

When Frank Gardner speaks, you listen for the veteran racer and outspoken advocate of better driver education always has an opinion, and he's not afraid to voice it, particularly when it comes to motor sport and the standard of driving on our roads.

For more than 40 years Gardner has carved out an enviable reputation, first as a respected race driver and engineer, and later as an enthusiastic advocate of driver training.

As a highly respected contemporary of world champions such as Sir Jack Brabham, Jim Clark, Graham Hill and Jackie Stewart, Gardner made a name for himself racing across Europe in Formula One, sports cars and touring cars. Included in his many racing credits is the British Touring Car Championship that he won in a massive Chevy Camaro.

When he returned to Australia in the early 1970s Gardner brought with him a number of radical ideas, particularly for building sports sedans, which he put into practice in a wicked

Chevrolet Corvaire, in reality a Lola Formula 5000 chassis clothed in a Corvaire body.

After dominating local sports sedan racing in the Corvaire, he retired to the role of team manager and ran the factory BMW team in touring car racing, first with the BMW 635CSi and then with the M3, using drivers such as Allan Grice, Jim Richards and Tony Longhurst.

Later again he ran the BMW 2.0-litre team in the Australian Super Touring Championship, but his official association with the German company ended when it withdrew after the 1997 series.

No matter how you look at it Gardner has done the time, and he's earned the respect of the motor sport fraternity in Europe and Australia, so it's best to shut up and listen when he speaks, and when he opens a new museum dedicated to motor sport and its heroes you go along and take a look.

So it was in early December that I found myself at Norwell deep in the heart of sugar cane country just out of

through a rigorous program behind the wheel of a Mercedes-Benz C190, learning the correct techniques for driving the unique Gardner way.

At the end of their courses students will be sitting correctly in the car using their legs for support instead of the steering wheel, they'll be feeding the steering wheel through their hands the way Gardner insists, and constantly scanning their surroundings for potential danger spots.

They'll also be dodging around imaginary children and dogs, stopping on a 10 cent piece, and controlling skids like a champion racer.

If they take notice of the 69-year-old they'll be much better equipped to cope with the dangers of everyday driving and won't panic when confronted with a dangerous situation.

While driver training remains the prime function of the Performance Driving Centre, the new Motorsport Gallery is an entertaining and educational addition, one that Gardner hopes will draw people back to Norwell again and again.

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Brisbane on the way to Surfers Paradise as Dean Wills, CEO of Coca-Cola Amatil and one of Gardner's long time supporters threw open the doors to the Motorsport Gallery at Gardner's Performance Driving Centre.

The Gallery adds a new dimension to the Performance Driving Centre, Gardner's aim being to use it to help educate young and old alike about the advances in automotive technology and in particular their influence on vehicle safety.

Gardner established the Mercedes-Benz sponsored Performance Driving Centre on 20 hectares of prime sugar cane farming land in 1990 with the objective of providing state-of-the-art driver training for the everyday motorist.

Students in his courses are put

