

Electric Commodore drives 65 parliamentarians during COMCAR trial

Melbourne, Tuesday 31 July 2012: Following a two-week trial with the COMCAR fleet in Canberra, 65 parliamentarians, including 15 Ministers, now have first-hand experience of how smooth, silent and exciting it is to go for a drive in Australia's newest and most impressive electric car.

"Over two weeks our electric Commodore drove 65 parliamentarians and clocked up over 1300 kilometres. The most common feedback from passengers was about how smooth and quiet the ride was, which we are absolutely delighted by," said Ian McCleave, CEO of EV Engineering.

"Our experience with COMCAR shows that this zero-emissions electric Commodore is well-positioned to meet the needs of high-demand fleets. The smooth ride and handling make it attractive to both drivers and passengers, and it also has enormous benefits for fleet managers who want to dramatically cut their vehicle emissions.

"We also learned how we could maximise the car's effectiveness for COMCAR; for example by installing additional charge spots in key locations, and shortening charge times by using fast-charge and battery-switch technology as Better Place makes it available in the ACT.

"The trial has demonstrated that zero-emission electric cars can easily be integrated into the vehicle mix of a demanding fleet. This is great news for fleet managers, drivers, and passengers alike," Mr McCleave said.

COMCAR was the first fleet in Australia to welcome and trial the car developed by Melbourne-based consortium EV Engineering. The fully-electric battery-switchable Commodore is a collaborative project designed to demonstrate the technical viability and customer attractiveness of a large electric car made in Australia.

Over the course of the two-week trial, the following results were recorded:

- The electric Commodore drove approximately 1300 kilometres
- 65 parliamentarians travelled in the car along with their passengers
- The car was predominantly assigned to the parliamentary shuttle service, with some directly allocated jobs.

Client feedback

- Clients who experienced a drive in the Commodore were overwhelmingly positive in their responses – "wonderful", "very excited".
- A regular comment was that clients were surprised by the similarity of the electric car to its petrol equivalent - "if you hadn't told me I was in it, I wouldn't have known".
- Many clients were very interested and some questioned drivers in detail and/or asked to look under the bonnet.
- A number of clients specifically requested that the car be assigned to their drive.
- Many clients commented on the quiet, calm and smooth ride.

Operating framework

Six drivers (two female, four male) were selected to drive the car, and received driver training prior to commencing their duties. In order to fully gauge the performance of the vehicle and its charging patterns, the car was scheduled for use in two shifts each day to allow charging time between shifts. This meant that the car performed a high number of driving jobs but lower overall kilometres than the existing fleet vehicles, due to the lunch shuttle shift being excluded in order for charging to take place.

Driver feedback

All six drivers were positive when reflecting on their experience with the car and its features. Drivers noted that they had commenced the trial by driving with some caution - for example, accelerating tenderly or not using the heater when unaccompanied in order to conserve energy. By the end of the trial, while still being conscious of available range, drivers were very much driving the car as they would any other fleet vehicle.

Technical issues

Two technical issues arose during the trial. The first related to a charging fault which resulted in no work on one shift. The second related to a fault warning from the car that resulted in no work for one and a half shifts. Both issues were rectified swiftly. There was no need for roadside assistance during the trial.

Summary of Evaluation

As well as demonstrating the electric Commodore to more than one quarter of all parliamentarians (not including those parliamentarians who looked over the car from time to time while it was parked at Parliament House), the trial provided COMCAR officials with a detailed understanding of the operation of the vehicle, including highlighting some minor issues that could improve the car's effectiveness.

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About EV Engineering

EV Engineering Limited brings together the leaders in Australia's automotive industry to design and build seven proof-of-concept electric Holden Commodores, Australia's most popular passenger car for 15 years. The group is comprised of Air International, Better Place, Bosch, Continental, Futuris, GE, and electric car recharge network Better Place. For further information visit www.evengineering.com.au