

FOCUSED AND TACKLING THE BIG ISSUES

Our role at the AAAA has always been very dynamic, and the last 18 months has taken that experience to the next level

Despite the challenges that have confronted us, we have remained focused on the strategies that are most important to our members and the broader industry.

The guidance and passion of our Board of Directors has been critical to our success during these turbulent times. Our AAAA Board is made up of a diverse mix of industry representatives, who with their vast experience work with myself and the whole AAAA team to ensure our strategic goals reflect the best interests of the industry.

At our most recent meeting, the AAAA Board deliberated and agreed on the four core pillars of the AAAA's strategic objectives. These pillars, as outlined below, will continue to drive our work efforts:

- *Unified Industry:* AAAA will bring the industry together for shared purpose and belonging, to create cohesiveness and enable us to strengthen our advocacy efforts for the industry.
- *Future Proof:* AAAA will proactively monitor and anticipate future industry trends, assist members to adapt to the future and find growth opportunities despite/because of the disruptions.
- *Industry Voice:* AAAA will represent and defend our members, which is critical to protect them from regulatory threats and promote fair competition. This work is done through our government relations and advocacy.
- *Member Strength:* AAAA will provide services that support business sustainability and profitability and support industry growth.

A great example of our work that encapsulates elements from all four of our core pillars is mandatory data sharing legislation. Work on the incoming law will continue to assist the industry to adapt to life under the new arrangements and to ensure the framework is in place to operationalise the Law. With the mandatory data sharing law now introduced to parliament and recently passing through the House of Representatives with unanimous support, we can start to shift more of our focus to other significant industry challenges. For more updates on the progress of this law, please see page 9 of this magazine.

One of those challenges is skills shortages. I have spoken about this previously and I will continue to provide updates as we work through what is a very complex and multi-faceted issue for our industry. There is no silver bullet to fix this issue, however we are certainly up for the challenge and feel well-equipped to apply our deep industry

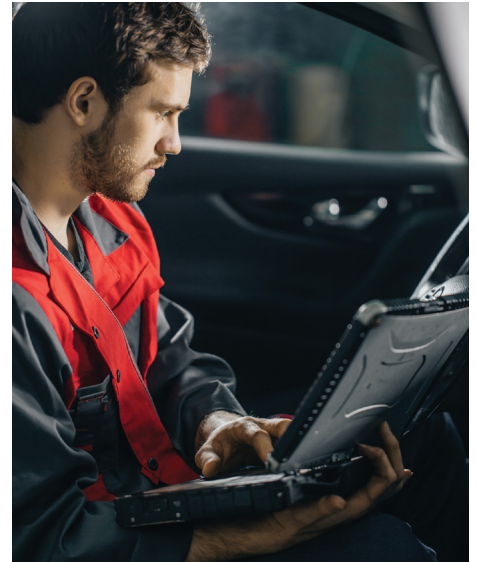
knowledge, relationships, and the essential insights of members to devise solutions that are in the best interests of the industry. With this in mind we are currently preparing a strategy document to scope the challenge faced by skills shortages and determine how best AAAA could mobilise the industry and government to develop a solution.

On the issue of skills, I am very proud to report that in partnership with Kangan Institute, the AAAA's 4WD Industry Council recently launched the pilot of the 4WD Accessories Technician Course. Our own AAAA research (available to members via our Member Portal), along with recent market performance, clearly shows the Australian 4WD industry is booming. The \$6 billion industry comprises more than 2,000 businesses and employs over 70,000 Australians. The sector desperately needs an ongoing supply of the right skills in the industry, to keep growing and to meet consumer demand. The new 4WD Accessories Technician Course is a worthwhile and timely initiative to ensure we create opportunities to foster new talent and upskill existing employees and you can read more about it on page 8 of this magazine.

Consumer awareness of their rights relating to servicing and repairing their vehicle is another major topic of priority for the AAAA. We are developing an important campaign to ensure consumers are aware of their rights in relation to vehicle warranties, capped price servicing, parts, and modifications. One of the most widespread misconceptions around new cars and warranties is that consumers have to have their car serviced at a dealership and fit 'genuine' parts to maintain that warranty. We must change that.

If consumers are educated on their rights, they can make informed decisions about when, who and how their vehicles are serviced, repaired, and modified. At the workshop level, if consumers know their rights, it promotes a fair and level playing field for these businesses, who provide high quality servicing, using high quality parts, at a fair price, as a legitimate alternative to dealerships.

Membership growth remains another key priority. From our Legal and HR hotlines, through to personalised advocacy support and exclusive research insights and tools, our members regularly tell us how valuable AAAA membership is for them. As more businesses and companies invest in AAAA membership, we can sustain and increase our ability to provide the advocacy, representation and services that strengthen our members' businesses and the operating environment for the broader industry. If you are not yet a member and want to



learn more about the benefits of AAAA membership, please visit www.aaaa.com.au/member-benefits

With our strategic goals and hunger to tackle the big issues for members clear, our energy has been further buoyed by recent AAAA events.

While adhering to social distancing requirements, the AAAA has recently hosted several face-to-face events and I know everyone that has taken part in these events has relished the opportunity to engage face-to-face with industry colleagues. I am very proud of the fact we can deliver these important activities for our members and deliver on our purpose to bring the industry together.

Finally, I was extremely proud to attend the official opening of the new South Australian Auto Innovation Centre (AIC), located in Edinburgh, Adelaide – a location that boasts a great number of innovative automotive companies. This new facility, in addition to the Melbourne AIC, is the culmination of eight years of passion and hard work and opens up new product development opportunities for businesses to keep innovating and thriving. To read more about the SA AIC opening, please go to page 10 of this magazine.

As always, if you have an industry issue affecting you or a suggestion on how we can better serve the automotive aftermarket, please reach out to us on info@aaaa.com.au or 03 9545 3333.

STUART CHARITY
Chief Executive Officer