

## Living With – the Toyota Corolla 2.0l Diesel

### Weeks 3-4

#### Where Annoying Is What You Want.

How can you forget the scene in the movie Shrek where Donkey annoys everyone by asking “Are we there yet, are we there yet?”

Did that annoy you? It did me, and brought back memories of being a young kid in the back of the car as my family ventured out and about, interestingly enough in an 80's Toyota Corona 2.0l. Scary thoughts of youth – young kids, fashions and hairstyles...

So what has all this to do with the 2008 Corolla 2.0l Diesel? I drove the Corolla from home a couple of days ago to go and do some Christmas shopping, stopping at the Post Box to post a few Christmas Cards. Nothing odd there, however, to my shame I, like so many other people, elected to not put on the seatbelt to drive the 400m.

Dumb idea! Not only from a legal point of view but also because of that wonderfully wretched chime that emanated from somewhere within the vehicle that at first I could live with, but if you leave the belt unbuckled long enough the annoying chime repeats more frequently. And gets louder.

I surrender! The seatbelt gets fastened restoring peace to the passenger compartment. I am once again driving in a legal condition and what's more I am in a safer state than what I was a few seconds prior. So as an incentive to 'Belt Up' the chimes were a total success. Well done Toyota!

#### Product Development - a suggestion

Now we have heard how certain sounds and or music have been used as torture in certain prison facilities around the world and certain music is being used to deter younger Kiwi's from hanging around shopping centres i.e. Barry Manilow/. Perhaps Toyota may want to develop the chimes concept further where if drivers and / or passengers do not fasten seatbelts then Barry and friends could start singing out to us through the speaker system. Just a thought.

Have a wonderful Christmas and we will be back with you in the New Year with a few more tales of Living With the Toyota Corolla 2.0l Diesel

### Weeks 1-2

Toyota has kindly provided us with a Diesel variant of the very successful Toyota Corolla (it is New Zealand's, and the world's, leading selling mid-size car) to 'live with' for 12 weeks. The idea is to not only get a feel of what the vehicle is like and capable of, but to have the opportunity use it as a family car.

We'll discover how it handles on the regular family 'taxi' journeys in and around Auckland, but also on longer trips, plus the inevitable beach run to Piha for the surfing-mad younger son. The 14 year old is not driving himself there quite yet. There will be occasions when the vehicle has only one person in it, i.e. the typical urban commute including shopping trips, to having two up, right through to having four or five of us in the car.

All in all we should get a real sense of what this vehicle has to offer.

Apart from the D4D\* badging on the front left and right panels of the car, on the outside it looks no different to the petrol version. It is only the manual gear shift and

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the distinctive diesel rattle that you hear on start up that gives it away. For those who still believe diesels go *bang-rattle-thump*, I can tell you it really is only a rattle these days and this is only at idle and very low speeds.

If you want a diesel version of the Corolla there is only the manual version - a bit like Henry Ford's Model T colour selection I guess. In truth it is more to do with the fact that it is well known that manual vehicles are more fuel efficient than their automatic counterparts and it is this that Toyota are targeting.

Being raised in the age when manual gearboxes were the norm and "Tri-matic" (anyone recall the brand?) gearboxes was something new, I very quickly settled into using the manual gearbox. When first entering the Corolla I looked at the position of the gearshift, mounted on the curved centre console, and thought, 'nah not me'.



However, once I settled into the drivers seat and started to play with the gearshift I found the positioning far more ergonomic than the traditional positioning of the gearshift. Aesthetically it doesn't do it for me. Others, on hearing I was driving a diesel Corolla, came and took a peek and liked the look of it.

Gear selection is a breeze and with six forward gears to choose from. There is a gear pretty much for all ranges of use and provides a very smooth ride when moving up through the gears.

The sixth gear on the Corolla tends to not be needed until you are over 110km per hour if you believe the little gear selector light that shows up on your dash when the vehicles' brain feels you are not driving the car to its optimum.

However, I still have the habit of listening to the engine plus watching the rev counter, and sixth gear can kick in quite nicely somewhere at or just below the 100km mark depending on road conditions. Initially, I found the little light annoying. However, one observer pointed out that for their teenager who was not taught to drive a manual car, the gear selector light is quite useful. Fair call, and after about a week I virtually do not see the gear selector light at all.

One of the features that I am thoroughly taken with is the requirement for the driver to have their foot on the clutch prior to being able to start. This is not strictly a Toyota feature but is an excellent safety feature to have. It will not stop you bunny-hopping on take-off if you let out the clutch in a rather hasty manner but it will prevent you starting the car in gear and possibly leaping the car forward into the front of the garage or possibly a pedestrian's legs as they walk past your supposedly parked car.

I don't know statistically on how many occasions this may have happened. When talking to people who typically drive automatics, this safety feature is one that helps them get over the reluctance of driving a manual vehicle.

Well, that's the first **Living With** review of the Toyota Corolla 2.0l diesel. We will give you further insights and impressions as we use the vehicle over the next ten weeks. If you don't login again before Christmas, have a wonderful Christmas, drive safely, watch out for all the road works, take the extra time to reach your destinations, and thoroughly enjoy the Christmas holiday with your family and friends.

\* D4D is Toyota's branding of the direct injection, 4 stroke, common rail diesel which is designed to provide higher output power, better fuel economy, lower exhaust emissions and lower noise and vibration than conventional diesel engines.