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'More efficient cars the way forward': green energy group

In response to Ford Australia's recent announcement on job losses, the Sustainable Energy Association of Australia (SEA) has warned Australian-based car manufacturing will continue to decline as long as local vehicles remain uncompetitive in the emissions and fuel efficiency stakes.



Credit: flickr/futureatlas.com

The SEA says it has long argued for stronger measures on national average fuel consumption numbers for new passenger vehicles.

It previously suggested three-year rolling targets on maximum fuel consumption, but says successive federal governments have 'dragged their feet' on setting mandated energy efficiency targets for the national vehicle fleet, and this has impacted negatively on the competitiveness of local manufacturers.

'Market commentators commonly say Australians are only interested in large cars, but Holden Commodore, which was Australia's sales top seller for 15 consecutive years between 1996 and 2010, is now in fifth place,' says Professor Ray Wills, SEA chief adviser.

The SEA points out that sales data from Europe show CO₂ emissions from the average new car sold there dropped to the milestone figure of 140g CO₂/km in 2010, while retail prices of motor vehicles have fallen every year in real terms.

In Australia, small and city cars now dominate the largest proportion of sales filling nine of the top 15 places; the Ford Falcon is now in 20th place.

SEA also believes greater enforcement of road rules and operating standards is needed in all states to remove unroadworthy vehicles by regulatory action, and also should be aided by measures that prevent relicensing of unsuitable expired-licence vehicles.

'Sustainability takes into account many factors – fuel efficiency and lower emissions is an important part of the equation, and so too is road safety,' says Prof. Wills. 'People should not be surprised to hear that car accidents and the injuries they can cause are not a

sustainable outcome.'

According to the SEA, action to remove polluting vehicles from Australian roads could reduce: air pollution (higher standard engines in vehicles); carbon emissions (fuel efficiency in vehicles); out of pocket expenditure (fuel efficiency in vehicles); motor vehicle accident occurrences (safer vehicles); motor vehicle accident injuries (safer vehicles); hospital queues (safer vehicles), and lung diseases (cleaner city air).

A study from the from The University of Western Australia and Telethon Institute of Child Health Research has highlighted in particular the effects of vehicle-sourced pollutants on the growth of unborn babies, and adds to older studies that show impacts on the developing lungs of infants and children.

Source: Sustainable Energy Australia

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