

Pope Francis can be seen to be encouraging the use of biofuels when he says:

“Until greater progress is made in developing widely accessible sources of renewable energy, it is legitimate to choose the less harmful alternative or to find short-term solutions.” (Laudato si’ #165)



Most cars and trucks run on fuels derived from oil. The two main problems with our overuse of oil is that there will not be sufficient for later generations and burning oil produces the gases that drive dangerous climate change. In Australia, the main alternatives (electric or hydrogen cars) currently have insufficient refuelling options and are beyond most people's budgets.

It is often possible to run a motor vehicle on diesel or petrol with a mix (5%, 10% or 85%) of ethanol derived from plant matter. Ethanol is considered a biofuel.

Positives of biofuels

- Made from many sources of renewable materials, in Australia this includes waste products like sorghum stems, spent grain or sugar cane.
- Leaves oil for other uses.
- Results in less CO₂ emissions than oil petrol, when production and use are considered.
- Generally produces less air pollution than petrol.

Negatives of biofuels

- Pure ethanol has lower energy content than petrol so you travel a shorter distance on the same size tank of fuel.
- Industrial agricultural production can damage the environment through clearing of native vegetation, chemical use, monoculture production and introducing invasive species.
- If crops for biofuels are produced with artificial fertilisers and transported a long way, energy return and greenhouse benefits can be low or negative.
- Shouldn't be used on some older vehicles (a list of suitable cars is at: www.fcai.com.au).

Driving efficiently – will use less of all fuel types

1. Accelerate and brake gently - *can save up to 30% fuel.*
2. Go with the flow - *slowdown early to let red traffic lights change to green and speed up a little before reaching the start of a hill and then allow the vehicle's momentum to carry the vehicle up the hill without working the engine harder.*
3. Lower speeds use less fuel - *travelling at 110km/h uses up to 25% more fuel than cruising at 90km/h.*
4. Remove roof racks or roof bars if they are not being used to carry *anything* – *can save up to 5%*
5. Maintain your car – *regular servicing can save up to 4% fuel.*
6. Keep tyres properly inflated - *under-inflated by 1 psi can reduce fuel efficiency by 3%.*
7. Remove unnecessary weight - *every extra 45 kg in a vehicle drops fuel efficiency by 2%*
8. Turn off your car while you wait - *turn the engine off when you're in a queue, or waiting for someone.*
9. Avoid congestion or drive less – *peak hour and busy roads mean more idling and more fuel used.*
10. Be smart with your air-con – *on milder days and at low speeds opening a window might suffice.*

For more information:

- CHOICE: www.choice.com.au
- Greenfleet Driving Tips <https://greenfleet.com.au/Individuals/Reduce-Emissions/Transport/Driving-Tips>
- RACV Fuel Info: <https://www.racv.com.au/on-the-road/driving-maintenance/fuel-prices/fuel-information.html>
- Queensland Government E10 ok <https://e10ok.initiatives.qld.gov.au/>