

The EV revolution: coming, ready or not

Everything you need to know about Zero Emissions Byron's EV Forum this month.

By **Christobel Munson.**

Giles Parkinson with Hyundai's Kona SUV.

Photo: Mike Frey



It's no big news that technology has rapidly brought incredible changes into our lives. Scarcely a decade ago, who would have thought that more than two million Australian homes would have solar panels creating fossil-free renewable energy on their roofs by 2019?

Around 2010, the first plug-in, emissions-free electric vehicles (EVs) started being registered to drive on our roads. Today, there are nearly 7000 EV owners in the country, with many cars powered by their own solar energy.

Electric skateboards, cargo vans, scooters, mopeds, motorbikes and outboard motors are also spilling onto the scene – and the first two- and four-seater electric planes are already in use in Australia.

A celebration of this electric transport 'revolution', presented by Zero Emissions Byron, will be held on 8 June at the Cavanbah

Centre in Byron Bay. Billed as the 'Byron EV Forum: the first EV forum in the Northern Rivers', it will bring together "exciting new technologies that will revolutionise the way we move", according to pre-event information, as well as a program of expert speakers.

Local resident and journalist Giles Parkinson will open the event. A former deputy editor and business editor of *The Australian Financial Review*, Giles founded and now edits *Renew Economy* (reneweconomy.com.au) – Australia's most-read website focused on clean-energy news and analysis and climate policy – and *The Driven* (thedriven.io), an insider's guide to electric vehicles. (Both sites are incredibly popular; *The Driven* has 150,000 site visits each month, while, in 2017, *Renew Economy* received The Deni Greene Award for reaching more than 25 million page views.)

Giles says he's noticed "huge interest" in electric vehicles in Australia, "accelerating quickly since Tesla came and changed the conversation, making EVs desirable if not affordable". Tesla's costly Model S landed here in 2014 and the less-expensive Model 3 is expected to arrive soon.

"A lot of people are attracted to electric cars but have been waiting for the price to come down," he adds. "Some are already paying far more than they ever thought they would for a car."

But the pricey Tesla is no longer the only boy on the block. Many other manufacturers are now in on the game, with lower-priced options bringing the possibility of EV ownership much closer. Until fairly recently, hybrid cars were the most affordable means of reducing the use of fossil fuels, halving the



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Australia has nearly 7000 electric vehicle owners.

Photo: Bridie Schmidt

consumption of petrol and being kinder on the environment. Brands from Toyota to Porsche, Mercedes-Benz to Mitsubishi offer petrol-electric hybrid cars.

So, what does Giles think people are looking for in an EV – is range the most important consideration? “A lot of people are happy with the driving experience in an EV. And you don’t have to go to a petrol station, so you’re not polluting the air. With early adopters, range is not so important. They’re very happy to make a change to their charging habits to accommodate driving an EV.

“For a mass audience, range may be an issue,” he adds. “But EVs invite you to think in a completely different way. Conventional ideas change pretty fast. For Australian conditions, I really think it comes down to what suits your own lifestyle.”

Electrify your future

Outside the forum: A range of manufacturers will showcase their latest models at the EV Forum. Hyundai will display the electric version of its Ioniq and Kona. There will also be Teslas (including a number of cars from the Tesla Owners Club of Australia), along with several other brands of electric cars, bikes, mopeds and scooters. As well as speaking with salespeople at the event, visitors will be able to hear the ‘real story’ directly from local owners of Tesla, Nissan, Hyundai and other EVs, plus two-wheeled vehicles.

Inside the forum: Environmental films will be screened throughout the day at the Cavanbah Centre, while industry experts will speak from 11am to 3pm on a comprehensive range of EV-related topics, including: Australian Innovation; EV Conversions; Buses and Car Hire; Scooters, Bikes and Trikes; Charging Infrastructure; and Local Policies. See zero Byron.org for the full program.

Kids’ comp: Kids aren’t forgotten, with two design competitions offering great prizes.

For five- to 10-year-olds: Draw a picture of an electric vehicle you’d like to ride in, then bring your entry to the forum by 11am.

For 11- to 18-year-olds: Describe your ideal EV transport solution in under 400 words (illustrate it, too, if you want). Email your entry to zeb@zero Byron.org by 5pm on 7 June. Judging and prize presentations will take place at 2pm on 8 June. Entries will be displayed in the foyer. Entry to the EV Forum is by gold-coin donation.



Join us at our next event:
Winter Solstice Sat 22nd June
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Details on website

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