

CHOICE OF REPAIRER

How workshops are working to support consumer choice

Workshops are increasing their efforts to support their customers' consumer rights.

Independent government reports have revealed that consumers are under increasing pressure to return to the place where they purchased their vehicles for regular logbook servicing.

Research conducted by the Australian Automotive Aftermarket Association (AAAA) found that about 39 percent of consumers felt that they did not have a choice, and they were of the false view that visiting their independent repairer would void the warranty.

Many car manufacturers are now extending the warranty period out to five and seven years and any consumer view that owners of vehicles under warranty have no choice is only going to make matters much worse for workshops.

But a separate study revealed very high levels of trust in our industry: 86 percent of consumers agreed that "once you find a good mechanic you stick with them;" 78 percent reported that they have a good relationship with their mechanic and 71 percent stated that they trust the mechanic's recommendations on parts.

The quality of the relationship between customers and workshops is a great foundation for a conversation about consumer rights. As a result of this research, workshops are increasingly likely to be having conversations with customers about fair competition and choice.

Consumers have choice

The advice from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission is that a consumer's

warranty rights are not affected by their use of an independent workshop as long as the service or repair is conducted by qualified staff using fit for purpose parts.

The Truth about New Car Servicing brochures are now widely available at workshops. Customers are using this information to support their warranty claims and to continue their patronage of their local workshop.

Concern about warranty rights also occurs when consumers are looking to modify vehicles including adding tow bars, frontal protection or suspension upgrades. New materials have now been developed to provide advice to consumers about modifications and warranty claims.

The fact is that modifying a vehicle does not, in itself, automatically void a manufacturer's warranty. Car manufacturers are required to fix manufacturing faults on vehicles during the warranty period: vehicle upgrades and the fitment of quality accessories does not affect this obligation unless the modification caused the fault.

Fair Competition

AAAA is working on several fronts to ensure a level playing field for the industry.

The increasing use of electronic logbooks can be problematic: some manufacturers do not allow workshops to access the logbook in order to record a scheduled service. As such it is likely that access to the eLogbook will be a feature of the new Mandatory Industry Code for Sharing Service and Repair information.

Until this new code is signed off by the government and becomes enforceable, it is recommended that workshops record the service and recommend that customers retain a copy in their glovebox. It's not ideal, but it's a stop gap measure to support consumers until the new Code is enacted.

Speaking of the Mandatory Code for data sharing, this is now government and opposition policy. The Federal Government Treasury Department is drafting the Code which will require all car manufacturers that sell into our market to provide vehicle service and repair information on fair and reasonable terms. Very soon our industry will be operating in a regime that closely mirrors the American system in which independents can access the same level of vehicle information that dealers have in real time.

The Mandatory code will be comprehensive and will require that car companies make available important information that has thus far been withheld:



THE TRUTH ABOUT NEW CAR SERVICING

AN INITIATIVE OF THE AUSTRALIAN AUTOMOTIVE AFTERMARKET ASSOCIATION

- Dimensions and tolerances for mechanical parts.
- Initialisation and reset codes for computerised systems.
- Calibration files for electronic control units (ECUs)
- Specifications for oils and lubricants.
- Diagrams of wiring looms /electronic component voltages.
- Repair manuals, body repair manuals and wiring diagrams.
- Supplements or updates, including software updates.
- Technical service bulletins.

The new Mandatory Code is expected to be finalised this year. It's a wonderful demonstration of what can be achieved when the industry speaks with one voice.

For further information or to order your free instore consumer education kits, contact the AAAA National Office on 03 9545 3333 or info@aaaa.com.au

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Your car, Your choice.
What is the "Choice of Repairer" Campaign?

The aim of the Choice of Repairer Campaign is to protect choice and competition in the vehicle repair, servicing, replacement parts and accessories sector by eliminating any technical or legal barriers that impact on the Australian consumers right to have their vehicle serviced, maintained and repaired at competitive prices in the workshop of their choice.

www.choiceofrepairer.com.au