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# A real-world vehicle emissions test program for Australia

**The AAA is calling on the Australian Government to introduce a real-world vehicle emissions test program in Australia to measure the emissions performance and fuel consumption of new vehicles in real world conditions and publish the results through the Government's Green Vehicle Guide website.**

## The need for real-world vehicle emissions testing in Australia

Currently, Australians are not able to make informed decisions about which car will put the least pressure on the family household budget.

The only information available to consumers about a car's fuel consumption and emissions performance comes from standard laboratory tests undertaken to comply with emissions regulations. However, the laboratory test is conducted under controlled conditions and in most cases does not represent how cars perform under real-world driving conditions.

Around the world, research is showing that the gap between lab and real-world test results is widening. This is because as regulations have become more stringent, car-makers have optimised vehicle performance to pass laboratory tests, with no requirement for this to translate into real-world driving.

As a result, rather than driving down emissions and fuel bills, more stringent emissions laws appear to be driving motorists into more expensive cars that don't deliver their promised benefits. Both consumers and the environment are increasingly being short-changed.

## AAA real-world vehicle emissions testing results

In the wake of the 2015 Volkswagen diesel emissions scandal, the AAA engaged engineering firm ABMARC to test 30 popular vehicles to quantify the difference between their stated results from standard laboratory testing and the actual emissions they produce in the real world.

The results reveal:

- Vehicles (not including plug-in hybrids) used up to 59% more fuel than advertised, and 23% more on average
- One plug-in hybrid vehicle used more than four times the petrol claimed
- Vehicles produced up to seven times the legal limit of some noxious emissions
- 11 out of 12 diesel cars tested exceeded legal limits for noxious emissions.

The results show consumers can't just assume a car will use a 'bit more fuel' on the road. Furthermore, and consistent with international research, the results show the gap between how vehicles perform in the lab and on the road is widening as standards have tightened.

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## Benefits of real-world vehicle emissions testing

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Only a testing program conducted in Australia, testing Australian vehicles on Australian roads and using Australian fuels can provide Australian consumers with the accurate information they deserve. It will:

- Empower consumers to make more informed purchasing decisions
- Make choosing a more efficient car easier
- Drive down costs to consumers and deliver meaningful environmental benefits
- Allow policy makers to ensure emissions regulations are having a real-world impact

## Operation of a real-world vehicle emissions test program in Australia

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### How many vehicles would be tested?

The AAA proposes that 60 new vehicle models available in Australia each year be subject to a real-world test. This would allow a comprehensive database to be built up over time. The AAA expects that if 60 vehicles were to be tested each year, results would be available for approximately 60 per cent of new vehicle sales within two years.

### How would the test be conducted?

The AAA proposes the test be modelled on the European standard, but modified slightly to take account of Australian conditions by allowing for variations such as higher urban average speeds, lower highway maximum speeds, and warmer climate. The testing would be conducted over a designated route and last between 90 and 120 minutes.

### Where would the testing be conducted?

Testing must be conducted in Australia. Vehicles sold in Australia must be tested under Australian conditions to ensure Australian consumers have the information they need about how their car will perform.

### How would the results be shared?

Results must be made available through the Government's Green Vehicle Guide Website, alongside laboratory test results. Opportunities for additional consumer channels such as social media and smart phone apps would need to also be considered. The AAA expects the results would be promulgated via commercial websites such as CarSales.com.au and, over time, by vehicle brands.

### What will the program cost and how will it be funded?

The AAA estimates that it would cost in the order of \$3 million per year to test 60 vehicles per year and report the results to consumers through the Government's Green Vehicle Guide.

Ideally, this cost should be covered by Government, given the high level of consumer and environmental benefit that the program would deliver and the information that will flow to policy makers who develop and administer the regulations.

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However, if the Government opts to pass the cost to industry, the AAA estimates that vehicle manufacturers would need to contribute in the order of only \$3.00 from the sale of each of the 1.2 million new cars sold in Australia each year to cover the cost of the program. The \$3.00 per vehicle could be collected at the time of importation, and passed to the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development to administer as part of its annual budget allocation.

Who would undertake the testing?

The testing must be independent of vehicle manufacturer Monday, October 23, 2017s.

The AAA proposes that the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development contract the testing through a competitive tender process. This would ensure that appropriate expertise and equipment is deployed to undertake the testing, at least cost to government.

The entity contracted to undertake the testing would also take carriage of updating and maintaining the Green Vehicle Guide website, and developing other consumer-facing technology applications (e.g. smart-phone apps) to ensure the test results are widely available.

## **Facts about real-world vehicle emissions testing**

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Is real world testing repeatable?

Yes. The results of the AAA testing show repeatability to within an average of 3 per cent. During the test, the car must meet criteria for average speeds and there are restrictions on the duration of stops, otherwise the test is not valid and must be done again.

Can't we just assume all cars use a bit more fuel on the road?

No. The results vary significantly between different makes and models. For some, the fuel consumption is similar to the lab result, however other vehicles had variations as high as 59 per cent. At the moment by simply scaling up evenly across the fleet, consumers would be taking a gamble. In addition, the better performing vehicle brands would receive no recognition.

Won't the results depend on driving style?

No. The real-world tests are modelled on the new European Union real world testing standards, which are designed so that characteristics of the individual driver are largely irrelevant.

Can't we just rely on overseas tests?

No. Cars sold in Australia are not necessarily the same as those sold in other markets. Australian driving conditions are different too, with 50km/h urban speed limits rather than 30km/h, lower highway speeds, and hotter climate. We need a test that shows how cars will perform on Australian roads, in Australian conditions, and using Australian fuels.

## **Find out more**

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For further information please visit: [www.realworld.org.au](http://www.realworld.org.au)