

Electric vehicles - a good second car for New Zealand families

New Zealand has one of the highest rates of car ownership in the world

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Electric vehicles could be a great solution for New Zealand households looking for an economical second car for around-town driving.

New Zealand has the second highest rate of car ownership per capita, behind the United States. And at 52%, New Zealand has one of the highest rates of households owning 2 cars or more.

These unexpected statistics were revealed by Elizabeth Yeaman, Manager of Transport Partnerships at New Zealand's Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA) as part of a discussion on transport at the 7th *Australia-New Zealand Climate Change & Business Conference*. In discussing the uptake of electric vehicles, Ms Yeaman commented "Electric vehicles are used most for around-town commuting rather than long family outings, so the fact that New Zealand has one of the highest levels of car ownership and number of 2-car families would indicate there is plenty of room for use of electric vehicles."

Also speaking at the session was Kristian Handberg, Project Manager of Low Emissions Vehicles for the Victorian Department of Transport in Australia. Mr Handberg gave details of Victoria's electric vehicle trial which, although at an early stage, has been successful. "People love using their electric vehicles," said Mr Handberg. "Initial concerns about restricted range have dissipated once users try the car and become accustomed to how it works and recharges."

The Victorian government launched its Electric Vehicle Trial in 2010 to help Victoria better understand the process, timelines and barriers for transitioning to electric vehicle technologies. The trial, which finishes in 2014, is seeking a total of 180 households to take an electric vehicle for three months each. "The early results have been encouraging" said Mr Handberg, "with positive feedback on driving the vehicles, the ease of use and the acceptance of the range limitations."

Wellington City is also running an electric vehicle program. In September 2010, Wellington became the first New Zealand city to trial production electric cars with the launch of a fleet of eight battery-powered Mitsubishi electric vehicles. The cars are being used by the City Council, Meridian Energy, The Wellington Company and New Zealand Post. The four-seater, battery-powered Mitsubishi iMiEV has a range of up to 155km and zero drive-time emissions.

"We love our electric vehicles," says Chris Cameron, Principal Advisor on climate change for Wellington City Council. "They are fun to drive, quick off the mark and make you feel incredibly good knowing there are zero emissions."

Ms. Yeaman and Mr Handberg were speaking at the Climate Change & Business Conference which continues in Wellington today. The event hosts more than 300 delegates with approximately 70 business and policy experts presenting on implications of climate change and best practice response.

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