

## Living With – the Toyota Corolla 2.0l Diesel

Weeks 5-6

### Almost Caught Out!

Let's just say that I have been getting very used to looking at the fuel gauge for days on end and not seeing any need to fund another branch of the governments' tax revenue; translation the fuel pump.

We drove the Toyota Corolla over the Christmas break in and around town out to the beaches a number of times and it certainly feels like my bank account is winning out. It looks like the fuel economy over time is good – if not excellent, at the end of the Living with period we'll let you know just how good. Meanwhile...

This tale is how I (the royal we here, as the other half also drives the car) almost got caught out when the warning "chime" let me know that I was low on fuel. I had been lulled into a false sense of security by the fact that the need to refill the Toyota Corolla diesel is probably only about half as often for a petrol equivalent, so another quick trip to the West Coast beaches should be a breeze.

When the warning emanated from somewhere in the dash my son and I were  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way to the beach where, naturally, there is no fuel pump within about 30 minutes. Decision time; do I or don't I turn around to find fuel or not? Now being male, reading manuals or seeking directions are strange concepts, so my belief was that we had enough (what does the 'E' stand for? Enough...) to get to the beach and then to the gas station on the return journey.

We had just peeked the beach over the hills and saw the fantastic surf and the decision was made for us, on we went. Admittedly at a more gentle rate and the long winding downhill to the beach gave my conscience a bit of a break. My son asked what happens if we run out of fuel on the way home, to which I replied, "Well I guess you will have to push the car to the nearest fuel station then." His expression showed that he was not sold on the idea. My calculations plus the onboard fuel computer and my recent driving habits gave me about 10km spare on the return trip.

We spent the morning on the beach and thoroughly enjoyed the surf, the fresh coffee from the local store and then it was time to head home. So immediately it was the climb up the hills away from the beach and once we made the top I checked the distance calculator again 35km remaining. Mmmmm, okay allow for the uphill section we just had, use the gears, keep the revs down and onward. The next time I checked it was 24km remaining and I was sure that I had not travelled 11km.

My son was looking on with a small sign of panic starting to show on his face. "Not a problem, we will get there with heaps to spare and remember the last kilometre or so to the fuel station is downhill so you won't have to push me that much." said I. Again that teenage look of disdain appeared. The distance to go display counted down from 16km, to 14km, to 11km and then with a mere 8km remaining we arrived at the gas station. Smug doesn't describe the look on my face – while the inside was offering up thanks to the gods of fuel economy.

As I started to put diesel into the Corolla, the fuel pump cut out and the attendant came rushing out to tell me I was putting diesel into a petrol car. I was able to inform her that the car was actually diesel powered so don't panic and thanks very much for her concern. Now how often are attendants this observant?

We then began to have a conversation about diesel versus petrol and the Corolla's performance, which I made clear that I was more than happy with the economy.

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What became clear from this conversation was that people are just getting their heads around the diesel car concept, helped by manufacturers like Toyota introducing diesel powered cars. The attendant was both impressed and surprised by the Corolla diesel, commenting that diesel does give a greater choice and that gas stations need to be geared up for seeing what they perceive as traditional petrol cars using diesel fuel.

I hadn't thought of it that way, but it does mean change is on the way on our 'road-scape' and that manufacturers, like Toyota, are helping change public perception... as well as making sure that people like me can make the gas station with fumes to spare!

### 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.

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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 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.

### **Living with....Toyota Corolla Diesel**

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.