

New guidelines for car servicing: 4 things motorists need to know

Most drivers would by now be acquainted with the new guidelines to competition in the South African automotive aftermarket. There is still uncertainty out there, however, in terms of what this really means for the general motorist. Kate Elliott, chief executive officer of Right to Repair South Africa (R2RSA), offers four things consumers need to know about the new rules to help clear things up.



Source: [Fixabay](#)

Elliott says, “At the end of the day the guidelines are there to support consumer choice, fair competition and competitive pricing. There are about 12.7 million vehicles on the road in South Africa and all of these will need to be serviced and repaired during their lifetimes. And now you as the consumer, have the power to select where you want to take your car for servicing.”



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She says there has been a lot of noise in the market but one cannot dispute the fact that vehicle workshops that are operating in a truly competitive market will provide better and more affordable services and repairs.

Here are the four main things consumers need to know:

1. You have the right to choose your service provider

Independent service providers can now service and perform maintenance on cars both during the in-warranty period and after. “You may choose to service your vehicle at the dealer from whom you purchased your vehicle or you can elect to shop around for the best possible price and service quality,” says Elliott.

2. Your warranty is protected no matter which service provider you choose

Elliott says previously, motor manufacturers would void the warranty if a vehicle was not serviced at the dealership. The Competition Commission has now declared this practice as incompatible with the Competition Act.

3. You are entitled to use non-original spare parts

With cost always being an issue, the good news is that consumers can now shop around and are entitled to use non-original spare parts (for example oil filters) in your vehicle during your vehicle's in-warranty period and manufacturers are not entitled to void your warranty. "It is no different to selecting a generic antibiotic – the same just more cost-effective," she says.

4. Unbundling of service/maintenance plans from the price of a vehicle

When you buy a car, vehicle retailers are now obliged to provide you with separate prices for your vehicle and for any value-added products that they might have on offer, such as service and maintenance plans.

Car retailers are also obliged to sell you a new vehicle without a service or maintenance plan if you do not wish to purchase one. "You do the maths," she says, "and you may be pleasantly surprised at just how much you can knock off the purchase price of your car."



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The removal of previous barriers is definitely in the consumer interest. The fact that technical information and special tools will now be even more accessible to independent workshops will help them tremendously in diagnosing and keeping the costs for the consumer down. Ultimately more competition always leads to better prices, better quality and better service.

"What is absolutely key, however, is that motorists do their homework. We strongly advise motorists to make use of reputable independent service providers and make sure they have sufficient defective workmanship and liability insurance in place, something which, in terms of the guidelines, all independent workshops are required to tell you. The manufacturers are entitled to void the warranty on a part which has been damaged as a result of the use of inferior parts, incorrect service procedures and/or faulty workmanship. This is where an independent workshop's insurance will kick in and cover you. That is why only using reputable providers is key," concludes Elliott.

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