



Hybrid on high

Most Australians now have a hybrid car high on their list

By MARTON PETTENDY

A NEW study by Roy Morgan Research has found that hybrid vehicles are high on the shopping lists of most new-car buyers in Australia.

According to a survey of 28,812 men and women who intended to purchase a new vehicle in the next four years, conducted Australia-wide between January, 2003, and April, 2007, more than 50 per cent said they would "seriously consider" buying a petrol-electric car.

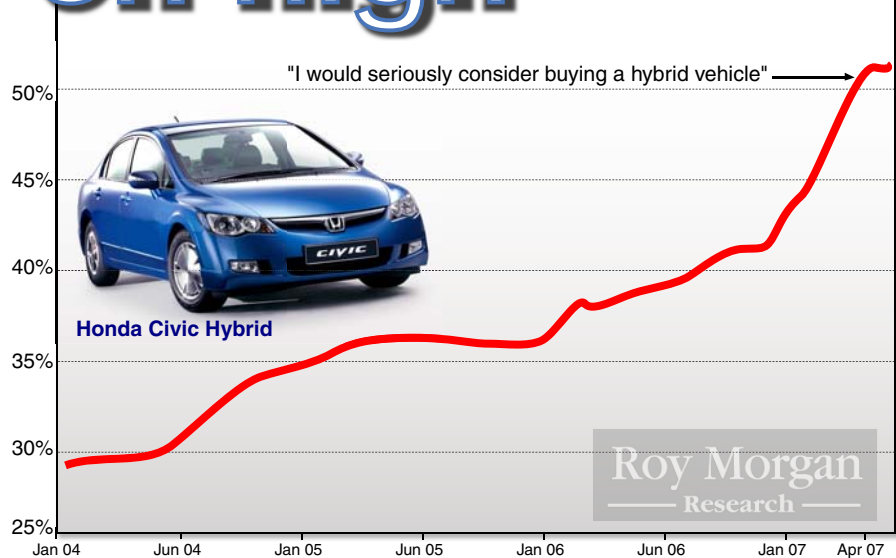
Published last week, the research shows that of those surveyed, 60 per cent of light- and small-car buyers are seriously considering hybrid vehicle technology.

Roy Morgan also found that 74 per cent of all new-car buyers now agree that "fuel efficiency is more important than high performance".

The leading research group says that



Toyota Prius



hybrid car consideration levels have increased at around eight per cent each year following the introduction of the petrol-electric Insight and Prius models from Honda and Toyota respectively in 2001.

It claims that a key driver in the recent increase in hybrid consideration is women in higher income households – predominately in Victoria and Queensland.

"As petrol prices continue to increase, global warming awareness rises, and alternatively powered vehicles become more versatile and affordable, we will continue to see a dramatic

rise in hybrid consideration and market share," said Roy Morgan Research director of business development, Norman Woodcock.

The only hybrid passenger cars sold in Australia are the Toyota Prius, Honda Civic Hybrid and the Lexus GS450h and RX400h.

The Prius is easily the best-selling hybrid in Australia, with an average of 329 sales per month in 2007, up from an average of 135 sales in 2006. Until this year, Toyota Australia has struggled to secure enough stock of the Prius, which has exceeded sales targets around the world, but is now starting to clear the backlog.