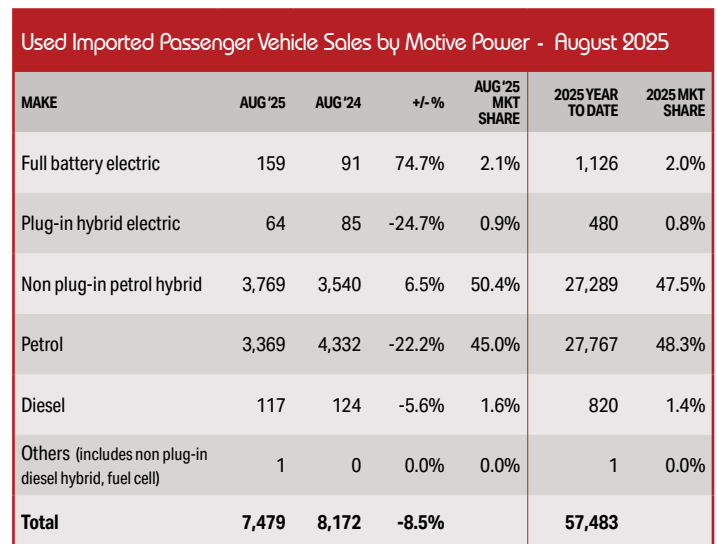
business premises on July 24, 2024, which located further evidence. He was arrested on site.

Nigel Barnes, chief customs officer for fraud and prohibition, said: "This offending is serious not just from a border but also a consumer fraud perspective as the suspect was supplying false import documents and duping buyers by selling older vehicles for higher profit."

Customs added there were no immediate safety concerns with the vehicles concerned and the NZTA would be contacting affected owners.

It was on August 27, 2025, that the NZ Herald reported Customs had confirmed a man and a company named in the civil action were also involved in the case.

He faces two charges of importing prohibited goods, eight charges of forgery and eight charges of dishonestly using a document. A trial has been scheduled for October 2026. 📍

Used Imported Passenger Vehicle Sales by Motive Power - August 2025

MAKE	AUG '25	AUG '24	+/- %	AUG '25 MKT SHARE	2025 YEAR TO DATE	2025 MKT SHARE
Full battery electric	159	91	74.7%	2.1%	1,126	2.0%
Plug-in hybrid electric	64	85	-24.7%	0.9%	480	0.8%
Non plug-in petrol hybrid	3,769	3,540	6.5%	50.4%	27,289	47.5%
Petrol	3,369	4,332	-22.2%	45.0%	27,767	48.3%
Diesel	117	124	-5.6%	1.6%	820	1.4%
Others (includes non plug-in diesel hybrid, fuel cell)	1	0	0.0%	0.0%	1	0.0%
Total	7,479	8,172	-8.5%		57,483	



Checks for vintage cars decrease

Vintage light vehicles and private motorhomes shifted to annual vehicle inspections instead of six-monthly ones on September 1.

Chris Bishop, the Minister of Transport, says the decision to reduce the frequency of warrants of fitness (WOFs) and certificates of fitness (COFs) was made after public consultation on the changes.

He describes the overhaul as common sense and says public support was overwhelmingly in favour of the proposals, which were unveiled in February.

A total of 13,242 submissions

were received and 89 per cent of those supported changing private heavy motorhome COF inspections from six-monthly to annual.

Meanwhile, support for changing the frequency of WOFs for light vehicles more than 40 years old from every six months to yearly came in at 98 per cent.

“Everyone loves spotting a beautifully kept vintage car out for a Sunday drive or cruising around our country in a motorhome is a classic Kiwi dream,” adds Bishop.

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

“Until now, their owners have had to front up for a WOF or COF every six months even though these are driven far less than your average modern car.

“Evidence shows vintage vehicles and motorhomes are half as likely to have a contributing fault in a serious crash even after adjusting for how many of them are on the road.

“When it comes to passing a WOF, vintage vehicles perform better than those under 40 years old. Once a vehicle hits 40, its pass rates go up – proof that hitting middle age isn’t all bad news.”

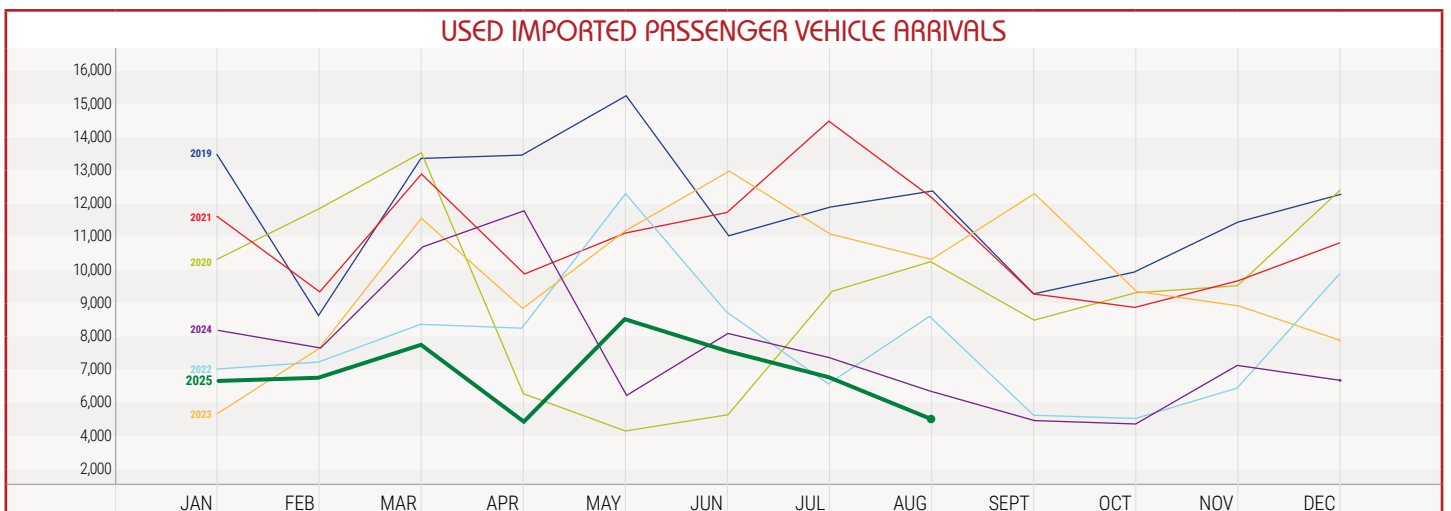
Bishop notes the government

also plans to soon review the frequency and requirements of WOFs and COFs for other light vehicles as part of its land-transport rules reform programme.

CROSSING THE BORDER

There were 5,196 used cars imported during August. It was the second lowest monthly total of 2025 after 4,917 units came in during April.

Last month's total included 5,000 from Japan and 145 from Australia. There were also 19 arrivals from the US, and 16 from the UK and the same amount from other countries. 🌐



COUNTRY OF EXPORT	2025										2024		2023	
	JAN'25	FEB'25	MAR'25	APR'25	MAY'25	JUN'25	JUL'25	AUG'25	AUG MKTSHARE%	2025 TOTAL	TOTAL	MKTSHARE	TOTAL	MKT SHARE
Australia	81	121	100	142	150	138	189	145	2.8%	1,066	1,285	1.5%	1,263	1.1%
Great Britain	14	25	23	12	3	13	14	16	0.3%	120	255	0.3%	272	0.2%
Japan	6,484	6,418	7,469	4,732	8,273	7,668	6,553	5,000	96.2%	52,597	86,040	97.5%	113,462	98.0%
Singapore	21	8	5	15	11	16	23	0	0.0%	99	256	0.3%	250	0.2%
USA	38	20	13	14	14	5	16	19	0.4%	139	249	0.3%	265	0.2%
Other countries	29	10	5	2	6	17	18	16	0.3%	103	170	0.2%	241	0.2%
Total	6,667	6,602	7,615	4,917	8,457	7,857	6,813	5,196	100.0%	54,124	88,255	100.0%	115,753	100.0%

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Support for school changes

The government's proposed overhaul of secondary education has been given a top grade by the Motor Trade Association (MTA).

It says that last month's announcement is an overdue step towards a more relevant, practical and future-focused system for young Kiwis.

"For too long, we've seen young people leave school without the skills or direction needed to thrive in industries such as ours," says James McDowall, head of advocacy.

"These reforms are an opportunity to give students real

experience and qualifications in the trades. With MITO transitioning to industry ownership and leadership, they will be in good hands in the automotive industry."

Under the proposed reforms, by the end of year 12 students could already hold a level-two certificate in trades such as automotive or be well on their way, adds McDowall.

These credits will count towards apprenticeships once they leave school or sign up for further study.

Students can mix vocational and academic subjects, and switch pathways if their interests change.

"The new system sends a strong message that trades are not a

fallback option," says McDowall. "They are challenging, skilled professions that deserve equal recognition and respect."

The MTA believes the government still needs to do its homework in two areas. "Firstly, industry standards boards are going to need a lot more money if they're going to help schools deliver this. Presumably, that will come from budget 2026.

"Secondly is how all this is going to integrate with the other extensive reforms in vocational education.

"The key for industry is to ensure that all stakeholders

are well-represented in these reforms. We urge all employers and stakeholders to have their say. The MTA will be submitting, so members are welcome to send feedback to us."

BOOST IN BUSINESS

There were 16,724 second-hand cars sold by traders to the public in August, which was up 8.3 per cent from 15,436 when compared to the same month in 2024.

Trade-ins totalled 13,864 for an 11 per cent increase from 12,490 over the same timescale.

Private transactions came in at 41,569, down by 2.1 per cent. 📉

SECONDHAND CAR SALES - August 2025

REGION	DEALER TO PUBLIC				PUBLIC TO PUBLIC			PUBLIC TO DEALER		
	AUG '25	AUG '24	+/- %	MARKET SHARE	AUG '25	AUG '24	+/- %	AUG '25	AUG '24	+/- %
Northland	598	536	11.6%	3.6%	2,013	2,028	-0.7%	208	217	-4.1%
Auckland	5,588	5,087	9.8%	33.4%	13,810	14,083	-1.9%	6,310	5,404	16.8%
Waikato	1,842	1,623	13.5%	11.0%	4,113	4,334	-5.1%	1,210	1,073	12.8%
Bay of Plenty	1,144	1,041	9.9%	6.8%	2,822	2,964	-4.8%	627	589	6.5%
Gisborne	133	130	2.3%	0.8%	307	370	-17.0%	57	48	18.8%
Hawke's Bay	607	643	-5.6%	3.6%	1,395	1,503	-7.2%	439	409	7.3%
Taranaki	373	345	8.1%	2.2%	1,166	1,087	7.3%	190	182	4.4%
Manawatu-Wanganui	840	905	-7.2%	5.0%	2,252	2,218	1.5%	811	662	22.5%
Wellington	1,512	1,410	7.2%	9.0%	3,083	3,402	-9.4%	1,098	1,032	6.4%
Tasman	156	151	3.3%	0.9%	565	491	15.1%	9	19	-52.6%
Nelson	141	127	11.0%	0.8%	441	449	-1.8%	165	163	1.2%
Marlborough	127	134	-5.2%	0.8%	363	371	-2.2%	70	55	27.3%
West Coast	82	100	-18.0%	0.5%	287	285	0.7%	19	34	-44.1%
Canterbury	2,408	2,159	11.5%	14.4%	5,684	5,634	0.9%	2,025	2,001	1.2%
Otago	792	688	15.1%	4.7%	2,112	2,024	4.3%	454	442	2.7%
Southland	337	295	14.2%	2.0%	1,029	1,089	-5.5%	172	160	7.5%
Other	44	62	-29.0%	0.3%	127	143	-11.2%	0	0	0.0%
NZ Total	16,724	15,436	8.3%	100.0%	41,569	42,475	-2.1%	13,864	12,490	11.0%

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New Passenger Vehicle Sales by Make - August 2025

MAKE	AUG '25	AUG '24	+/- %	AUG '25 MKT SHARE	2025 YEAR TO DATE	2025 MKT SHARE
Toyota	1,978	1,244	59.0%	24.5%	12,404	20.6%
Mitsubishi	869	713	21.9%	10.7%	6,092	10.1%
Kia	778	842	-7.6%	9.6%	5,824	9.7%
Ford	532	257	107.0%	6.6%	2,675	4.4%
Mazda	513	315	62.9%	6.3%	2,861	4.7%
Suzuki	346	443	-21.9%	4.3%	3,256	5.4%
Hyundai	344	319	7.8%	4.3%	2,265	3.8%
MG	329	298	10.4%	4.1%	2,747	4.6%
GWM	264	204	29.4%	3.3%	2,143	3.6%
Honda	245	281	-12.8%	3.0%	2,350	3.9%
BMW	175	82	113.4%	2.2%	1,227	2.0%
Subaru	166	132	25.8%	2.1%	1,607	2.7%
Nissan	153	187	-18.2%	1.9%	1,739	2.9%
Audi	130	85	52.9%	1.6%	826	1.4%
Lexus	117	86	36.0%	1.4%	1,020	1.7%
Volkswagen	102	215	-52.6%	1.3%	1,151	1.9%
Chery	101	0	10,100.0%	1.2%	229	0.4%
Land Rover	91	78	16.7%	1.1%	784	1.3%
Mercedes-Benz	88	139	-36.7%	1.1%	940	1.6%
Tesla	77	133	-42.1%	1.0%	1,015	1.7%
Jaecoo	69	22	213.6%	0.9%	624	1.0%
Skoda	66	137	-51.8%	0.8%	666	1.1%
Omoda	66	37	78.4%	0.8%	546	0.9%
BYD	62	108	-42.6%	0.8%	1,286	2.1%
Mini	53	40	32.5%	0.7%	650	1.1%
Cupra	50	27	85.2%	0.6%	221	0.4%
Volvo	48	33	45.5%	0.6%	330	0.5%
Porsche	43	35	22.9%	0.5%	374	0.6%
Mahindra	39	24	62.5%	0.5%	228	0.4%
Leapmotor	35	0	3,500.0%	0.4%	147	0.2%
Isuzu	26	19	36.8%	0.3%	135	0.2%
Peugeot	17	49	-65.3%	0.2%	339	0.6%
Polestar	16	23	-30.4%	0.2%	431	0.7%
Alfa Romeo	15	4	275.0%	0.2%	69	0.1%
Jaguar	14	10	40.0%	0.2%	157	0.3%
Jeep	13	20	-35.0%	0.2%	175	0.3%
KGM	8	27	-70.4%	0.1%	289	0.5%
LDV	7	4	75.0%	0.1%	13	0.0%
GMC	5	0	500.0%	0.1%	20	0.0%
Geely	5	0	500.0%	0.1%	53	0.1%
Maserati	4	2	100.0%	0.0%	29	0.0%
Lamborghini	4	4	0.0%	0.0%	35	0.1%
Ferrari	4	2	100.0%	0.0%	28	0.0%
Citroen	4	3	33.3%	0.0%	31	0.1%
Others	17	65	-73.8%	0.2%	247	0.4%
Total	8,088	6,748	19.9%	100.0%	60,278	100.0%

New Passenger Vehicle Sales by Model - August 2025

MAKE	MODEL	AUG '25	AUG '24	+/- %	AUG '25 MKT SHARE	2025 YEAR TO DATE	2025 MKT SHARE
Toyota	RAV4	1,039	541	92.1%	12.8%	6,219	10.3%
Ford	Everest	413	79	422.8%	5.1%	1,713	2.8%
Mitsubishi	ASX	397	285	39.3%	4.9%	2,844	4.7%
Mitsubishi	Outlander	353	221	59.7%	4.4%	2,254	3.7%
Kia	Seltos	315	306	2.9%	3.9%	2,470	4.1%
Toyota	Yaris Cross	181	189	-4.2%	2.2%	784	1.3%
Toyota	Corolla	167	89	87.6%	2.1%	846	1.4%
MG	ZS	160	118	35.6%	2.0%	1,320	2.2%
Hyundai	Tucson	150	98	53.1%	1.9%	855	1.4%
GWM	Haval H6	150	81	85.2%	1.9%	1,124	1.9%
Toyota	Corolla Cross	141	38	271.1%	1.7%	956	1.6%
Suzuki	Swift	131	257	-49.0%	1.6%	1,304	2.2%
Mazda	Mazda3	131	28	367.9%	1.6%	287	0.5%
Mazda	CX-5	130	123	5.7%	1.6%	1,058	1.8%
Toyota	Land Cruiser Prado	128	1	12,700.0%	1.6%	1,138	1.9%
Kia	Stonic	123	169	-27.2%	1.5%	895	1.5%
Hyundai	Kona	104	84	23.8%	1.3%	826	1.4%
Suzuki	Fronx	96	0	9,600.0%	1.2%	486	0.8%
Nissan	X-Trail	95	86	10.5%	1.2%	950	1.6%
Kia	Sportage	94	178	-47.2%	1.2%	809	1.3%
Honda	ZR-V	92	34	170.6%	1.1%	457	0.8%
Mitsubishi	Eclipse Cross	86	154	-44.2%	1.1%	700	1.2%
Kia	Sorento	83	39	112.8%	1.0%	564	0.9%
Mazda	CX-30	83	31	167.7%	1.0%	327	0.5%
Chery	Tiggo 4 Pro	76	0	7,600.0%	0.9%	174	0.3%
Hyundai	Santa Fe	76	107	-29.0%	0.9%	384	0.6%
Toyota	Highlander	76	118	-35.6%	0.9%	732	1.2%
Subaru	Outback	70	65	7.7%	0.9%	770	1.3%
Jaecoo	J7	69	22	213.6%	0.9%	624	1.0%
MG	HS	69	22	213.6%	0.9%	477	0.8%
GWM	Haval Jolion	69	92	-25.0%	0.9%	611	1.0%
Kia	Carnival	69	63	9.5%	0.9%	267	0.4%
Tesla	Model Y	68	116	-41.4%	0.8%	805	1.3%
Mazda	CX-80	67	0	6,700.0%	0.8%	339	0.6%
Honda	CR-V	61	50	22.0%	0.8%	458	0.8%
Toyota	Yaris	60	132	-54.5%	0.7%	494	0.8%
Suzuki	Jimny	60	99	-39.4%	0.7%	610	1.0%
Toyota	Land Cruiser	54	31	74.2%	0.7%	349	0.6%
Volkswagen	Tiguan	53	82	-35.4%	0.7%	540	0.9%
Honda	Jazz	52	67	-22.4%	0.6%	576	1.0%
Toyota	C-HR	50	35	42.9%	0.6%	416	0.7%
Subaru	Forester	49	32	53.1%	0.6%	386	0.6%
Omoda	C5	49	34	44.1%	0.6%	436	0.7%
Mazda	CX-3	47	67	-29.9%	0.6%	322	0.5%
MG	MG 3	46	119	-61.3%	0.6%	758	1.3%
Others		1,956	2,166	-9.7%	24.2%	18,564	30.8%
Total		8,088	6,748	19.9%	100.0%	60,278	100.0%

Franchises land global awards

Dealerships in New Zealand have secured Ford Guest Experience (FGE) recognition in sales and/or after-sales service.

The FGE is a global standard that includes a comprehensive programme covering all aspects of operations and guest experience, and is underpinned by innovative technologies.

To be recognised and accredited requires ongoing investment to deliver a consistent, high-quality customer experience.

Annaliese Atina, managing director of Ford NZ, says: "Congratulations to all our dealer teams that achieved accreditation.

"We're proud to recognise the investment, hard work and dedication in putting the customer at the centre of all you do."

Awards for sales excellence went to Capital City Ford in Lower Hutt, Pacific Motor Group in Whangarei, Dunedin City Ford, Ocean Ford in Whakatane, Central Motor Group in Rotorua and Taupo, Team Hutchinson Ford and Avon City Ford in Christchurch, and – in the Auckland region – North Harbour Ford, John Andrew Ford, and South Auckland Motors in Manukau and Pukekohe.

After-sales recipients were Capital City Ford in Lower Hutt and Wellington, Pacific Motor Group in Whangarei, Team Hutchinson Ford and Avon City Ford in Christchurch,



Ford NZ's award winners for sales and, below, after-sales service



Dunedin City Ford, Central Motor Group in Rotorua, Timaru Motors, and – in Auckland – North Harbour Ford in Glenfield and John Andrew Ford in Grey Lynn.

ALLIES EYE GROWTH

Eagers Automotive hopes to explore "significant opportunities" on both sides of the Tasman after teaming up with the Mitsubishi Corporation.

They have signed a non-binding memorandum of understanding covering the automotive and mobility sectors.

Eagers says the alliance will leverage Mitsubishi's industry experience, and existing OEM

Jump of 20%

Sales of new cars came in at 8,088 last month for an increase of 19.9 per cent compared to 6,748 during August 2024. Toyota's RAV4 topped the ladder with 1,039 registrations. Next up were the Ford Everest with 413, Mitsubishi's ASX and Outlander with 397 and 353 respectively, and Kia's Seltos on 315. August's best-selling marque was Toyota with 1,978. Mitsubishi claimed second on 869 with Kia third on 778.

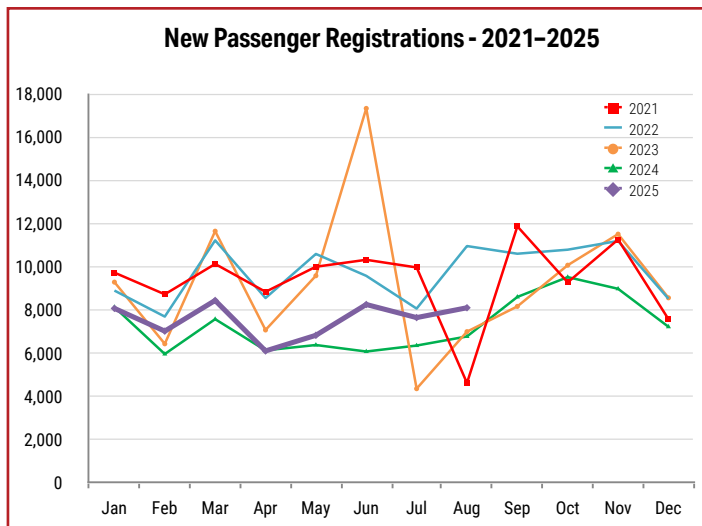
and joint-venture partnerships, to accelerate growth across its new-vehicle dealers and used-car business, which trades as easyauto123 in New Zealand.

There is also scope to explore

business openings in financial services, fleet management and lifecycle ownership solutions for new-energy vehicles.

Keith Thornton, Eagers' chief executive officer, says: "This alliance provides a runway of significant opportunities for growth, leveraging Mitsubishi Corporation's deep industry experience, geographic reach and market insights as a strategic investor and leading operator."

Mitsubishi Corporation is an integrated trading and investment company that develops and operates eight groups across multiple industries with a global network of business partners. 🌐



MAKE	AUG'25	AUG'24	+/- %	AUG'25 MKT SHARE	2025 YEAR TO DATE	2025 MKT SHARE
Full battery electric	384	562	-31.7%	4.7%	4,545	7.5%
Plug-in hybrid electric	432	231	87.0%	5.3%	2,977	4.9%
Non plug-in petrol hybrid	3,293	2,474	33.1%	40.7%	22,959	38.1%
Petrol	3,127	3,028	3.3%	38.7%	25,040	41.5%
Diesel	852	452	88.5%	10.5%	4,757	7.9%
Others (includes non plug-in diesel hybrid, fuel cell)	0	1	-100.0%	0.0%	0	0.0%
Total	8,088	6,748	19.9%		60,278	

Company signs deal for vans

Mercedes-Benz Vans has announced the Keith Andrews Group is managing the distribution and servicing operations of its vehicles in New Zealand under a partnership between the companies.

By leveraging Keith Andrews' understanding of the local market, it says the new model will ensure customers "continue to receive the exceptional service and experience they expect of the brand".

Diane Tarr, managing director of Mercedes-Benz Vans Australia-Pacific, adds: "This transition marks an important step for us in New Zealand and sets the stage for continued success in the market."

"With the Keith Andrews Group's proven market knowledge and commitment to excellence, we're confident our business, operations and customers are in good hands for the future."

Mercedes-Benz notes it remains committed to the Kiwi market and says the deal will open new opportunities for local business development.

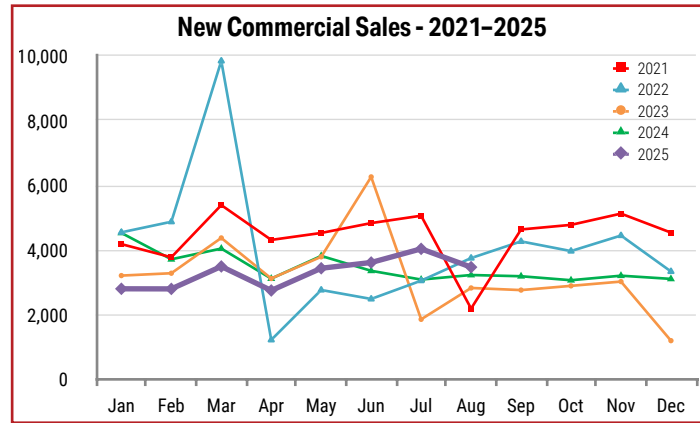
The distribution agreement

means it will still supply vans and parts to this country, ensuring continuous service and customisation options to serve customers through the existing dealer network.

Darren Evans, Keith Andrews' chief executive, says his company is excited to become the general distributor for Mercedes-Benz Vans in New Zealand.

"We are honoured by the trust placed in our team," he adds. "We're committed to delivering great service to our customers and dealer partners, and supporting the continued success of these vehicles."

The group focuses on commercials, and provides



MAKE	AUG '25	AUG '24	+/- %	AUG '25 MKT SHARE	2025 YEAR TO DATE	2025 MKT SHARE
Ford	1,115	926	20.4%	30.6%	7,028	26.5%
Toyota	981	830	18.2%	26.9%	7,303	27.5%
Mitsubishi	262	279	-6.1%	7.2%	2,206	8.3%
Mercedes-Benz	188	107	75.7%	5.2%	529	2.0%
Isuzu	161	178	-9.6%	4.4%	1,045	3.9%
Nissan	145	142	2.1%	4.0%	1,971	7.4%
LDV	115	54	113.0%	3.2%	871	3.3%
Kia	108	0	10,800.0%	3.0%	187	0.7%
Iveco	75	32	134.4%	2.1%	231	0.9%
Fuso	50	84	-40.5%	1.4%	373	1.4%
BYD	49	0	4,900.0%	1.3%	1,421	5.4%
Hino	38	51	-25.5%	1.0%	368	1.4%
Volkswagen	33	114	-71.1%	0.9%	340	1.3%
Scania	33	67	-50.7%	0.9%	260	1.0%
GWM	32	29	10.3%	0.9%	299	1.1%
Renault	28	39	-28.2%	0.8%	182	0.7%
Fiat	26	33	-21.2%	0.7%	237	0.9%
CRRC	26	2	1,200.0%	0.7%	90	0.3%
JAC	17	0	1,700.0%	0.5%	84	0.3%
Hyundai	17	44	-61.4%	0.5%	201	0.8%
Others	149	211	-29.4%	4.1%	1,290	4.9%
Total	3,648	3,222	13.2%	100.0%	26,516	100.0%

MAKE	MODEL	AUG '25	AUG '24	+/- %	AUG '25 MKT SHARE	2025 YEAR TO DATE	2025 MKT SHARE
Ford	Ranger	978	823	18.8%	26.8%	6,203	23.4%
Toyota	Hilux	745	686	8.6%	20.4%	5,706	21.5%
Mitsubishi	Triton	262	279	-6.1%	7.2%	2,205	8.3%
Toyota	Hiace	189	102	85.3%	5.2%	1,288	4.9%
Mercedes-Benz	Sprinter	160	93	72.0%	4.4%	417	1.6%
Nissan	Navara	145	142	2.1%	4.0%	1,971	7.4%
Ford	Transit	137	103	33.0%	3.8%	824	3.1%
Kia	Tasman	108	0	10,800.0%	3.0%	187	0.7%
Isuzu	D-Max	93	102	-8.8%	2.5%	573	2.2%
Iveco	Daily	66	20	230.0%	1.8%	165	0.6%
BYD	Shark 6	49	0	4,900.0%	1.3%	1,421	5.4%
Toyota	Land Cruiser	47	37	27.0%	1.3%	308	1.2%
Isuzu	N Series	39	42	-7.1%	1.1%	226	0.9%
LDV	eDeliver 3	34	0	3,400.0%	0.9%	130	0.5%
GWM	Cannon	32	29	10.3%	0.9%	299	1.1%
CRRC	eS12 Max	26	0	2,600.0%	0.7%	26	0.1%
Fiat	Ducato	26	32	-18.8%	0.7%	229	0.9%
LDV	Deliver 9	24	28	-14.3%	0.7%	207	0.8%
Mercedes-Benz	Vito	22	1	2,100.0%	0.6%	73	0.3%
Isuzu	F Series	22	27	-18.5%	0.6%	187	0.7%
Others		444	676	-34.3%	12.2%	3,871	14.6%
Total		3,648	3,222	13.2%	100.0%	26,516	100.0%

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MAGAZINE

◀ sales and after-sales support for Daimler commercial brands Fuso, Freightliner, Mercedes-Benz Trucks and Mercedes-Benz Vans.

Established in Whangarei in 1991, it has since expanded to include branches in Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga, Rotorua, Napier, Palmerston North, Wellington, Nelson, Christchurch, Timaru, Dunedin and Invercargill.

TOOL FOR MANAGERS
FleetPartners has launched an online vehicle-lease calculator and selector tool to help business owners and fleet managers browse, compare and learn the estimated cost of leasing a range of models. It says the digital tool can provide the estimated bundled costs of more than 600 different new make and model variants. Users can search for vehicles

suitable for their business, and create a shortlist to compare the expected weekly and monthly lease payments.

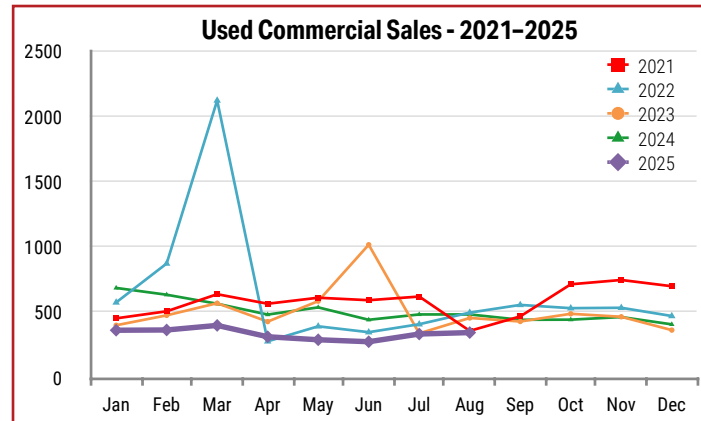
Searches can be done by segments, including utes, vans, sedans and SUVs, and results can be further refined for specific makes, fuel types, drivetrains, number of seats or price range.

Cristy Spencer, head of marketing and channel sales, says the calculator is the latest step in supporting its business customers, marques and dealers through its omni-channel technology solutions.

"Because the lease payment includes exclusive use of the vehicle for the lease's life and most

running costs, such as registration, servicing and replacement tyres, it's now possible to digitally compare potential total cost of ownership.

"Rather than just focusing on the RRP, a bundled lease helps compare the often-forgotten running costs of a vehicle like depreciation to its expected resale value, and how much it costs to service and maintain it while using it for your business."



RANGER TOPS TABLE
There were 3,648 new commercials registered last month for a year-on-year monthly increase of 13.2 per cent from 3,222.

The Ford Ranger topped the ladder with 978 units. Toyota's Hilux came second with 745 and Mitsubishi's Triton was third on 262.

There were 345 used commercials registered in August. ☺

MAKE	AUG '25	AUG '24	+/- %	AUG '25 MKT SHARE	2025 YEAR TO DATE	2025 MKT SHARE
Toyota	145	259	-44.0%	42.0%	1,156	43.0%
Nissan	70	91	-23.1%	20.3%	521	19.4%
Mitsubishi	29	17	70.6%	8.4%	147	5.5%
Hino	21	34	-38.2%	6.1%	176	6.5%
Ford	20	16	25.0%	5.8%	150	5.6%
Isuzu	15	21	-28.6%	4.3%	166	6.2%
LDV	14	1	1,300.0%	4.1%	33	1.2%
Daihatsu	10	3	233.3%	2.9%	47	1.7%
Suzuki	4	0	400.0%	1.2%	52	1.9%
Volkswagen	3	5	-40.0%	0.9%	22	0.8%
UD Trucks	2	4	-50.0%	0.6%	14	0.5%
Iveco	2	0	200.0%	0.6%	12	0.4%
Subaru	1	1	0.0%	0.3%	7	0.3%
Renault	1	2	-50.0%	0.3%	6	0.2%
Mitsubishi Fuso	1	0	100.0%	0.3%	3	0.1%
Mercedes-Benz	1	2	-50.0%	0.3%	20	0.7%
Mazda	1	4	-75.0%	0.3%	26	1.0%
Honda	1	0	100.0%	0.3%	3	0.1%
Holden	1	3	-66.7%	0.3%	16	0.6%
Fuso	1	5	-80.0%	0.3%	15	0.6%
Others	2	19	-89.5%	0.6%	98	3.6%
Total	345	487	-29.2%	100.0%	2,690	100.0%

MAKE	MODEL	AUG '25	AUG '24	+/- %	AUG '25 MKT SHARE	2025 YEAR TO DATE	2025 MKT SHARE
Toyota	Hiace	114	185	-38.4%	33.0%	843	31.3%
Nissan	NV200	30	16	87.5%	8.7%	139	5.2%
Nissan	NV350	19	53	-64.2%	5.5%	191	7.1%
Hino	Dutro	16	24	-33.3%	4.6%	133	4.9%
Fuso	Canter	15	11	36.4%	4.3%	102	3.8%
Ford	Ranger	15	7	114.3%	4.5%	51	2.6%
Toyota	Dyna	14	14	0.0%	4.1%	106	3.9%
Isuzu	Elf	13	16	-18.8%	3.8%	107	4.0%
Nissan	Caravan	13	14	-7.1%	3.8%	98	3.6%
LDV	T60	12	1	1,100.0%	3.5%	24	0.9%
Daihatsu	Hijet	10	3	233.3%	2.9%	47	1.7%
Toyota	Toyocace	8	4	100.0%	2.3%	72	2.7%
Mitsubishi	Fuso	7	1	600.0%	2.0%	16	0.6%
Toyota	Regius	5	30	-83.3%	1.4%	60	2.2%
Nissan	Vanette	4	2	100.0%	1.2%	31	1.2%
Mitsubishi	Triton	4	1	300.0%	1.2%	15	0.6%
Mitsubishi	Rosa	4	5	-20.0%	1.2%	15	0.6%
Toyota	Hilux	4	12	-66.7%	1.2%	50	1.9%
Suzuki	Carry	4	0	400.0%	1.2%	52	1.9%
Ford	Transit	3	2	50.0%	0.9%	35	1.3%
Others		31	86	-64.0%	9.0%	503	18.7%
Total		345	487	-29.2%	100.0%	2,690	100.0%

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Review into business strategy

Sales increase

Imports of new cars in August came in at 7,892. This was up 9.5 per cent from 7,205 in the same month of last year, but 27.7 per cent lower than 10,909 in July.

Registrations of 8,088 new passenger vehicles were completed last month, which was 19.9 per cent more than the 6,748 achieved in August 2024 and 6.2 per cent higher than July's total of 7,613.

The numbers have resulted in the stock of new cars still to be registered falling by 196 to 69,492. Daily sales, as averaged over the previous 12 months, stand at 259 units per day and up from 250 a year ago.

August's results mean stock at-hand has dropped to 268 days if sales continue at the current rate. In the same month of 2024, it stood at 310 days.

The chairman of 2 Cheap Cars says the company is reassessing its strategy so it remains well-positioned to benefit from an upswing in demand despite its balance sheet being strong.

Michael Stiasny adds that as the economic environment eases and consumer confidence returns, the used-vehicle sector is "one of the immediate beneficiaries simply because affordable, reliable cars are a necessity, not a luxury".

However, the company is "realistic about the need to continually flex to meet the market" and fine-tune operations to improve profitability.

He says: "The board and management are focused on ensuring the strategy remains fit for purpose and will not shy away from making changes considered

necessary to create stronger shareholder value."

The first two months of the 2025/26 financial year proved to be challenging as economic conditions remained uncertain.

That said, management expects trading to improve as the cumulative impacts of declining interest rates and greater access to consumer credit take effect.

While 2 Cheap Cars' strategy remains focused on margin optimisation, it is also targeting increased volume through its expanding retail footprint and enhancing customer experience through digital and operational improvements.

A key growth driver will be the new flagship branch in Clemow Road, Sylvia Park.

At close to 5,000sq m with capacity for 150 cars, this site will

materially increase retail capacity and enhance brand visibility in one of Auckland's highest-traffic zones.

As for 2024/25, 2 Cheap Cars' net profit after tax came in at \$3.3 million after contending with what it calls a "turbulent market".

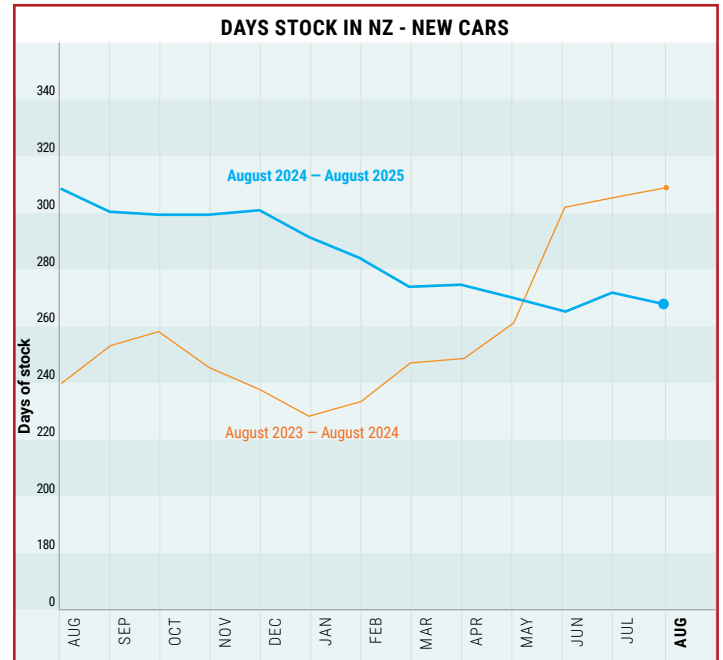
The total was down by \$2.9m, or 46.8 per cent, from \$6.2m in the 2023/24, but in line with guidance and aided by the impact of carbon credits carried forward from prior years. Revenue and income fell by six per cent over the same period to \$82m, gross margin dropped by 14 per cent to \$17.8m and vehicle sales slipped by six per cent to 7,675 units.

David Sena, chief executive, says the company's fundamentals remain strong despite challenging market conditions.

"We've never seen a more turbulent market than this and

Dealer stock of new cars in New Zealand

	CAR SALES			STOCK	DAILY SALES - 12-MONTH AVERAGE	DAYS STOCK AT HAND
	IMPORTED	REGISTERED	VARIANCE			
Aug '24	7,205	6,748	457	77,464	250	310
Sep '24	6,739	8,571	-1,832	75,632	251	301
Oct '24	8,331	9,484	-1,153	74,479	250	298
Nov '24	6,771	8,953	-2,182	72,297	243	298
Dec '24	6,949	7,186	-237	72,060	239	301
Jan '25	5,756	8,053	-2,297	69,763	239	292
Feb '25	5,682	6,993	-1,311	68,452	242	283
Mar '25	6,951	8,411	-1,460	66,992	245	274
Apr '25	6,421	6,083	338	67,330	244	275
May '25	5,708	6,807	-1,099	66,231	246	270
Jun '25	8,391	8,230	161	66,392	252	264
Jul '25	10,909	7,613	3,296	69,688	255	273
Aug '25	7,892	8,088	-196	69,492	259	268
Year to date	57,710	60,278				
Change on last month	-27.7%	6.2%		-0.3%		
Change on Aug 2024	9.5%	19.9%		-10.3%		
	MORE IMPORTED	MORE SOLD		LESS STOCK		



◀ there's no question trading is tough," he adds.

"However, we are a resilient business, underpinned by maintaining prudent inventory levels, a laser focus on cost control and optimising our retail footprint."

The company reports its decline in revenue and income during 2024/25 reflected the country's continued economic downturn, a sharp fall in immigration and consequent softer market demand.

Its decline in gross margin was driven by aggressive discounting to meet "depressed consumer sentiment", but still "represented a robust contribution margin of 21.7 per cent".

"The company's strategic focus on optimised purchasing, and insourcing key compliance and refurbishment activities, has continued to mitigate cost pressures," it says.

"However, a decline in finance and insurance penetration rates, and lack of diversified revenue

streams, has limited the company's ability to fully mitigate the prolonged downturn in the used-car sector."

Year-on-year operating expenses increased by 10 per cent, primarily driven by significantly rising costs of listing fees on third-party platforms.

As a result, 2 Cheap Cars is accelerating investment into "owned" digital channels and will explore potential new third-party platforms to reduce long-term customer acquisition costs.

It adds a substantial part of its business has historically been linked to immigration.

But the prolonged downturn and a decline in net migration, particularly in key urban centres, has contributed to reduced demand and annual profit.

Net operating cash inflow in 2024/25 was \$6.7m, down by \$200,000. It is "well positioned" with inventory valued at \$14.9m, up \$1.1m from the prior year, because

of extra direct purchasing through Car Plus, its Japanese subsidiary.

As of the end of March, 2 Cheap Cars was compliant with all banking covenants, and had cash of \$5.3m and total equity of \$21.1m.

The board has declared a final gross dividend of 2.97 cents per share, bringing total gross dividends in the past fiscal year to 6.03 cents.

PORT INSTALLS SOLAR

Hundreds of solar panels have been fitted to the roof of the car-handling facility at Bledisloe Wharf, Port of Auckland.

The port's first large-scale solar installation features 1,344 panels and can produce around 876MWh of renewable electricity per year.

That's enough to power about 100 homes or provide about six per cent of the port's current grid-energy use.

"This is a significant step towards our own electrification goals," says a spokesman. ☺

Stock tumbles

There were 5,196 used cars imported last month, a drop of 15.6 per cent from August 2024 when 6,156 units crossed our borders.

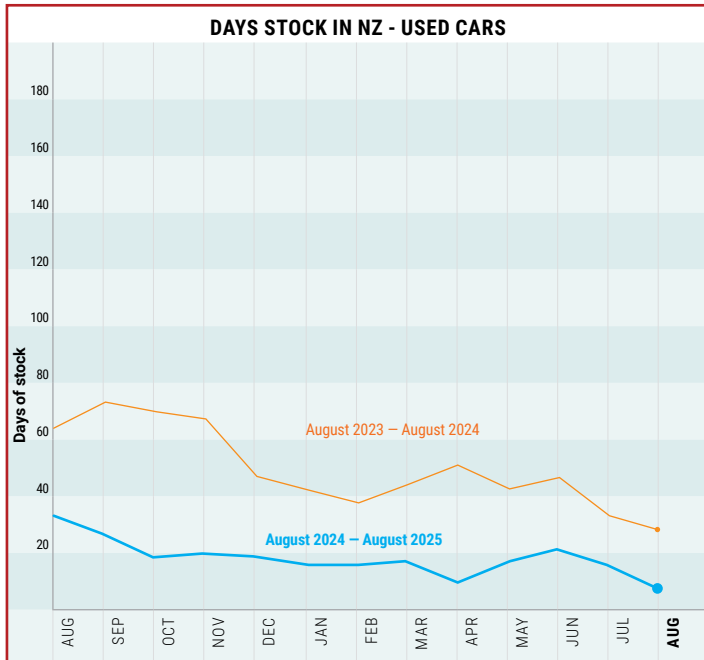
The latest figure was also down by 23.7 per cent from 6,813 in July this year.

Some 7,479 units were registered in August, down 8.5 per cent from 8,172 in the same month of 2024 and a decrease of 7.2 per cent from July's tally of 8,062.

With 2,283 fewer used cars imported than registered last month – the second-biggest drop of the past year – unregistered stock on dealers' yards or in compliance shops came to 1,613 units.

This was 84 per cent lower than the 10,095 units a year ago and down by 58.6 per cent from 3,896 at the end of July.

Average daily registrations for August were 236, compared to 298 a year ago, and there is seven days' stock remaining.



	CARSALES			STOCK	DAILY SALES -12-MONTH AVERAGE	DAYS STOCK AT HAND
	IMPORTED	REGISTERED	VARIANCE			
Aug '24	6,156	8,172	-2,016	10,095	298	34
Sep '24	5,045	7,192	-2,147	7,948	282	28
Oct '24	4,714	7,313	-2,599	5,349	278	19
Nov '24	7,024	6,913	111	5,460	273	20
Dec '24	6,642	7,130	-488	4,972	268	19
Jan '25	6,667	7,372	-705	4,267	264	16
Feb '25	6,602	6,790	-188	4,079	258	16
Mar '25	7,615	7,270	345	4,424	254	17
Apr '25	4,917	6,439	-1,522	2,902	247	12
May '25	8,457	7,264	1,193	4,095	243	17
Jun '25	7,857	6,807	1,050	5,145	240	21
Jul '25	6,813	8,062	-1,249	3,896	238	16
Aug '25	5,196	7,479	-2,283	1,613	236	7
Year to date	54,124	57,483				
Change on last month	-23.7%	-7.2%		-58.6%		
Change on Aug 2024	-15.6%	-8.5%		-84.0%		
	LESS IMPORTED	LESS SOLD		LESS STOCK		

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