

Media Release

For immediate use

4 June 2015

Do not consider or attempt to disable, deactivate or remove faulty airbags from your vehicle.

Following the world's largest recall of vehicles due to faulty airbags, VACC has sent a strong message to owners of affected vehicles.

"Tampering with airbags is more likely to contribute to the damage caused by an accident, in the same way that you are at greater risk if you do not wear a seatbelt. Airbags should never be tampered with by motorists or unqualified people. Airbags are not a discretionary item of equipment and cannot be simply turned off and on again. The mechanism is technically sophisticated and forms an important part of the vehicle's engineering. They are designed to protect drivers and passengers from injuries in the event of a crash and a vehicle with an inoperative air bag is not working as it should; deeming it unroadworthy," VACC Executive Director, Geoff Gwilym said.

VACC has also advised the Federal Government that if it thinks the airbag recall issue is a headache now, wait until it deregulates new car imports.

The vast majority of vehicles purchased in Australia are from local dealers. Motorists, fleet owners and businesses take comfort knowing they have a well-established support system on their doorstep to overcome any issues. Responsibility for the current recall falls on the car company which works with the dealer network to ensure replacement parts are provided to the local dealer and the refit is conducted without cost to the consumer.

Should the Federal Government introduce a proposal to deregulate new car imports, then motorists, fleet owners and businesses will not have this level of support for future recalls. In fact, if they ever receive a recall notice, the local dealer may not get involved, and it'll be the responsibility of the vehicle owners to navigate the process themselves.

"Enabling personally imported vehicles into Australia is likely to result in consumers, who have imported their own vehicle, having to find contact details, work out time zones and speak foreign languages in the event of future safety recalls. Whether the recall is large or small, if you have bought a vehicle directly from overseas and that manufacturer issues a recall, not only will you have to make all the arrangements yourself, you may also incur huge out-of-pocket costs," VACC Executive Director, Geoff Gwilym, said.

"The current Takata airbag recall also highlights the valuable community service our well-established current dealer network provides. Despite the enormity of this situation, Australians are reassured knowing that car dealers are on top of the issue, vehicles will be checked, replacement parts will be supplied and refitting will be free of charge," Mr Gwilym said.

VACC has communicated to its Licensed Motor Car Trader members, advice and information about the current recall. Consumers should note that used car dealers will be able to discuss the process of buying a vehicle subject to a recall notice and that car companies will contact affected vehicle owners when replacement parts are available.

For further recall information, visit www.vacc.gov.au