

BULLETIN

Victorian Automobile Dealers Association



Reference No: consumer/MM-04-20

Date issued: 09/04/2020

Consumers being told not to visit dealerships

VACC has received several calls and emails from members of the Victorian Automobile Dealers Association (VADA) regarding dealership customers being pulled over by the Victoria Police and asked where they were going. When replying they were advised by Police that having a car serviced is not an essential service and that they must return home.

Case study 1

Regional Vic dealer

As discussed this morning, the police pulled over one of our customers this morning and they asked her where she was going. She advised them she was taking her car to us to be serviced. They told her that it was not an essential activity and that she should return home. She told them that she needed her car for work. They gave her a warning.

This is an over the top response by Victoria Police, and they are providing incorrect information to the public. Having your car serviced is not a prohibited activity.

Mick, could you please speak to the relevant ministers to send an urgent clarification to Vic Pol. This will have a detrimental impact on our business and industry as a whole.

Case study 2

Metro dealer

Just passing on some information. We just had a customer ring up and cancel a service appointment because she advised she rang Vic Police and asked if car servicing is classed as 'essential' in which they replied that it is not and if she is caught she will be issued with a fine.

What has VACC done regarding this situation?

VACC has written to the Minister for Police, Lisa Neville MP, and advised of the situation. We hope to receive a reply from the Minister's office soon.

What should VADA members do?

If your dealership is experiencing this issue, **it would be useful to have the Victorian Police member name, and station of domicile. This information should then be passed to VACC for action.**

What public messaging is VACC undertaking on behalf of dealers?

Aside from lobbying for recognition of on automotive retail as an essential service (see below messaging to Governments) VACC has been active in the media. VADA members should note that an advertising campaign will kick off over Easter that will see VACC members from a range of industry sectors, including Franchise Dealers, telling community that they are open and raring to go. There is also direct marketing paraphernalia on the VACC website for member download.

Other VACC action on the messaging of Government(s) to consumers

A big factor impacting retail sales figures is the negative influence of constant mixed messages coming from State and Federal Governments as to whether people (consumers) can visit a retail business.

VACC has written to both Federal and State Governments advising that it would be helpful if government(s) would assist retail operators by placing an emphasis on the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic), Section 20, Clause 6 (1)(Viii) 'Leaving premises to obtain necessary goods and services' where it states that a person can leave a premises to obtain goods and services provided by:

(viii) a retail facility that is not prohibited from operating by the Restricted Activity Directions.

VACC yesterday received correspondence, in writing, from the Victorian Government that is clear in that there is no current listing of essential services in Vic as they relate to COVID-19. It is also correct that the Victorian Government has listed businesses that are not permitted to operate, cafes-sit down food, cinemas etc. Under this criteria automotive retail is not prohibited. This doesn't mean that everything else in an essential service, however, in our view, can still operate with the appropriate COVID-19 defence actions in place.

VADA recognizes the requirement of government to issue health warnings for the betterment, wellbeing and safety of community. VADA would prefer that the Victorian Government work within the legislated auspices of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act (2008) and announce that retail businesses can be open and that consumers may attend those businesses with confidence. This must be done whilst maintaining and reemphasizing the government's strong and prudent messaging that social distancing measures must always apply. Industry supports those separation practices and has reemphasised its messaging.

Please continue to lean on VACC for assistance.

Michael McKenna MBA

Industry Policy Advisor

Industry Divisions

VACC

Level 7 | 464 St Kilda Road | Melbourne Vic 3004

P: 03 9829 1280 | **M:** 0418 822 939 | **F:** 03 9867 1795 | **W:** vacc.com.au