

The Sydney Morning Herald

DRIVE



Value Packed

The guide to driving your new-car dollar further than ever!



INSIDE: Can you save buying prestige?

How much has value changed in 20 years?

Plus the ultimate new-car buyer's guide for everything under \$50k ...

DRIVE
com.au

EDITORIAL

New cars are driving your value dollar further

By James Ward

What is value? Or more specifically, what does value mean in terms of your next new car purchase?

It's an easy question to ask but perhaps a tricky one to answer, mainly because everyone's response is different, and each response is correct. Well... correct for you.

For many buyers, value often means affordable, and affordable often means cheap.

Make no mistake, shopping for the most affordable new car in Australia is something that resonates with a lot of buyers, as the Kia Picanto (from \$18,690 before on-road costs) and MG 3 (from \$21,990 drive away), are runaway best sellers in the city-car sales race.

They aren't the top-selling cars in the country, though, so clearly there's more to value than price.

Can value be measured in another way? For many other buyers, yes.

Value can support the amount of car you get for your spend. Value in power (IM6 Performance costs \$141 per kW), value in equipment (Chery Tiggo 4 costs \$15.66 per kg), value in capability (Volkswagen Crafter costs \$20.26 for every kilo it can carry), and even value in sheer size (an MG3 can be yours for just \$2637.25 per square metre) can help govern where customers see the most benefit for their need.

For many buyers, though, value extends beyond purchase and moves to ownership.

Transparent capped-price service programs, long warranties and even other benefits like complimentary roadside assist help to distribute value across the time you own a car.



A car's value can be measured in many ways, from price and warranty to value in power.

Buying a brand-new Honda Civic for example, knowing that each annual service for the first five years is just \$199, or less than \$20 per month, feels like great value regardless of the purchase price.

Downstream value is a big consideration here too. What that new car will be worth when it's time to move it on is a huge part of many buying decisions. Having longer warranties, agreed future-value finance terms and a robust second-hand market also help define value.

Flip the coin, and even the person buying that "near new" (or NUSED) second-hand car can shift the value dynamic in their favour and be able to buy something that may have been out of reach from the new car showroom, or just feels like better value 18 months or so down the track.

Bottom line is, there's no single answer as to how value can be measured for everyone, which is why in this guide, we're taking a look at affordability and value across the whole new car spectrum.

Tune in for even more value!

Catch Kris Smith and our own James Ward in *Driving Value* – a four-part television series looking at what value and affordability can mean for your next new car.

Driving Value – from October 12 on 9 and 9Now.

Cars are better built, better equipped and better supported than they have ever been, meaning that a new car buyer in 2025 is already at the tip of the value spear. Read on to find out where you should be throwing that spear to find the best value new – or near new – car that is right for you!

Australian Born & Bred...

Learn more

...Since 1928

For over 95 years Century has been designing and manufacturing batteries in Australia to better suit our harsh climate and unique conditions. We pride ourselves in offering one of the widest selections of products in the industry which continues to set new standards in performance and technology.

For more information call **13 22 87** or visit **centurybatteries.com.au**

CB123-3913

THE RANGE WALK

Why base-level models are anything but basic in 2025

By James Ward

Remember the “good old days” where an entry-level car came with a base engine, manual transmission, wind-up windows and maybe an AM/FM stereo? To get more performance, better materials and even a couple more speakers, you had to work your way up the range.

As technology took over, the “range walk” was also seen as a way to “throttle” the lower-specification cars by offering limited safety equipment or perhaps fewer gizmos and features.

Everyone knew it too, as the interior would be awash with button-blanks, teasing you that in a higher-grade model, you would have something fun to press.

Today, we still have expansive vehicle ranges with varying levels of equipment, but things have shifted into a need-v-want position, with most entry-level vehicles offering a staggering amount of standard equipment, particularly in the safety arena.

Sure, it may have cloth seats and small wheels, but in most cases your 2025 base model has absolutely everything you need, with the tease of a panoramic sunroof or powered tailgate further up the range tickling the desire of “want”.

This extends to the driveline now, where we now often see parity of hybrid options and power outputs spread across the range.

Take Australia’s best-selling car, the Toyota RAV4, for example.

Between the entry-level GX 2WD and range-topping Edge eFour AWD is a \$16,100



A far cry from the basic shells of yesteryear, most base models now have all you need,

price gulf. Yet, those opting for the \$42,260 (before on-road costs) RAV4 GX still score an efficient petrol-electric hybrid powertrain, auto transmission, LED headlamps, power windows, dual-zone climate control, satellite navigation, wireless smartphone projection, and all the safety and driver assistance technology you’ll find on the \$58,360 Edge.

No, you don’t get a sunroof; yes, your wheels and touchscreen are smaller; but you

get everything you need, and can then choose the extra items you want, to fit in with your budget of course.

If value is paramount to your next new car purchase, don’t discount the entry-level models in any range of vehicles.

Take the time to cross-reference the specification and inclusions of all the cars that interest you and find your perfect balance between need and want.



Holden Commodore SL Wagon



Holden Commodore Executive Sedan



Holden Commodore Executive Wagon



Holden Commodore Berlina Sedan



Holden Commodore Berlina Wagon

Australia’s most affordable in 2025

Most affordable car in Australia

Kia Picanto Sport manual @ **\$18,690** + on-road costs (ORC)

Most affordable automatic car in Australia

MG 3 Vibe @ **\$21,990** drive-away (DA)

Most affordable SUV

Chery Tiggo 4 & Mahindra 3XO @ **\$23,990** DA

Most affordable medium-sized SUV

MG HS Vibe @ **\$33,990** DA

Most affordable ute

Toyota HiLux Workmate 4x2 CC @ **\$27,730** + ORC

Most affordable 4x4 double-cab ute

GWM Cannon Premium @ **\$40,490** DA

Most affordable 4WD SUV

Suzuki Jimny Lite manual @ **\$30,490** + ORC

Most affordable 4WD diesel SUV

Mahindra Scorpio @ **\$41,990** DA

Most affordable EV

BYD Dolphin Essential @ **\$29,990** + ORC

Most affordable 7-seater

Mahindra XUV700 @ **\$39,990** DA

Most affordable PHEV

Chery Tiggo 7 SH Urban @ **\$39,990** DA

Most affordable Japanese car

Suzuki Swift hybrid manual @ **\$24,490** + ORC

Most affordable European car

VW Polo Life @ **\$30,790** + ORC

Most affordable sports car

Mazda MX-5 manual @ **\$42,735** + ORC

Most affordable V8

Ford Mustang GT manual @ **\$83,990** + ORC

At \$18,690 before on-road costs, the Kia Picanto Sport manual is Australia’s most affordable new car – so why don’t we all drive one? Everyone is shopping with different needs and requirements, so here is your dollar entry-point to 15 types of current new cars.



The most affordable European car: VW Polo Life



The most affordable V8: Ford Mustang GT manual.

COMPARISON REVIEW

How far has value come in 20 years? 2005 Hyundai Getz v 2025 Kia Picanto

By James Ward

Just how much have things changed in 20 years? I mean, I've gone grey but we still eat eggs for breakfast, watch TV (albeit bigger, flatter ones) and apparently still listen to Jimmy Barnes who had a number one album in 2005 as well as another this year.

My point is, we aren't flying around with jetpacks, holidaying on the moon or teleporting to the office. Life, as we know it, has been ticking along quite sedately for the past 7300-odd days. Well... sedately and more expensively.

Over the past two decades, Australia's consumer price index (CPI) has climbed 72 per cent, which means, on average, things cost a little less than double what they did when you were lining up at Hoyts to see the final showdown between Anakin and Obi Wan in *Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith*.

Bread, for instance, has climbed 90 per cent from \$1.58 a loaf to \$3.00 now, yet milk is only up 27 per cent (\$1.40 a litre to \$1.78 a litre) and petrol is up just 59 per cent from 114.7c/L in 2005 to 182.2c/L today.

House prices... yeah, these are up from a median of \$350,000 in 2005 to \$827,000 in 2025, a rise of 136 per cent, but prices of cars – in particular, our 20-years apart hatchbacks pictured here – have barely changed at all.

Back in 2005, the Hyundai Getz was one of Australia's most affordable new cars.

Priced from \$13,490 before on-roads, the Getz was available as a three or five-door hatchback and competed with cars like the Holden Barina, Ford Fiesta and Australia's cheapest new car at the time, the \$11,490 Daihatsu Charade.

Buyers could choose from a variety of trim grades, automatic or manual transmission, and, wildly (due to mid-life updates), a choice of a 1.3, 1.4, 1.5 or 1.6-litre engine depending on the model.

The eight paint options were all offered at no cost, which is good because if you bought some of the lower-spec models, you already needed to spend an additional \$2400 on a safety pack just to score an ABS (anti-lock braking system).

Let's step back in time to 2005, then, and our little silver, three-door, automatic Getz is priced at \$15,380.

It is fitted with the 70kW/126Nm 1.4-litre engine, and at 1121kg on the scales, has a power-to-weight ratio of 62.4kW/t.

For your spend, there is a six-speaker CD-player sound-system, power windows and mirrors, keyless entry, and air-conditioning – impressively standard across the range.

Safety equipment includes driver and passenger airbags and, well, very little else by today's standards.

That \$2400 safety option – pushing the price to \$17,780 – feels like a true remnant of "stripped down base models", particularly considering the first production car fitted with ABS (the W126 Mercedes-Benz S-Class) hit the road in 1978.

Fast-forward to our 2025 Kia Picanto Sport manual. This is officially Australia's most affordable new car in 2025, and it's even in no-cost-white paint!

Priced from \$18,690 before on-road costs, the Picanto represents a 64 per cent increase in the price of the 2005-most-affordable Charade (\$11,490), but only a 32 per cent increase (in \$20,290 automatic form) against its Korean counterpart Getz.



Australia's most affordable car in 2005 was the Hyundai Getz (left), and today it is the Kia Picanto

Note that if you include the safety pack, this drops to just a 14 per cent increase over 20-years.

Mechanically, the Picanto's 62kW/122Nm 1.2-litre engine is down on size and output of the Getz, but the Kia is a whopping 145kg lighter, making the all-important power-to-weight ratio much the same – 62.4kW/t in the Hyundai and 63.5kW/t in the Picanto.

Yes, the Kia is physically smaller (23cm shorter, 7cm narrower, 5.5cm shorter between the wheels) and has a slightly smaller boot (255 litres v 288 litres), but it still manages to offer five doors, as well as more front head room (1005mm to 995mm) and leg-room (1085mm to 1048mm).

All this said, we're arguing millimetres and percentage points. Basically, from an

engineering and physical standpoint, these cars haven't changed at all in 20 years.

Turning the lens to infotainment, and the Kia with wireless smartphone projection capability and a digital instrument cluster, feels obviously more modern than the Getz.

This is an area where we have made huge leaps forward in terms of technology, but even so, the analogue dashboard in the Hyundai still provides clear information, and the touchscreen in the Kia still receives the same AM/FM radio frequencies.

To be fair, the whiz-bang functionality of voice-to-text and live-traffic navigation you'll find in the Kia is actually powered by your smart phone rather than the car. So rather than penalise the Hyundai for existing before the iPhone was invented, we

When did technology enter the market?

We take much of the technology found on today's affordable new cars for granted, but it wasn't always so accessible. Here is where and when popular technologies first entered the showroom.



Mercedes-Benz demonstrates its ABS back in 1978.

ABS (anti-lock braking system)

1978 Mercedes-Benz S-Class

Driver airbag

1981 Mercedes-Benz S-Class

Curtain airbags

1994 Volvo 850

Full LCD instrument display

2001 Lexus LFA

Infotainment

2002 BMW 7 Series

BLS (blind-spot monitor)

2007 Volvo S80

AEB (autonomous emergency braking)

2009 Volvo XC60

Apple CarPlay

2014 Ferrari FF

Android Auto

2015 Hyundai Sonata



Vehicle control and accident prevention technologies that are now standard in nearly every new car (ABS and ESC) were not even present in all model grades of the Getz.

Sport manual. While they're remarkably similar, they're worlds apart when it comes to safety.

can remember the joy of hanging up a call by slamming closed the clamshell case of a Motorola Razr – and note that, as in 2025, using a mobile phone while driving your Getz was illegal in 2005.

Driving our two hatchbacks feels remarkably similar too.

Both cars need to see their little four-cylinder engines revved enthusiastically to get the best punch of performance, although the fuel consumption of the Kia (5.4L/100km claimed) is significantly better than the Hyundai (7L/100km claimed).

Running each car for 15,000km at its respective fuel price “at the time” would see you spend about \$1200 a year on the Hyundai in 2005 and \$1475 on the Kia today. Taking that 72 per cent CPI growth into

consideration, and today's drivers are about \$200 a year better off.

Both cars are light and fun to zap around town. It's remarkable how entertaining the Hyundai still is, having no issue in keeping up with traffic flow or navigating urban streets. Both cars manage variable quality roads and speed humps well enough, and are even happy cruising with heavy traffic at freeway speeds.

Vision, steering feel and even ergonomics feel as though they have progressed in stasis since 2005, with both cars feeling easy and accessible for all drivers.

So, you ask, what, if anything, has changed since YouTube was founded (yes, it has been that long).

One word. Safety.

As noted earlier, the Hyundai Getz has just two airbags (front driver and passenger) to the Kia's six (dual front, front-side and full-length head), plus vehicle control and accident prevention technologies that are now standard in nearly every new car (ABS braking and ESC – electronic stability control) were not even present in all model grades of the Getz.

The Kia doesn't stop there, though.

Australia's cheapest car also offers a rear-view camera, autonomous emergency braking (AEB), forward collision alert, rear cross-traffic alert, lane departure warning, lane-keeping assistance, blind-spot monitoring, even a driver attention monitor and door-open warning that advises occupants of an approaching vehicle so they don't step out into traffic.

The leaps and bounds made in both passive and active safety technology, as well as the accessibility of these systems, would have seemed like science fiction back in 2005. In fact, most didn't even exist when the Getz rolled out of the showroom, with the Volvo XC60 the first car to enter the market with AEB, in 2009.

It's not just the technology, either. Even a small car like the Picanto is fundamentally safer in an accident than many older vehicles. Test data shows deformation in the

Hyundai's floor that moved the pedals 12cm-rearward within the driver's footwell. Further, the steering wheel was pushed back 6cm and the windscreen (A-pillar) back nearly 7cm.

While these may not seem like big numbers, the Kia's pedals moved less than 4cm rearward, the steering wheel moved 4cm forward (and 3cm down – away from the driver), and the A-pillar moved less than 2cm backward.

Essentially, due to the addition of technology, more advanced design principles and the use of stronger safety cells, the amount of protection provided by a modern car – even a small one – compared to one 10, let alone 20 year old, is staggering.

Look at all of this under the lens of value, and the fact the Kia is only marginally more expensive than the Getz to buy, irrespective of CPI, shows just how much more car your dollar will afford today.

Even on a value-conversion scale, the Hyundai's \$15,000 price point would only be \$21,500 today – placing it in line with an automatic Picanto or MG3, and while the mechanical and drivable nature of a modern city-friendly hatch hasn't changed much, the sheer volume of safety technology in even the most humble car on the market makes a new car now better value than it ever has been.



My, how you
have grown!

Making cars safer, and offering more value, often makes them bigger.
Just how much have these popular cars grown in size over their generations?

VOLKSWAGEN GOLF

		LENGTH	WIDTH	WEIGHT
1974	MK1	3710	1610	970
1983	MK2	4040 (8.9%)	1680 (4.3%)	1032 (6.4%)
1991	MK3	4020 (-0.5%)	1695 (0.9%)	1057 (2.4%)
1997	MK4	4149 (3.2%)	1735 (2.4%)	1184 (12.0%)
2004	MK5	4204 (1.3%)	1759 (1.4%)	1240 (4.7%)
2008	MK6	4631 (10.2%)	1781 (1.3%)	1400 (12.9%)
2015	MK7	4657 (0.6%)	1799 (1.0%)	1326 (-5.3%)
2022	MK8	4286 (-8.0%)	1789 (-0.6%)	1304 (-1.7%)
CHANGE IN 51 YEARS		15.5%	11.1%	34.4%

TOYOTA RAV4

		LENGTH	WIDTH	WEIGHT
1995	GEN-1	4125	1695	1259
2000	GEN-2	4245 (2.9%)	1785 (5.3%)	1250 (-0.7%)
2005	GEN-3	4255 (0.2%)	1735 (-2.8%)	1410 (12.8%)
2013	GEN-4	4570 (7.4%)	1845 (6.3%)	1615 (14.5%)
2019	GEN-5	4600 (0.7%)	1855 (0.5%)	1670 (3.4%)
CHANGE IN 30 YEARS		11.5%	9.4%	32.6%

Left: The boxy Volkswagen Golf of 1974 has matured into a sleek and curvy automobile.



SHOPPING FOR VALUE

How to make your first new car purchase experience a good one

By James Ward

No matter where or when you are in life, buying your first brand-new car is exciting. You chose the brand, the model, the colour, the extras. You are the first person to breathe in that new-car smell, and the first to take to the streets. What's not to like?

The thing is, the excitement can cloud such mundane things as your purchase price, finance rate or service costs, and no-one wants to suffer buyer's remorse when the cold financial reality of your new car hits home.

Here are our tips on how you can enjoy this exciting experience while keeping a clear head.

Do your research

Of course we are going to say this. The team at *Drive* reviews every new car on the market and can provide unparalleled insight into which models, variants and options should be on your shopping list.

Do some reading; ask some questions – askdrive@drive.com.au – and go into the dealership with notes on which models, trim grades and options you are considering. It's OK to step up to a larger model or higher-specification variant when you see them, so long as you know what you are getting into!

Shop around

Your local dealer may be just around the corner, but it never hurts to ask around at other sites to see if they can offer you a sharper deal.

What cars are in stock?

Dealers will often be more motivated to sell a car they already have on site rather than order a new one, so unless you are crafting a one-of-one personalised masterpiece, ask to see what the brand has in stock as you may often be able to save money as well as be in your car just a little bit faster.

The last day of the month

It's an oldie, but a goodie. Buying a car on the last day of the month can help both the



You can get the keys of your new car a little quicker if you're less picky and are prepared to buy one the dealer already has on site.

dealer and the brand with their sales volume reporting, so they may want to work a little harder just to close a deal.

Be prepared

Do you need to check if your child seats or golf clubs will fit? Is there enough room for teenage children in the back seat, or is the boot at a height your labrador can easily reach? Bring these things with you – yes, even the dog.

Real-world testing and checking at the dealership can provide immense benefit before you sign on the dotted line.

Ask about service costs

Ongoing maintenance is a fact of motoring life, and with nearly all brands offering transparent pricing and maintenance schedules, you can see everything on the brand's website before you head to the dealer.

Sometimes brands will offer service packages to cover three or five years, so use this as a potential negotiation point to roll into the deal.

Careful with accessories

If you are shopping close to the luxury car tax threshold (\$80,567 for most cars or \$91,387 for fuel efficient ones), the LCT calculation is based on the purchase price of the car rather than the list price. So if you add a towbar or other accessory that pushes your invoice above the LCT threshold, you can end up paying more tax than if you bought the accessories separately.

Check warranty stipulations

If you are using your new car for some work-related duties, like rideshare or courier jobs, you may be covered under a commercial warranty as opposed to a regular consumer one. These tend to have different rules

around mileage or service intervals, so ask the questions and check the fine print to see if this applies to you.

Get financial advice

Ask for details around finance figures and payment schedules before committing to your purchase, and run them by your accountant or financial advisor. While it may sound obvious, different finance options work differently for different people – so check with a professional as to what suits your needs and situation best.

Take a friend with you

This is potentially the most important tip. Take someone with you who isn't as emotionally excited about the purchase as you are – sometimes the voice of reason can help you make a brilliant decision, or save you from a bad one!

SERVICE COSTS

Keeping you on the road need not break the bank

By Zane Dobie

Gone are the days when you rolled into a dealership and came away shocked at the cost of a simple service. Now, pre-paid, capped and disclosed amounts are all part of the buying process for a brand-new car.

The brands outlined here offer some of the most affordable capped-price servicing programs in Australia.

Genesis

Hyundai's luxury subsidiary, Genesis, has long held the title as one of the cheapest cars to service in Australia, offering five years or 130,000 kilometres of free servicing.

That extends to all Genesis vehicles and remains with the vehicle even after resale.

Honda

Honda offers some of the cheapest new cars to service in Australia with its capped-price service guarantee. If you bought a Honda on or after July 1, 2021, your first five service visits will cost just \$199 each.

Toyota

The Japanese brand caps the price of your first five services, with the little Yaris coming in the cheapest at just \$250, while the large RAV4 is capped at \$270 through

one of the hundreds of Toyota dealerships around the country.

However, you can expect to pay slightly more for larger vehicles in the range.

By having your Toyota serviced at a Toyota dealership, you will also extend the warranty of your driveline (engine, gearbox and differential) from five years to seven.

Chery

Chery offers competitive capped-price servicing, bringing its growing fleet, made up mostly of SUVs, into the top five of the cheapest cars to service in Australia.

Most of its range, including the Tiggo 7, Tiggo 8, Omoda 5 and C5, all fall under \$300 for the first five services, with prices ranging from \$280 to \$299.

Mitsubishi

Mitsubishi may not have the cheapest cars to service out of the dealership, but the brand offers an industry-leading 10 years of capped-price servicing for cars built after October 1, 2020.

If you jump into an Outlander, for instance, you can expect the first five services to cost between \$320 and \$370. Major services, usually beyond the capped-price timeline of most brands, and due after that initial five-year period, are capped at \$680.



Many car brands offer attractive capped-price services, from as low as \$199.

NUSED CARS

Aged like a fine wine – why a near-new prestige car can bring huge value benefits

By James Ward

Sometimes the things we really want often feel just out of reach. That fabulous holiday, those stylish new shoes, maybe even that brand new prestige car.

But where there is a will, there is a way, and amazing holidays can often be found on sale, those shoes may be sourced from an outlet and that new prestige car doesn't stay new forever.

The rise of certified pre-owned programs, where low-kilometre, near-new cars are given a thorough check and supported by manufacturer warranties can make that out-of-reach new car a much more achievable used one.

Big prestige players like Mercedes-Benz, BMW, Porsche and Volvo all offer a certified pre-owned program, but so do big volume brands like Toyota and Hyundai, making the move from new to "NUSED" a very compelling one, particularly in the value stakes.

Purchasing a certified pre-owned car can save thousands, or even tens-of-thousands from the new car price, while offering a car that has been checked and, well, certified, by the manufacturer to be as good as it was when new.

Each program is different, but usually the cars need to meet specific criteria of having been sold and serviced through a branded dealer, and they must be under a certain age and odometer reading, and then pass a rigorous check.



Mercedes-Benz will add two years to remaining warranty periods on certified pre-owned models such as the GLC 200 (top), while Volvos come with a minimum 12 months warranty.

Volvo, for example, will provide a minimum 12 months warranty where Mercedes-Benz will add an additional two-years of warranty support to any remaining factory coverage.

The following brands support a certified pre-owned program, so if you feel that brand new car, prestige or not, is just beyond your budget, perhaps one that's been around the block a couple of times could be just the ticket!

- Aston Martin Timeless
- Audi Approved
- Bentley Certified by Bentley
- BMW Premium
- Cupra Approved
- Ferrari Approved
- Genesis Certified
- Hyundai Promise
- Jaguar Approved
- Lamborghini Selezione
- Land Rover Approved
- Lexus Certified
- Maserati Certified
- Mercedes-Benz Certified
- Mini Next
- Nissan Intelligent Choice
- Porsche Approved
- Rolls-Royce Provenance
- Skoda Certified
- Tesla Certified
- Toyota Certified
- Volkswagen Certified
- Volvo Selekt

DRIVE NUSED™

Nused /nju:zd/
Adjective

CARS FOR SALE

A new way to shop new and quality used cars in stock from dealers today.

- NEW AND QUALITY USED CARS
- MANUFACTURER WARRANTY EST.*
- NO PRIVATE SELLERS
- CARS AVAILABLE & IN STOCK NOW
- SHOP NUSED ONLY AT DRIVE.COM.AU

Great Price

Warranty Remaining

Price Drop

Shop cars at
drive.com.au/cars-for-sale



*NUSED™ cars include estimated remaining manufacturer's warranty, based on the car's age and kilometres, using information provided to Drive. Please confirm with the selling dealer prior to purchase.

Your 2025 Affordable Car Buyers' Guide

Those buying a new car with a strict budget need not worry. As detailed by our list of models priced below the \$50,000 barrier, choice at the affordable end of the market is abundant.

Far from a few years ago, when it seemed every new-car price was skyrocketing following COVID-19 supply restraints, there is now a suite of options available to consumers. Whether you're chasing adventure in a 4x4, practicality in a

medium SUV, or thrills in a sports car, the sub-\$50,000 price bracket caters to a wide range of buyers.

Our list is broken down by vehicle size and powertrain to help you understand the breadth of options. Our price guide details the manufacturer's recommended retail price (unless otherwise stated 'drive-away'), and the vehicles are 'priced from', meaning there could be multiple variants priced beneath our \$50,000 cut-off.

CAR	SIZE	FUEL	PRICE
DA = DRIVE AWAY			

Under \$20,000



Kia Picanto Hatchback Petrol **\$18,690**
Where buyers not all that long ago were afforded plenty of choice in the Under \$20,000 bracket, today just a single model comes in under what is something of a psychological barrier. Lauded for its compact dimensions, which make it perfect for zipping around town, the Picanto doesn't want for the kind of equipment and technology buyers expect today.

\$20,000-\$25,000



MG 3 Hatchback Petrol **\$21,990 (DA)**
Once one of Australia's cheapest cars, the new MG 3 moves the brand to a more mainstream position. A thorough rethink of the city car segment sees the new model equipped with competitive safety and technology.

Hyundai Venue Light SUV Petrol **\$23,000**

A new car for less than your lunch

Just how much does a **\$25,000** car cost you? Less than you'd probably be paying for lunch and a coffee. Using a standard car finance loan, with no deposit and no balloon, at **6.5 per cent** interest over five years, you're looking at paying about **\$490** a month, or roughly **\$16 per day**. Increase your budget to a \$30k car and you'll be paying about \$590 a month or **\$19 per day**.

CAR	SIZE	FUEL	PRICE
-----	------	------	-------



Chery Tiggo 4 Light SUV Petrol **\$23,990 (DA)**
The Chery Tiggo 4 reignites Australia's budget car market with sharp pricing, high levels of equipment, a seven-year warranty, and an interior that defies its price.

Mahindra XUV3XO Small SUV Petrol **\$23,990 (DA)**
Suzuki Swift Hatchback Petrol **\$24,490**

\$25,001-\$30,000

Kia Stonic	Light SUV	Petrol	\$25,660
Mitsubishi ASX	Small SUV	Petrol	\$26,740
Mazda 2	Hatchback	Petrol	\$26,990
GWM Haval Jolion	Small SUV	Petrol	\$26,990 (DA)
MG ZS	Small SUV	Petrol	\$26,990 (DA)
Toyota HiLux	Ute 4x2	Petrol	\$27,730



Toyota Yaris Hatchback Hybrid **\$28,990**
A mainstay of the affordable new car diaspora, the Toyota Yaris jumped up in price dramatically when the new model was released in late 2020. But it also came with a vast swag of new equipment and technology, bringing the once cheap-and-cheerful into line with modern expectations.

Nissan Juke Light SUV Petrol **\$29,165**
Hyundai i30 Sedan Sedan Petrol **\$29,250**

CAR	SIZE	FUEL	PRICE
-----	------	------	-------



BYD Dolphin	Hatchback	Electric	\$29,990
<i>Australia's most affordable EV, the BYD Dolphin is an easy recommendation for buyers looking to go electric on a budget. Plenty of standard equipment is the icing on the cake.</i>			
Chery C5	Small SUV	Petrol	\$29,990 (DA)
Chery Tiggo 7	Medium SUV	Petrol	\$29,990 (DA)
Suzuki Fronx	Small SUV	Petrol	\$29,990 (DA)

\$30,001-\$35,000

Mazda CX-3	Light SUV	Petrol	\$30,370
Suzuki Jimny	Small SUV	Petrol	\$30,490



Kia K4	Sedan	Petrol	\$30,590
<i>With SUVs taking over the road and dealership forecourts, it's refreshing to see there's still appetite for small sedans like the Kia K4. Brimming with standard equipment and backed by Kia's standard seven-year warranty, the K4 is the perfect antidote to a world of SUVs.</i>			
Volkswagen Polo	Hatchback	Petrol	\$30,790
Mazda 3	Hatchback	Petrol	\$31,310
Toyota Yaris Cross	Light SUV	Hybrid	\$31,790
Skoda Fabia	Hatchback	Petrol	\$31,990



Renault Duster	Small SUV	Petrol	\$31,990 (DA)
<i>A newcomer to Australia, the Renault Duster brings rugged styling and pleasing on-road manners and in the case of 4x4 models, off-road capability.</i>			

Drive-away costs explained

How much are on-road costs? It depends on your purchase price, the dealer and your location, but you can roughly expect to pay about **\$4000** on top of the purchase price for a **\$30,000** car. On-road costs include 12-months registration, 12-months compulsory third-party insurance, dealer delivery and vehicle preparation fees and government stamp duty.

CAR	SIZE	FUEL	PRICE
-----	------	------	-------



Toyota Corolla	Hatchback	Hybrid	\$32,110
<i>A mainstay of the affordable car market since it first arrived here in 1968, the Corolla has become Australia's favourite small car with a solid reputation for affordability and reliability. Over 50 million have been sold around the world over its lifespan.</i>			
Subaru Impreza	Hatchback	Petrol	\$32,490
Isuzu D-Max	Ute 4x2	Diesel	\$32,700
Hyundai Kona	Small SUV	Petrol	\$32,950
MG 5	Sedan	Petrol	\$32,990 (DA)
Kia Seltos	Small SUV	Petrol	\$33,140



Skoda Kamiq	Small SUV	Petrol	\$33,990 (DA)
<i>Compact on the outside, but surprisingly spacious on the inside, the Skoda Kamiq offers a long warranty and polished presentation in the small SUV segment.</i>			
Skoda Scala	Hatchback	Petrol	\$33,990 (DA)
MG HS	Medium SUV	Petrol	\$33,990 (DA)
Mazda CX-30	Small SUV	petrol	\$34,060
Mitsubishi Triton	Ute 4x2	Petrol	\$34,490
Nissan Qashqai	Small SUV	Petrol	\$34,665
Volkswagen T-Cross	Light SUV	Petrol	\$34,990
Honda HR-V	Small SUV	Petrol	\$34,900 (DA)
Jaecoo J7	Medium SUV	Petrol	\$34,900 (DA)
Renault Koleos	Medium SUV	Petrol	\$34,990 (DA)

\$35,001-\$40,000

Subaru Crosstrek	Small SUV	Petrol	\$35,990
GWM Haval H6	Medium SUV	Petrol	\$35,990 (DA)
GWM Ora	Hatchback	Electric	\$35,990 (DA)
Hyundai i30	Hatchback	Petrol	\$36,000
Mazda BT-50	Ute 4x2	Diesel	\$36,400
Nissan Navara	Ute 4x2	Diesel	\$36,428



GWM Cannon	Ute 4x2	Diesel	\$36,490 (DA)
<i>A dual-cab ute that doesn't break the bank, the GWM Cannon offers decent payload and towing ability. A 2025 update brought a more powerful 2.4-litre engine, bringing the Cannon into line with some mainstream utes like Nissan's Navara and Mitsubishi's Triton.</i>			

CAR	SIZE	FUEL	PRICE
Mazda CX-5	Medium SUV	Petrol	\$36,740
Chery E5	Small SUV	Electric	\$36,990
Nissan X-Trail	Medium SUV	Petrol	\$36,990
Renault Arkana	Medium SUV	Petrol	\$36,990
Ford Ranger	Ute 4x2	Diesel	\$37,130
Toyota Corolla Cross	Small SUV	Petrol	\$37,440



Hyundai i20 N	Hatchback	Petrol	\$37,500
The pint-sized hatchback brings performance motoring within reach of the masses with a perky turbo engine, manual transmission, a nicely balanced chassis and plenty of grip.			
Honda ZR-V	Small SUV	Petrol	\$37,900 (DA)
Kia Sportage	Medium SUV	Petrol	\$37,990
MG 4	Hatchback	Electric	\$37,990
KGM Torres	Medium SUV	Petrol	\$38,000 (DA)
Hyundai Tucson	Medium SUV	Petrol	\$38,350
Volkswagen Golf	Hatchback	Petrol	\$38,690
LDV G10	Van	Diesel	\$38,937
Volkswagen T-Roc	Small SUV	Petrol	\$38,990
Hyundai Inster	Hatchback	Electric	\$39,000
BYD Atto 3	Small SUV	Electric	\$39,990
Geely Starry EM-i	Medium SUV	Plug-in hybrid	\$39,990



Mitsubishi Outlander	Medium SUV	Petrol	\$39,990
The Mitsubishi Outlander remains a medium SUV favourite, offering pricing and features on par with its rivals, and the option of seven seats			
Peugeot Partner	Van	Petrol	\$39,990



Toyota Camry	Sedan	hybrid	\$39,990
One of Australia's most popular mid-size sedans features a powerful hybrid drivetrain, and high levels of standard safety technology, all packaged up in sharp style that disguises a roomy, comfortable interior.			
Mahindra XUV700	Medium SUV	Petrol	\$39,990 (DA)

CAR	SIZE	FUEL	PRICE
-----	------	------	-------

\$40,001-\$45,000



MG S5	Small SUV	Electric	\$40,490 (DA)
One of Australia's most-affordable electric SUVs, the MG S5 lands here with some pretty sharp drive-away pricing, a nicely designed and thoughtful cabin and a driving experience that is comfortable and pleasant.			

Geely EX5	Medium SUV	Electric	\$40,990
Skoda Karoq	Medium SUV	Petrol	\$40,990 (DA)
LDV T60	Ute 4x2	Diesel	\$41,042 (DA)
Volkswagen Caddy	Van	Petrol	\$41,225
Skoda Octavia	Sedan	petrol	\$41,490 (DA)
Honda CR-V	Medium SUV	Petrol	\$41,900 (DA)
Mini Cooper	Hatchback	Petrol	\$41,990
Chery Tiggo 8	Medium SUV	Petrol	\$41,990 (DA)
Mahindra Scorpio	Medium SUV	diesel	\$41,990 (DA)
Mazda MX-5	Sports	Petrol	\$42,140
Toyota RAV4	Medium SUV	Hybrid	\$42,260
Peugeot 2008	Small SUV	Petrol	\$42,490
KGM Musso	Ute 4x4	Diesel	\$42,500 (DA)
JAC T9	Ute 4x4	Diesel	\$42,662
BYD Sealion 6	Medium SUV	Plug-in hybrid	\$42,990
Kia Tasman	Ute 4x2	Diesel	\$42,990



Subaru Forester	Medium SUV	Petrol	\$43,490
An all-new Forester brings a new look and a new hybrid powertrain giving the popular mid-size SUV the armoury to take on the best-selling Toyota RAV4 in the segment.			

LDV D90	Large SUV	Diesel	\$43,647 (DA)
Leapmotor C10	Medium SUV	PHEV	\$43,888
Toyota GR86	Sports	Petrol	\$43,940
Subaru Outback	Large SUV	Petrol	\$44,190
Subaru BRZ	Sports	Petrol	\$44,290
Toyota C-HR	Small SUV	Hybrid	\$44,540
Renault Kangoo	Van	Petrol	\$44,990



Volkswagen Tiguan	Medium SUV	Petrol	\$44,990
An all-new Tiguan has arrived, the model line-up growing in size and bringing with it more powerful engines, revised exterior styling, updated technology and new equipment.			

Kia Niro	Small SUV	Hybrid	\$45,000
----------	-----------	--------	----------

CAR	SIZE	FUEL	PRICE
-----	------	------	-------

\$45,001-\$50,000



Alfa Romeo Junior Small SUV Petrol **\$45,900**
Alfa Romeo's compact SUV brings a touch of Italian flair at a price that won't break the bank. With a punchy three-cylinder engine, the Junior matches its Italian good looks with an excellent driving experience.

Jeep Compass	Small SUV	Hybrid	\$45,990
GWM Haval H6 GT	Medium SUV	Petrol	\$45,990 (DA)
LDV Deliver 7	Van	Diesel	\$46,305
BYD Seal	Sedan	Electric	\$46,990
Cupra Leon	Hatchback	Petrol	\$46,990
Hyundai Staria	Van	Diesel	\$46,990
Haval H7	Medium SUV	Hybrid	\$46,990 (DA)
MG QS	Large SUV	Petrol	\$46,990 (DA)



KGM Actyon Medium SUV Petrol **\$47,000 (DA)**
Korean brand KGM enters the medium SUV battlefield with the feature-laden Actyon, taking on the likes of firm segment favourites, the Toyota RAV4, Kia Sportage and Hyundai Tucson.

Lexus LBX	Light SUV	Hybrid	\$47,550
Kia EV3	Small SUV	Electric	\$47,600
Mitsubishi Eclipse Cross	Small SUV	PHEV	\$47,790
GWM Tank 300	Medium SUV	Diesel	\$47,990 (DA)
LDV Mifa	People mover	Petrol	\$47,990 (DA)
Subaru WRX	Sports	Petrol	\$48,190
Volkswagen Tayron	Medium SUV	Petrol	\$48,290
Isuzu MU-X	Large SUV	Diesel	\$48,400
Peugeot 308	Hatchback	Hybrid	\$48,990
Peugeot Expert	Van	Diesel	\$48,990
Audi Q2	Small SUV	Petrol	\$49,400
Zeekr X	Small SUV	Electric	\$49,900



Deepal S07 Medium SUV Electric **\$49,990**
Chinese newcomer Deepal enters the Australian market with a stylish and well-equipped fully-electric SUV with 475km of driving range.

Mini Countryman	Small SUV	Petrol	\$49,990
Renault Traffic	Van	Diesel	\$49,990
Honda Civic	Hatchback	Hybrid	\$49,900 (DA)
Jaecoo J8	Large SUV	Petrol	\$49,990 (DA)

50 years of Australia's most affordable cars

Fifty years ago, Australia's most affordable car, the Mini Moke, could be yours for just \$2384. Sure, it didn't have doors, and the part-time roof was a thin bit of canvas, but for under three-thousand bucks, you could find yourself with a brand new car in your driveway.

It seems almost unthinkable that as recently as 2001, new car buyers could nab a brand new car - the Daihatsu Handi - for under \$10,000. That would have been it for sub-\$10k cars, when in 2013, fledgling Chinese brand Chery asked just \$9990 for its Chery J1 hatchback.

Since then, just two models - Mitsubishi's Mirage and Kia's Picanto - have held the honour of Australia's most affordable new car, a title currently held by the Picanto which remains, in 2025, the only new car in Australia priced at less than \$20,000. And unlike its Moke forebear of 50 years ago, it has doors.

YEAR	CHEAPEST	MAKE	MODEL
2025	\$18,690	Kia	Picanto Sport manual
2024	\$17,890	Kia	Picanto Sport manual
2023	\$16,290	Kia	Picanto S manual
2022	\$15,990	Kia	Picanto S manual
2021	\$14,990	Mitsubishi	Mirage ES manual
2020	\$13,990	Mitsubishi	Mirage ES manual
2019	\$13,990	Mitsubishi	Mirage ES manual
2018	\$12,250	Mitsubishi	Mirage ES manual
2017	\$12,250	Mitsubishi	Mirage ES manual
2016	\$11,990	Mitsubishi	Mirage ES manual
2015	\$11,990	Mitsubishi	Mirage ES manual
2014	\$11,490	Mitsubishi	Mirage ES manual
2013	\$9,990	Chery	J1 manual
2012	\$10,990	Chery	J1 manual
2011	\$11,790	Suzuki	Alto GL manual
2010	\$11,790	Suzuki	Alto GL manual
2009	\$11,990	Proton	S16 GX manual
2008	\$13,690	Holden	Barina manual
2007	\$13,690	Holden	Barina manual
2006	\$13,490	Holden	Barina manual
2005	\$11,490	Daihatsu	Charade manual
2004	\$11,950	Daihatsu	Charade manual
2003	\$11,250	Daihatsu	Cuore manual
2002	\$11,250	Daihatsu	Cuore manual
2001	\$9,750	Daihatsu	Handi manual
2000	\$9,990	Daewoo	Matiz S manual
1999	\$9,990	Daihatsu	Handi manual
1998	\$9,990	Suzuki	Alto GL manual
1997	\$10,990	Daihatsu	Handivan manual
1996	\$10,990	Daihatsu	Handivan manual
1995	\$9,990	Lada	Volante manual
1994	\$9,990	Lada	Volante manual
1993	\$5,990	FSM	Niki manual
1992	\$5,999	FSM	Niki manual
1991	\$6,990	FSM	Niki manual
1990	\$7,990	FSM	Niki manual
1989	\$7,990	FSM	Niki manual
1988	\$7,490	Suzuki	Mighty Boy manual
1987	\$7,899	Suzuki	Mighty Boy manual
1986	\$7,548	Daihatsu	Hi-Jet manual
1985	\$5,825	Suzuki	Hatch manual
1984	\$5,150	Suzuki	Hatch manual
1983	\$4,065	Leyland	Moke manual
1982	\$3,999	Suzuki	Hatch manual
1981	\$3,999	Leyland	Moke manual
1980	\$3,990	Suzuki	Hatch manual
1979	\$3,995	Leyland	Moke manual
1978	\$3,565	Leyland	Moke manual
1977	\$3,126	Leyland	Moke manual
1976	\$2,604	Suzuki	Carry manual
1975	\$2,384	Leyland	Moke manual

RUNNING COSTS

What is the most affordable type of car to drive – hybrid, full-electric or petrol?



The mid-range Hyundai Santa Fe Elite 1.6-litre hybrid models cost \$4000 more than 2.5-litre petrol variants, and using the claimed combined cycle fuel consumption, will use 38.5 per cent less fuel.

By James Ward

It's the question on everyone's lips – when buying a new car, will choosing a hybrid or full-electric option over a traditional petrol or diesel model make weekly running costs more affordable?

It's a great question. There are hybrid or plug-in hybrid options available from nearly all brands across all major segments, and electric vehicles are becoming more affordable every week.

In August 2025, over 30 per cent of all new cars sold in Australia were electrified, while pure petrol sales dropped to their lowest ever level of just 37 per cent. If these trajectories continue, we can expect electrified cars – hybrids, both plug-in and series, as well as pure-EVs – to outsell petrol models within the next six months.

So, with choice and volume clearly on the rise, is a hybrid the right choice for everyone?

Turns out, it depends very much on how and where you drive.

All hybrids use regenerative braking systems to recover energy from the car as it slows down. This means, when driving in traffic, each time you hit the brakes to slow down, you are recharging your battery.

This energy is then used to power vehicle systems when the petrol engine is off – like when you are stopped at traffic lights – or even powering the whole car at low speeds.

What this means, is that yes, for city driving, a hybrid – any hybrid – will be more efficient than a pure petrol car.

So ... done? Not quite.

For sustained highway driving, the car doesn't get as much chance to recover energy from braking, and while it will still use energy from the battery and supplement power from the electric motor, the efficiency



All hybrids (right) use regenerative braking systems to recover energy from the car as it slows down. This means that any hybrid will be more efficient than a pure petrol (left) car in the city.

difference won't be as noticeable as when driving in town. And let's not forget, a hybrid generally costs more than a petrol to buy.

Using the mid-range Hyundai Santa Fe Elite as an example, the 1.6-litre hybrid models cost \$4000 more than 2.5-litre petrol variants, and using the claimed combined cycle fuel consumption, will use 38.5 per cent less fuel – which at \$1.82 per litre, equates to savings of about \$1000 per year (driving 15,000 kilometres annually) in petrol costs.

Own the car for a smidge over four years, and whacko, you've offset the spend for the hybrid and can enjoy happy days of knowing

every kilometre you travel is more affordable than if you had bought the petrol.

Do all your driving around the city – where the hybrid will use almost 52 per cent less fuel – and that petrol saving is a bit over \$1800 per year, meaning you'll hit value parity in a bit over two years.

Go the other way though, and do most of your driving at highway speeds, and the difference drops to just \$400 a year, meaning that it will take 10 years to offset the purchase price of the hybrid.

You can start your own spreadsheet if you drive your car hard too. Zapping away from

To get the most affordability from your car, consider where and how you drive, and what the premium is to buy hybrid or electric against a regular petrol.

the lights will use much more petrol, perhaps making an electric or plug-in hybrid option more your speed.

Here, you will save even more on running costs, depending on where you plug your car in. Home electricity rates are around \$0.20 per kWh, and if you drive the same 15,000 kilometres a year with car that averages 20kWh/100km (like a BYD Sealion 7), it will cost about \$600 per year.

Use public charging that could cost as much as \$0.85 per kWh, and you're looking at about \$2550 in energy for the year, which is about \$1000 more than our hybrid on a combined cycle.

Yes, a more efficient EV would help (a Tesla Model Y will run about 15kWh/100km), and a solar collector and battery would save you even more (ignoring the capital cost) but essentially, there's no single solution here.

To get the most affordability from your car, consider where and how you drive, and what the premium is to buy hybrid or electric against a regular petrol.

The best way to save money on fuel is to drive more sedately and smoothly – regardless of powertrain – which may be a better and easier solution for everyone.

MAINTENANCE

The key differences between petrol and electric cars?

By James Ward

It's a common misconception that an electric car, with its limited moving parts and high-tech propulsion, doesn't need servicing like a traditional petrol or ICE (Internal Combustion Engine) car. And yes, in many ways this is true. You don't need to change oil, filters, or spark plugs because there aren't any. You don't need the same frequency of brake pad replacement because the car will use friction braking in its motors to slow down. But, an electric car is still a car, and while the service process may be different, it's not totally superfluous. A few years ago, we followed the service process of two Mini Cooper hatchbacks. One, powered by a traditional 2.0-litre turbocharged petrol engine, and the other driven by a 32.6kWh battery pack and single electric motor.

TYPICAL PETROL SERVICE

Once on the hoist in the garage, the petrol Mini had its brake pads and brake discs checked, along with its tyre health, which includes the tyre pressure where a reading is taken, tread depth is recorded and the tyre is thoroughly inspected. The engine oil and filter are then changed, with a total 5.25 litres added. At this stage of the service, the brake fluid is also changed. The car undergoes an underbody examination to ensure nothing is damaged



Both services begin on a hoist for attention to the brakes and an inspection of the underbody.

or loose, then once it's back on the ground, it receives a tyre rotation. The spark plugs are then replaced – a necessity every four years or 60,000 kilometres depending on the car. Another element that gets replaced is the cabin air filter (also required every four years). In the final step, the car is plugged into a diagnostic computer to ensure there are no errors and that the service has been recorded on the car. This will ensure that the owner is advised when the next service is due.

Cost: \$1640 for five years or 80,000 kilometres.

TYPICAL ELECTRIC SERVICE

Like the petrol Mini, the beginning of the servicing process is the same, in that the car is sent up on a halfway hoist. Brake pads, discs and tyres are examined; however, obviously, there's no oil or filter to replace. Both cars undergo an underbody examination to ensure nothing is damaged or loose. Once the car is back on the ground, it

Like the petrol Mini, the beginning of the servicing process is the same, in that the car is sent up on a halfway hoist. Brake pads, discs and tyres are examined; however, obviously, there's no oil filter to replace.

undergoes its tyre rotation. Just a single filter and brake fluid are disposed of from the EV. Once all the main tasks have been completed, just like the petrol Mini, the car is connected to the diagnostic computer to check for any errors, record the service, and log its next one. Part of the electric Mini service includes a charge of the battery to at least 80 per cent before it leaves the garage. Cost: \$940 for four years or \$1280 for six years No contest; servicing the electric car is cheaper, and using our "dirty-glove-o-meter" it was much cleaner, too! It's worth noting that tyre life on an electric car is often shorter than the equivalent ICE vehicle due to the EV generally weighing more (1365kg v 1199kg – 166kg difference in this example).

THE MINI COUNTRYMAN.
SPACIOUS. BOLD.
AWARD-WINNING.



AVAILABLE
IN PETROL.



AVAILABLE
IN ELECTRIC.



BEST SMALL SUV
UNDER \$80K

EXPECTATIONS

Life doesn't begin at \$50k



The Kia Tasman S 4X4 ute just scrapes in under \$50,000 at \$49,990 plus on-road costs.

The MG S5 EV is priced from \$40,490 drive-away for the entry-level Excite model.

By Rob Margeit

Buying a new car can be a stressful process, not least of all for the massive financial undertaking. Setting an upper limit on how much you are prepared to pay can alleviate some of that stress, but it also reduces the choices open to you.

Setting a ceiling of \$50,000 does bring with it some limitations on the types of cars you can afford, but having an upper limit doesn't need to exclude entry into some popular segments.

Sales of dual-cab utes, for example, have exploded in popularity in recent years. And that surge has seen manufacturers increasingly focus their efforts on building utes that can serve multiple masters. From weekday workhorse to weekend warrior, "lifestyle" utes are gaining in popularity.

But, of course, filling what were once strictly utilitarian vehicles with the kinds of creature comforts and technology previously only found in passenger cars and SUVs has seen prices of dual-cabs balloon.

It's not uncommon for some of the more feature-laden lifestyle utes to nudge \$80,000. But buyers on a strict budget need not miss out, with an increasing number of options coming in under our \$50,000 ceiling.

Similarly, electric vehicles, once the domain of the wealthy, have been steadily coming down in price.

Where once a small electric hatchback with a 200-kilometre range would cost buyers around \$60,000, today the advances in technology and large-scale uptake around the world have seen prices drop dramatically, putting EVs within reach of more buyers than ever before.

REVIEW: KIA TASMAN

While much noise is made about the new, top-spec Kia Tasman dual-cab ute, buyers might be surprised to find a four-wheel drive variant from \$49,990 plus on-road costs.

The Kia Tasman S 4X4 might not have a lot of the fancy features of the more expensive models, but there still is a lot shared with this entry-level model.

Firstly, you've got the same 2.2-litre turbocharged diesel powertrain, which mates up to an eight-speed automatic transmission and puts out 154kW and 440Nm with a claimed consumption rate of 7.6 litres per hundred kilometres.

While these figures do lag behind some of the gutsier competitors like the Ford Ranger and the Toyota HiLux, the Tasman does perform better in the real world than you might expect.

Equally, the ride quality of the Tasman is impressive for the ute segment. Big payloads (1025kg in this case) means a ute will never ride as well as an SUV, but the Tasman is one of the segment highlights in this regard.

Bump absorption is more forgiving than other utes over rough surfaces, and it's matched to a balanced steering feel that allows the Tasman to be easily placed on suburban roads and highways alike.

Inside, the twin 12.3-inch central and driver displays match more expensive variants and perform very well, and the Tasman's cabin offers class-leading levels of space, comfort and practicality.

Cloth seats feel a bit snazzy in this trim level, ergonomics are well catered for and the second row is much more spacious and comfortable than key competitors.

Off-road, the four-wheel drive system with automatically locking rear differential works well, and gives the Tasman solid off-road capability on par with most other utes in the segment.

Despite being a base model, the Tasman S isn't utterly devoid of helpful features: front and rear parking sensors, big screens, digital radio, dual-zone climate control and auto LED headlights.

There's also loads of safety kit as standard, along with a five-star ANCAP safety rating for this new model.

However, the lack of a tub liner is noticeable for a work ute, and some might find the steel wheels a bit crass. But for buyers looking for an off-road-capable dual-cab ute under \$50,000, the Kia Tasman ticks a lot of boxes. *Sam Purcell*

REVIEW: MG S5 EV

MG's first dedicated electric SUV landed in Australia earlier this year with generous equipment and sharp pricing, making it one of the most affordable EVs on the market.

A replacement for the ageing – and pioneering – MG ZS EV, the S5 represents a massive step-up for the Chinese brand.

Priced from \$40,490 drive-away for the entry-level Excite model with a 49kWh battery, and topping out at \$47,990 drive-away for flagship Essence with a bigger 62kWh battery, the MG S5 brings a healthy list of standard equipment, a thoroughly modern and spacious interior and between 335km and 425km of driving range, depending on the model.

Recharge times are reasonable too; the smaller 49kWh battery takes only 19 minutes to replenish from 10 to 80 per cent

at a maximum rate of 120kW, while using a home-installed wallbox at a maximum rate of 6.6kW will see the battery become fully charged overnight.

The S5 wants for little in terms of standard equipment, with a tech-laden offering that reflects today's buyers' tastes: big screens, smartphone integration, and a five-star safety rating, while the higher Essence grades also brings creature comforts like seat heating and a panoramic sunroof.

But it's not just about showroom appeal – the MG S5 is equally as impressive on the road. With 125kW and 250Nm available from its lone electric motor, all channelled to the rear wheels via a single-speed transmission, the S5 doesn't stray too far from the affordable electric vehicle playbook.

There's a surge of acceleration from standstill, a hallmark of the instant torque available once you step on the throttle. It's not push-back-in-the-seat fast like some EVs, but it's plenty enough to satisfy most driving needs.

Ride comfort is impressive, with MG's chassis engineers striking a nice balance from the S5's MacPherson struts up front and five-link independent set-up at the back. Minor road imperfections do little to upset the S5's composure, with the damping ironing out all but the biggest of lumps.

MG backs the S5 EV with a 10-year/250,000km warranty, bringing peace of mind to the purchasing decision, while servicing costs run to \$1119 over three years or \$1967 over five.

The MG S5 EV represents good value in a growing segment, placing electric motoring within reach of more Australian buyers than ever before.

STAFF RECOMMEND

What would the experts buy?

It's a question I get asked almost weekly. Whether I'm out with friends, or lunching with the family, the question of which car Aunt Judy or Cousin Tom should buy inevitably crops up, followed quickly by, "Well, what car would you buy?".

To answer that question, I posed a challenge to the editorial team at Australia's leading automotive media outlet, *Drive*.

As professional road testers and journalists, we drive hundreds of new cars every year, testing them against a huge range of criteria – from performance and

comfort to practicality and safety. And of course, the one criteria that is arguably most important to a vast swath of new car buyers – value for money.

With that in mind, what car would *Drive*'s team of expert road testers be prepared to hand over \$50,000 (before on-road costs) of their own dollars for? About the only certainty asking nine road testing experts is that you'll get nine different answers.

Here then, are the cars under \$50,000 we would buy.

ROB MARGEIT



Tung Nguyen, news editor
Mazda 6 Touring Wagon
\$42,260

With the Mazda 6 now discontinued but remaining stock still available, it might be the last chance to score the best do-it-all wagon in Australia. A punchy enough 140kW/252Nm petrol engine meets a high-end interior, sporty dynamics and family-friendly practicality.

James Ward, director of content
Mini Countryman C Core
\$49,990

As a Drive Car of the Year category winner (2025 Best Small SUV under \$50k), the entry-level Countryman offers plenty of style, functionality and fun, that may be Mini by name, but not by nature, especially on the inside. The technology integration – complete with mobile app support – feels more befitting of a higher price tag model.



Alex Misoyannis, deputy news editor
Honda Civic e:HEV L
\$49,900 drive-away

The entry-level Civic hybrid doesn't punch as hard as some rivals on equipment, but it's fun to drive, very fuel efficient, spacious, cheap to run, and feels like a quality car that's had some attention to detail applied to it.



Sam Purcell, off-road editor
Suzuki Jimny GLX
\$31,990

It's slow, cramped, thirsty, Spartan on the inside and ponderous through the corners. But it's excellent off-road, and is one of the few cars within the budget that plasters a huge grin across my melon. And if I'm buying, that's crucially important.



Kathryn Fisk, senior journalist
Hyundai Kona Premium Hybrid N Line
\$48,700

The Kona is a sharp-looking small SUV that can still fit my two kids and all their stuff in, drives well, and has a hybrid powertrain to help save on fuel. As the top-spec version, it gets all the bells and whistles. Hyundai's warranty and servicing terms are fair, too.

Rob Margeit, features editor
Hyundai Inster
\$39,000

What's not to like? It's funky, it's electric and it's compact, perfect for the inner-city enclave I call home. I love its interior, a mix of practical and oddball style and I love the way it drives – effortless and comfortable. The claimed range of 327 kilometres is enough for my needs too.



Zane Dobie, journalist
Hyundai i20N
from \$37,500

Easily one of the most fun hot hatchbacks on the market now. With the aftermarket sector for Hyundais really heating up, you could spend your spare \$12,500 to make an absolute weapon, not to mention that it's got a wiggle stick and clutch.



Tom Fraser, production editor
Toyota GR86 GT manual
\$43,940

I'm championing the sports car segment with my choice, and I'd plug the performance car-sized gap in my garage with the Toyota GR86 for \$43,940 (before ORCs). It's fast enough, fun enough, and looks the part. I'll worry about the family later.



Ethan Cardinal, journalist
Kia Sportage HEV SX
\$49,450

For someone who's not ready to make the jump into a fully electric vehicle, I'd consider the Kia Sportage SX hybrid as the perfect bridge. It's comfortable, spacious, and you get a lot of bang for your buck when it comes to the equipment.

If money's no object ...

If you've just won Powerball and are looking to get the most car your money can buy, then look no further. Currently, there are 209 new cars on sale in Australia with a price tag over \$200,000. And sitting at the top of the pile are the cars we have here, the five most expensive new cars your money can buy in 2025. We can only dream ...



Lamborghini Revuelto
PHEV Plug-in hybrid **\$987,000**

Ferrari SF90 Stradale
Plug-in hybrid **\$846,888**



Rolls-Royce Cullinan Black Badge
Series II **\$895,000**

Ferrari 12 Cilindri Spider
\$886,800



Ferrari 12 Cilindri
\$803,500



MG5 EV

THE ALL-NEW, ALL-ELECTRIC SUV



\$40,990*
FROM
DRIVEAWAY



BOOK A TEST DRIVE



*~ T&Cs Apply

