



**Ken Newton,
CEO, VASA**

Under the Southern Cross

...And finally, let's look at the weather.

The national outlook for daytime temperatures averaged over summer (December to February) shows a moderate to strong shift in the odds favouring warmer than normal conditions over the south-east and parts of Australia's tropical north.

The pattern of seasonal temperature odds across Australia is mostly a result of continued warmth in the central to southeastern Indian Ocean, especially off the west coast of Western Australia.

Enough of the formal forecast from that bastion of barometer boffins unfortunately called the BOM (Bureau of Meteorology).

Australians rarely take much notice of official weather forecasts. When summer hits around early November, you'll hear the weather forecast at the beginning of every greeting, on the street, on the phone and now on e-mails: "Isn't it hot?" Or if the mercury jumps off the scale, as it often does, the greet-

ing goes up a notch, "It's bloody hot." Sums it up perfectly.

So why am I waffling on about weather reports? It's because a summer in Australia, land of extremes, can make or break a mobile air conditioning business. While everyone else complains about the heat, our boys and girls in the business are stocking up with R-134a, tapping on their gauges and waiting at the cash register with huge smiles across their sweat-streaked countenances.

But VASA's president Mark Padwick has reached the conclusion that we can throw away our wall thermometers, because a business boom is going to happen anyway – bloody hot or not. Mark has issued a call to all VASA members to smarten up their marketing and get ready to make a lot of money over the next few years.

The reason is that a large slice of the motoring population is opting to restore

some mechanical dignity to their existing vehicles rather than race into debt with a new car purchase in these uncertain financial times. I call it the crash of consumerism. In the words of our fathers, "make do with what you've got, sonny".

The latest available figures for October, 2008 reveal that light commercial vehicles disrupted the trend by recording a 7.9 percent increase in sales for the month, however all other segments recorded a significant decrease. Passenger vehicles are down 13.8 percent, SUVs down 19.1 percent and heavy commercial vehicles dropped 15.9 percent.

I didn't make this story up; I have first hand experience. Yes, I did something recently that I haven't done since the late 1980s. I went looking at new cars. I was considering replacing my 1990 Audi 90 Sports.

Big mistake.

I walked into a Toyota salesroom in my home town, hoping for a quiet peek at the Camry on the floor. My right foot had just crossed the threshold when two salesmen, reeking with snake-oil sincerity, attached themselves to me. I just couldn't shake them. Talk about desperate.

They gleefully sprouted facts and figures about the Camry—wow, it has airbags, and brakes and everything! I tried desperately to ignore them, but these guys are apparently immune to abuse of any kind. "Does it take two of you?" I screamed.

I actually saw nothing. I felt like I was in a swamp, being annoyed by swarms of mosquitoes. I just wanted out of there. "Let's make a date for a test drive," they gushed. "No," I said. "Let's end this relationship right now."

I didn't know buying a car was an inquisition.

My dear, trusting Audi – obviously now distressed because tears were running across the tarmac from under the engine compartment – never looked or felt better as I slid into its still-comfortable and responsive interior, and off I sped.

Thanks to those pushy guys, all thoughts of upgrading to a new vehicle have gone, and my Audi and wallet have sighed the big sigh of relief. ✱

**"Congratulations to our colleague
Lindsey Parrish, for receiving the MACS
Pioneer Award in 2009. Well deserved!"**

