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I-CAR Australia
2728 Logan Rd
Eight Mile Plains
QLD, 4113

Mandatory Information Sharing in Collision Repair

To Whom it may concern,

I-CAR Australia was launched in September 2006 and joins Canada and New Zealand as part of I-CAR's global expansion. I-CAR Australia is operated by the industry for the industry under a Licence Agreement. The Australian program focuses on providing Post Qualification skills enhancement, education, training and information to the entire industry.

I-CAR develops and delivers technical training programs to professionals in all areas of the collision industry. In addition, I-CAR provides a communication forum for anyone interested in proper collision repair. I-CAR Australia's primary funding is derived from student tuition and services. This assures that I-CAR Australia can remain unbiased in developing programs and services on an industry-wide basis.

In Australia, I-CAR is registered as is a charitable trust or organisation, with a restricted number of industry trustees. The Board of Management is elected from representatives of members and from that board the executive management team is drawn.

The I-CAR vision is that every person in the collision repair industry has the information, knowledge and skills required to perform complete, safe and quality repairs for the ultimate benefit of the consumer.

I-CAR has training agreements with 28 Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) internationally as well as providing accreditation to collision businesses and insurers that are endorsed by many of the OEMs working with I-CAR.

The Australian collision repair industry performs repairs to over 65 different brands of motor vehicles with many hundred model variants included in this number. The scope of understanding the complexities of each vehicle due to the differences in architecture, design, material usage and technology implemented is challenging for any collision repair business.

In Australia, 95% of collision repair facilities perform only the collision damage that has occurred and leave many of the mechanical aspects to certified businesses, generally OEM dealers in the majority of repairs. Collision repairers are NOT mechanics but Body Repair technicians who perform different tasks to that of a automotive mechanical technician.

As I-CAR provides a service to the collision repair industry, we feel that a better understanding of the entire collision industry is required.

Unlike many international markets where OEMs own and perform repairs within their own businesses, the Australian collision repair industry is independent. There are between 3,000 to 3,500 collision repairers currently operating in Australia with OEMs having ownership of less than 1% of those.

Collision repair work is distributed through Insurer approved network repairers in the majority of incidents. Due to the enormous number of models being repaired daily and the incoming wave of new technology being introduced, we have labelled this the 'Technical Tsunami'.

For the collision repair industry to provide safe and complete repairs, the access to information is required to be available. Within each manufacturers' model range, the build architecture and structures are also unique as different design and function criteria are satisfied.

Of course, the reality is that even with the repair specifications provided, there is no guarantee that the repair information will be performed as specified. Many of the tasks required in modern vehicles require specialist equipment and training. The investment made by many repairers to ensure they can perform repairs as specified can be quite large.

The unfortunate reality is that making repair procedures openly available is required, however it is incumbent on the work providers to ensure the repairs are directed to the correct facilities.

For collision repairs there needs to be a mechanism where the information provided is relayed to only skilled and equipped repairers. Having a business trading as a collision repair business does not provide enough guarantee that repairs will be completed in the correct manner. Without a controlled process that stops repairs being directed to facilities that are not fully equipped and trained, the delivery of the information in this context does not necessarily guarantee safe and complete repairs.

The financial implications on the industry to provide repairs to all vehicles is often encumbered by repair cost models seen within the collision repair industry.

A solid recommendation would be to only provide information to repairers who satisfy the OEM minimum criteria for repairing their vehicles. This would also help tailor the market to specific scope of damages, specialist brand repairers.

The challenge is a large one but the complexities of the modern passenger vehicle continue to increase year to year and by not providing the information is a potential threat to safety.

The collision repair industry is a stand alone one that requires information not only on structure, but safety restraint systems, Advanced Driver Assist Systems, Glazing and electrics. As most technological systems in cars are placed in the most vulnerable areas in a collision, the requirement for repair procedures is critical.

It is understood that the IP belongs to the manufacturer and any information made available can be priced accordingly. The collision repair industry has paid for access to information for many years and this is not the concern. A larger concern is the importation of vehicles where no repair data is available, presenting a huge unknown in the repair requirements of such vehicles.

Mark Czvitkovits

CEO

I-CAR AUSTRALIA

T: +61 7 3219 9088

M: +61 416 156 759

E: mark.czvitkovits@i-car.com.au