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It's an electric revolution

Northern Territory News, Darwin

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THE END OF THE ROAD FOR GAS GUZZLERS

It's an electric revolution

Dom Tripolone
Richard Blackburn

Electric vehicle sales have exploded by 150 per cent this year, as motorists turn their backs on gas guzzlers.

And the EV revolution is tipped to accelerate further, as a wave of new models hit our shores in late 2023 – and drivers take advantage of recently-tweaked car leasing tax breaks.

The latest sales data released by the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries (FCAI) shows that Australians bought more EVs than hybrid petrol-electric vehicles, with Tesla leading the charge.

The American EV-only brand is the ninth best-selling car brand in the country overall this year, beating big name makers such as Nissan and Volkswagen.

Tesla's move to prioritise the Australian market, while others shored up their home markets, has paid huge dividends.

The brand's Model 3 sedan is the top-selling passenger vehicle in the country, eclipsing popular models such as the Toyota RAV4 and Mazda CX-5.

Only the Toyota HiLux and Ford Ranger utes are more popular with Australian buyers.

Meanwhile, the Tesla Model Y SUV was the fifth best selling vehicle overall last month.

The growth is being driven by the Federal Government's decision to waive the Fringe Benefits Tax for cars leased through work on salary pack-

ages.

The move has effectively made electric vehicles as cheap to lease as their petrol-power equivalents.

National Automotive Leasing and Salary Packaging Association secretary Rohan Martin said there had been a surge in interest since the government legislation passed parliament last year.

"Customer inquiry is probably up around at least three to four-fold, if not more from where it was prior to the introduction," he said.

"This time 12 or so months ago EVs would have been around one to two per cent of

all novated lease sales. That's now probably closer to 10 to 15 per cent," he said.

Cheaper EVs from Chinese brands MG and BYD, which cost less than \$50,000 on the road, have also sparked buyer interest.

FCAI chief executive Tony Weber said the sales reflected Australians' willingness to embrace electric cars at the right price.

"This growth demonstrates that where Australians can afford a battery electric vehicle which suits their lifestyle, they will buy them," Mr Weber said.

The Electric Vehicle Council's Behyad Jafari said demand for EVs was much higher than the sales suggest, because supply had been restricted until recently.

He said EV sales made up only six per cent of sales, but

the demand suggests we should be at 20 or 25 per cent.

"We are seeing more and more models in different segments coming out every year," said Mr Jafari.

"For one in five people electric vehicles are ready for them today. So let's get more in their hands."

He warned that Australia's

love affair with utes was hampering the take up of electric cars.

"Every market has its unique challenges. One of the things that's brought up here is that we have a lot more larger vehicles and utes, but so do markets like the USA and they're further ahead than we are," he said.

"We do know there are more electric utes available in the rest of the world than are available in Australia."

Currently the only electric ute on sale is the circa-\$100,000 LDV eT60 ute that can only tow 1000kg and has a driving range of just 330km.

Both Mr Jafari and Mr Weber said charging infrastructure needed to improve to cater for the surge in EV sales.

"If we want more zero and low emission vehicles on our roads, then we must provide the necessary recharging infrastructure and move to implement an ambitious yet achievable fuel efficiency standard which will encourage manufacturers to allocate more of the limited supply to Australia," said Mr Weber.



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Supply is increasing, though, and major brands including Toyota plan to enter the EV market this year.

WHAT'S COMING

MG4

Budget Chinese brand MG has confirmed the new MG4 will arrive later this year. The hatchback will be priced at more than \$50,000 drive-away and will have a driving range of up to 435km.

TOYOTA BZ4X

Toyota has copped a lot of flak for not having an electric car, but its first model dubbed BZ4X is due in Australia late this year. The RAV4-size electric SUV has been delayed more than a year but when it finally arrives it'll bring eye-catching style, a driving range of 461km and an expected 10-year battery warranty. The price is expected to be steep, though, at about \$75,000 for the single motor versions and \$90,000 for the punchy dual motor variant.

KIA EV9

Kia's new EV9 large electric SUV moves the maker into uncharted territory. The EV9 will be the brand's flagship model and likely its most expensive, eclipsing the circa-\$110,000 EV6 GT launched this year. It'll have a potential driving range of more than 540km.

SUBARU SOLTERRA

Co-developed with Toyota the Solterra is the twin to the BZ4X and is Subaru's first all-

electric vehicle. The mid-size SUV is almost a dead-ringer for Toyota and is even built in the same factory.

FORD MUSTANG MACH-E

Ford upset muscle-car diehards when it slapped a Mustang badge on its new four-door electric SUV. But they won't groan about its performance, as the range-topping dual-motor version launches to 100km/h in about 3.7 seconds.

VOLKSWAGEN ID RANGE

Volkswagen has been selling electric cars in Europe for years, but it's finally bringing a swath of new EVs to Australia in 2024. This includes the ID.Buzz, the reborn version of the iconic Kombi van, the ID.3 small hatchback and ID.4 and ID.5 mid-size SUVs.



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**Daniel Ricciardo
with the Ford
Mustang Mach-E.**