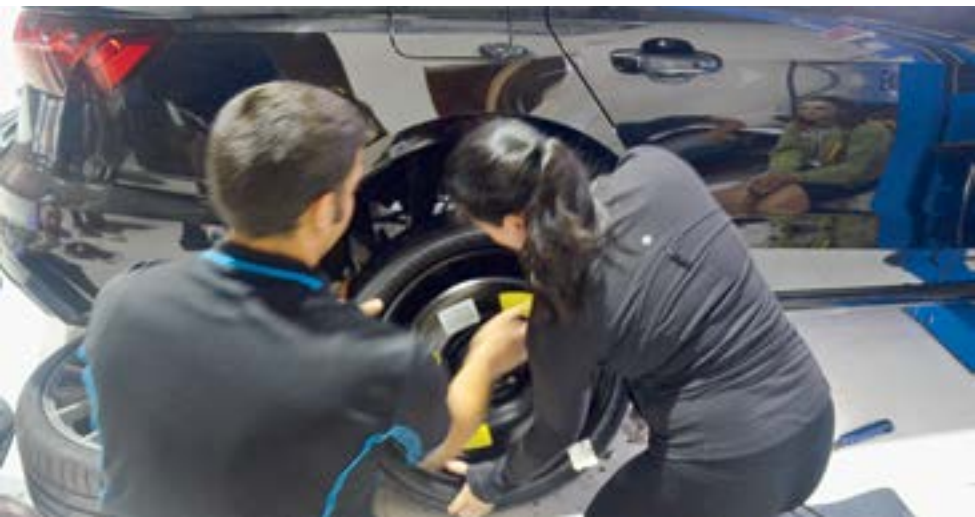




Stay road-ready this winter with simple maintenance checks on tyres, fluids and safety systems.

Winter brings extra hazards

THE past week has given locals a taste of the weather to come with fog clouding the vision of many early morning and evening travellers, wet roads and reduced visibility due to rain. With more wintry conditions hitting the region over the next couple of weeks coinciding with school holidays, drivers are advised to stay on top of car maintenance and take extra care on the roads. These conditions make driving more hazardous and can increase the risk of accidents and near-misses. RACV Automotive Services general manager Makarla Cole said winter driving demanded a more cautious and prepared approach. "Fog, snow and ice significantly reduce visibility and traction, making it harder to stop,

steer and judge road conditions," she said. While the Gannawarra district isn't prone to snow, major roads can become hazardous after rain, with dense fog, wet surfaces, potholes and strong winds creating challenging driving conditions. Ms Cole said it's important to look after yourself when driving and to follow general advice to ensure everyone gets to their destinations safely. "General road safety advice still applies," she said. "Plan your trip ahead of time, schedule rest breaks and check weather conditions before you leave. "If conditions deteriorate, pull over and wait until it is safe to continue."

Keeping tyres in check

AS winter settles in, road safety experts are urging motorists to pay closer attention to their tyres, with colder conditions increasing the risk of accidents on regional roads. Tyres are the only point of contact between a vehicle and the road surface, and their condition plays a critical role in braking, steering and overall stability. In winter, when temperatures drop and roads become wet or slippery, worn or under-inflated tyres can significantly reduce a vehicle's grip. According to VicRoads, tyre pressure naturally decreases in colder weather, meaning drivers may be travelling on under-inflated tyres without realising it. Low pressure increases stopping distances, reduces fuel efficiency and can cause uneven wear, shortening the life of the tyre. Tread depth is equally important. Australian regulations require a minimum tread depth of 1.5mm, but safety agencies recommend replacing tyres before they reach that point, as deeper tread channels water more effectively and reduces the likelihood of aquaplaning. Winter often brings more rain, fog and early-morning frost, all of which can compromise traction. Tyre problems often stem from punctures, worn tread and uneven wear, which is frequently linked to poor wheel alignment. Regular checks can prevent many of these problems. Experts recommend inspecting tyres at least once a month, including the spare, and



Tyre problems often stem from punctures, worn tread and uneven wear. before long trips. Maintaining tyres is one of the simplest and most cost-effective ways to improve road safety. As winter conditions continue, ensuring tyres are properly inflated, in good condition and replaced when necessary, can make a critical difference to driver safety on local roads.

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