

G'day,

The restrictive practices whereby motor vehicle manufacturers refuse to make available the necessary information to diagnose and/or repair their products is outrageous and amounts to extortion. Such information should be made available to anyone who wishes to use it whether they be a mechanic, engineer or home workshop repairer. I've been repairing my own vehicles ever since I bought my first one, chiefly because I can do it better and cheaper and with more care than any mechanic I've ever dealt with. That any manufacturer should attempt to force me to place myself at the not so tender mercies of dealership repair shops is quite beyond the pale and we should not stand for it.

Worse still, a visit behind the sumptuous waiting room will quickly demonstrate that dealerships usually have only one or two qualified mechanics while the lion's share of the work is carried out by labourers under their not-very-attentive direction. Worse still, instead of diagnosing mechanical problems, they follow a strict regime of parts replacement until the problem disappears. Thus the customer pays for a high percentage of unnecessary work.

Preventing the vehicle's owner from accessing the electronic diagnostics exacerbates this problem.

While I am on this subject, something also needs to be done about the modern method of battery charge control which, for reasons so far not justified, shuts down the charge rate to a trickle or stops the charging altogether a short time after a car has been started. This is resulting in a large number of battery 'failures' that are leaving motorists unnecessarily stranded because their battery is never fully charged.

When they call the RACV for help they are often attended by the RACV battery van operated by a driver using an entirely inappropriate instrument that he applies to the flat battery, declares it dead, sells them a new one and pockets the commission he is paid for each new battery sale. I'm not kidding about this. I have already contacted RACV and the instrument manufacturers (in USA) about it and have thereby confirmed that this practice is shonky.

Luckily, when the RACV tried to pull this one on me after I'd accidentally left my headlights on, my electrical engineering background saved me from falling for it. The battery their man declared to be completely done for served me well for the next 3 ½ years. Following the incident, I surveyed my colleagues and four remarked that the RACV had attempted to pull the same swizz on them.

Cheers Ron
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