

Incentivise Safer Vehicle Policy

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Motor Trade Association of WA Policy Statement

To advance emission reduction and improve road safety, government should offer incentives for owners of aging vehicles and new drivers to acquire newer, safer vehicles.

Recommendations

1. Utilise funds from the Road Trauma Trust Account to incentivise new drivers and owners of ageing vehicles to purchase or upgrade to a safer and more fuel-efficient vehicle.
2. Incentives should include a vehicle buyback scheme to encourage end-of-life vehicle policies.
3. Criteria should be developed in consultation with stakeholders and meet key objectives, such as key safety features and minimum emission standards.

Background

- The Bureau of Infrastructure and Transport Economics report (Jan 2024) confirms that the average age of WA's passenger vehicle fleet is ageing; in 2022, the average age of passenger vehicles was 11.41 years, and in 2024, the average age increased to 11.89 years. WA has the third-oldest vehicle fleet in the country. As the average vehicle age increases, it appears to correlate with an increase in road vehicle-related fatalities.
- High-CO₂-emitting vehicles, often due to age, lack key safety features. Young people and those who cannot afford a newer vehicle often own these vehicles out of necessity and are disproportionately represented in vehicular crashes.
- Single-vehicle fatalities in rural areas remain high, despite a conservative effort to improve road infrastructure. In combination with improved infrastructure, a safer vehicle fitted with relatively basic safety features such as a lane departure warning system may contribute to a reduction in both single-vehicle and head-on crashes.

Rationale

- Road crashes are a leading cause of death and hospitalised injuries in Australia.
- The death toll continues to trend upwards, with driver (passenger vehicles) leading the toll.

- In WA, fatal crashes in 60 to 75 km/h zones had the greatest increase over the last 12 months.
- Multiple vehicle crashes increased by 7.8% nationally.
- Mobile phone use and not wearing a restraint continue to be notable offences.
- Older vehicles may not be fitted with integrated phone connectivity, increasing the likelihood of illegal mobile phone use and driver distraction.
- ANCAP estimates that, in Australia alone, implementing Autonomous Emergency Braking systems will save 580 lives per year, avoid 20,400 serious injuries and 73,340 minor injuries a year— a net benefit of \$1.9 billion.
- Government policy aims to reduce vehicle emissions, but older polluting vehicles contribute more emissions than can be offset by new vehicle emission standards, further exacerbated by an ageing vehicle fleet in WA.

Scope

- The policy focuses on the largest vehicle sector, being passenger light vehicles, because it should provide the largest net benefit to the community and the economy.
- Criteria should be developed in consultation with stakeholders and meet key objectives, such as key safety features and emission standards.
- Manufacturers have actively included key safety features in their vehicles for more than seven years, and although it has only become mandatory recently, it is available across a range of second-hand vehicles.
- Older high-polluting vehicles of little value (e.g. 15 years and over) should be encouraged to be removed from service and only be used for part recycling, aligning with end-of-vehicle-life policies.
- This policy aligns with the Road Safety Commission, Western Australia Road Safety Action Plan 2024-2026 (Safe vehicles).

End.

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