



Replacement Parts Q&A

Q. What is the Replacement Parts Project?

A. The National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) has provided funding to ARTSA to raise awareness with consumers of the safety implications of choosing poor quality heavy vehicle replacement spare parts. The project will also provide a code of conduct and best practice guidelines to parts suppliers.

Q. What are the safety concerns with Replacement Parts?

A. The industry has safety concerns over the lack of a verifiable quality standard or measure for some imported heavy vehicle replacement (spare) parts in Australia. Many safety and compliance-critical parts are being supplied and fitted to in-service heavy vehicles that are poor or unverified quality. Consequently, road users are at an increased risk of crashes or breakdowns involving heavy vehicles. Additionally, operators and drivers of heavy vehicles could be vulnerable to enforcement violations and loss of vehicle productivity.

Q. What are examples of safety critical parts?

A. Safety critical parts include items such as brake linings and pads, steering arms, shock absorbers mechanical couplings and headlights – where if they fail – there is a very high risk of a crash.

Q. What are the risks in buying imported spare parts?

A. Some replacement parts seem to avoid the testing and certification requirements that arise from the obligation that a vehicle continue to comply with the original Australian Design Rules. Unfortunately, Australia does not have effective regulatory controls that exclude from sale unsafe or nonconforming replacement parts that are imported into Australia.

Q. What are the four things consumers need to know about imported replacement parts?

A. An imported replacement part in some cases might cost less, but this needs to be weighed up against:

- 1** The durability of the part could be significantly less than an approved part – costing more in workshop maintenance through more frequently replacing the worn-out imported part.
- 2** You could be legally liable for a crash caused by a non-conforming safety critical replacement part.
- 3** You could be vulnerable to claims by drivers that the vehicle was defective, and this caused a crash.

- 4 Enforcement officers are increasingly looking for unapproved parts when a vehicle is being inspected on the roadside. For example, unapproved shock absorbers on a road-friendly suspension will invalidate the basis for claiming a concessional mass limit, potentially resulting in an over-mass violation.

Q. What can replacement spare parts suppliers do?

- A. Suppliers can help consumers make better purchasing decisions by having a Code of Practice that they will provide information to explain the benefits of sourcing and installing quality replacement parts that meet recognised design standards. Suppliers can also explain to consumers the risks of using parts that have no reliable quality & durability status.

Q. Does the project aim to exclude non-OEM supplied parts from the project?

A. No.

All parts suppliers should want to be involved by adopting Good Practice Guidelines so that consumers can be confident of getting a safe and compliant part at a good price, and the supplier is not involved in a 'race-to-the-bottom'. The good practice guidelines will be applicable to all parts suppliers.

Q. Do governments and their departments and authorities regulate for replacement part quality and compliance?

A.

- The state governments are responsible for in-service vehicle regulation. Apart from requiring vehicles to continue to comply with the Australian Design Rules, state governments have not introduced specific requirements for replacement-part quality.
- The NHVR is interested in achieving better compliance by heavy vehicles with the road worthiness and compliance-worthiness standards. It has funded this project. The NHVR is also taking over roadside vehicle inspection functions, so this project could inform the NHVR.
- ACCC has some powers to mandate technical standards but leaves vehicle standards regulation to the Federal Authority, which is not responsible for in-service vehicles. It does oversee safety recalls in Australia.
- The Federal vehicle-standards regulator (in the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities) has not power to regulate outside the national standards (which are the Australian Design Rules). It passes on complaints about replacement-part durability and quality to the NHVR.

Q. Where can I get further information?

A. Visit www.artsa.com.au/articles/index.html to get further replacement part information or contact Greg Rowe, Executive Director, ARTSA on 0407825132.