

The Way Ahead:
**Women and the Motor Vehicle
Industry**

This report was produced by a National Working Party comprised of representatives from Departments/ Offices of Women's Policy and Fair Trading for the Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs.

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Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs

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Executive Summary

This report is the culmination of stage one of a national project focusing on women and the motor vehicle industry. It presents a comprehensive picture of how women fare when buying a car or having their car repaired or serviced and identifies a number of strategies for consideration by government and industry to address the key concerns to emerge from the research.

The project developed through the commitment of government, industry and consumer bodies to ensuring that women are treated equitably in the marketplace.

The issue of women as consumers has been on the agenda of the Commonwealth/State Ministers' Conference on the Status of Women since 1994. In August 1999 the Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs endorsed Queensland Minister for Women's Policy and Minister for Fair Trading Judy Spence's proposal for a National *Women as Consumers - Motor Vehicle Industry Project*. It endorsed the establishment of a National Working Party comprising representatives from consumer affairs agencies and women's policy areas of government across Australia, with Queensland having secretariat responsibility for co ordinating the project. The National Working Party worked in close consultation with industry and relevant community organisations in the development of this report.

The results are based primarily on survey and call centre/complaints data collated for the national project by all states and territories in Australia. 3,994 women from New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania, South Australia, Western Australia, and the Northern Territory responded to the *Women Car Buyer's Survey*. 419 women from the Australian Capital Territory, the Northern Territory, Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia responded to the *Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services*. 500 women from metropolitan and regional Victoria were surveyed, using an amended survey instrument, about their experience in purchasing and servicing motor vehicles. More than 100 women in New South Wales responded to a 'Have Your Say' campaign specifically seeking feedback on women's experiences in the motor vehicle industry and 53 women participated in the New South Wales Department of Fair Trading's Call Centre survey.

Some results are cause for concern and indicate an unacceptable rate of customer dissatisfaction. These results are the focus of this report. However, these should be viewed in the wider context of the overall findings which are generally positive.

The majority of respondents to the *Women Car Buyers Survey* indicated a positive response to questions about service and treatment when buying a car:

- 75 per cent agreed that the salesperson understood what they wanted;
- 78 per cent agreed that they were served promptly and courteously;
- 72 per cent agreed that the salesperson had helpful answers to questions;
- 67 per cent agreed that the salesperson was interested in what they wanted;
- 62 per cent agreed that the salesperson understood that the buying decision was theirs;
- 61 per cent agreed that the salesperson did not treat them in a sexist, patronising manner.

Eighty-four per cent of Victorian women who had experience in buying a new or second hand car reported that they were satisfied with the treatment they received.

Similarly in relation to the *Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services*:

- 86 per cent agreed that they were satisfied with their most recent service;
- 64 per cent agreed that they were satisfied with their most recent repair;
- 53 per cent agreed that they not were treated in a patronising manner;

- 81 per cent agreed that the service centre/repairer understood what they wanted;
- 68 per cent agreed that the service centre/repairer explained clearly what service/repairs were necessary;
- 54 per cent agreed that the service centre/repairer did not use technical terms which were difficult to understand;
- 64 per cent agreed that they could trust the service centre/repairer to do what was required to service/repair their car and do a good job; and
- 63 per cent agreed that they did not feel that they were being talked into unnecessary servicing/repairs.

Eighty-nine per cent of Victorian women who had experience in servicing or repairing their car were satisfied with the treatment they received.

Despite these positive findings, the following results highlight the need for change in the industry.

Of respondents to the *Women Car Buyers Survey*:

- 51 per cent said they did not enjoy the car buying experience;
- 24 per cent said the sales person did not understand that the buying decision was theirs;
- 20 per cent felt they were treated in a sexist and patronising manner; and
- 20 per cent thought they paid more for their car than a male would have.

Of respondents to the *Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services*:

- 49 per cent indicated dissatisfaction with having their car serviced or repaired;
- 36 per cent said that being a female had a bearing on how they were treated;
- Of those women dissatisfied with a previous service, 40 per cent did not make a complaint;
- Of those dissatisfied with a previous repair, 28 per cent did not make a complaint;
- 26 per cent said they were treated in a patronising manner;
- 20 per cent said the service centre/ repairer used technical terms which were difficult to understand.

Thirteen per cent of Victorian women who participated in a telephone survey were not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the treatment they received when buying a new or second hand car. 10 per cent were not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the treatment they received when getting their car serviced or repaired.

Fifty-eight per cent of women who responded to New South Wales's call centre survey felt they received worse treatment because of their gender. 95 per cent of respondents to the 'Have Your Say' campaign reported a negative experience and 64 per cent related to vehicle sales.

These findings add to a considerable body of research conducted over the past six years which has examined a number of aspects of women's experiences in the motor vehicle industry and indicate that not a great deal has changed in relation to how women are treated as consumers in the motor vehicle industry since research first began in 1994. This is despite the significant clout women now exercise as consumers in the motor vehicle industry and the considerable efforts the industry is making to capture this lucrative and growing segment of the new car market.

Based on the major findings as outlined above, three key areas are identified as useful starting points on which to base strategies for the future. These are:

1. Changing the perceptions and attitudes of the motor vehicle industry towards women;
2. Enhancing women's capacity to deal equitably with the motor vehicle industry; and
3. Improving processes to protect consumers of the motor vehicle industry.

A number of options were identified in previous research, by reference groups and working parties around the country and by the New South Wales Department for Women in its Discussion Paper. The fact that many of the same strategies were identified independently by different jurisdictions, indicates there is already a degree of unanimity about the options that are most appropriate.

The extent of the industry's commitment to addressing the key concerns is further evidenced by the fact that many of the options raised are already in place or under serious consideration. The challenge is to build on these and develop new strategies that will ultimately benefit all players in the motor vehicle industry.

The following list of options represents a summary of those presented in the body of the report:

- Increase the representation of women in the industry;
- Support women who choose to work in the industry;
- Provide customer service training for people working in the industry;
- Provide comprehensive information, training and advice to women about buying a car, repairs and services and car maintenance;
- Include information about buying a car and vehicle service and repairs in life skills courses at high school;
- Consider the introduction of a cooling off period for purchase of vehicles, such as is in operation in Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory. Queensland has recognised these provisions as a means of addressing high pressure sales concerns and have included them in a recently released bill. New South Wales is currently considering the introduction of a cooling off period regime;
- Encourage the industry to establish and maintain an effective internal complaints handling system;
- Education and awareness campaigns about the complaints mechanisms which operate in each jurisdiction and the rights and responsibilities of consumers of the motor vehicle industry;
- Development of codes of conduct for the industry.

These options are not a comprehensive list. It is envisaged that subsequent to consideration of the report, jurisdictions will, in partnership with industry, consumer and relevant community organisations, select the most appropriate options and determine the most appropriate strategies to implement either individually or on a national basis.

Development and implementation of selected strategies will form stages two and three of the project. Evaluation of these strategies will be conducted in the final stage of the project.

Given the commitment already shown by the motor vehicle industry to change industry perceptions of women, there is genuine cause for optimism that the way ahead for women in the motor vehicle industry is a positive one.

The National Working Party recommends that states and jurisdictions, in partnership with industry and other relevant organisations, conduct a stocktake of resources and initiatives and develop an action plan drawing on the options raised in this paper.

Project Aim

The aim of the *Women as Consumers - Motor Vehicle Industry Project* is to identify the extent to which women are discriminated against in purchasing, servicing and repairing vehicles and to develop strategies, where appropriate, to address this discrimination. The desired outcome of the project is a better informed and more equitable market place in which women consumers and industry members know their respective rights and responsibilities.

The project focuses on interactions between motor vehicle industry representatives and women consumers with respect to the *purchase* of a motor vehicle, either new or used, and to motor vehicle *service* and *repair*. Financing, credit and insurance issues relating to the industry and retail supply of motor vehicle accessories were not within the scope of this project. However it is important to note that these are issues of concern and can have a significant impact on women's financial standing and debt levels.

The term "motor vehicle", for the purposes of the project includes the various forms of vehicles, for example, sedans, utilities, trucks, 4WD vehicles and motorcycles which are approved and licensed under traffic legislation for use on public roads.

Methodology

A National Working Party, consisting of representatives from Departments/ Offices of Women's Policy and Departments/ Offices of Fair Trading, was established with Queensland as the lead jurisdiction. Each jurisdiction undertook research to determine the extent and nature of discrimination against women in the motor vehicle industry. This research informed the development of possible strategies jurisdictions may consider to address the issues identified.

The information below provides detail on the research undertaken in each jurisdiction. Analysis of this research is contained in this report. However, more detailed State specific analysis is available on request from local Offices/Departments of Fair Trading or Offices/Departments for Women's Policy.

Surveys – Questionnaires

The NRMA in New South Wales developed a self completion questionnaire in relation to the purchase of motor vehicles. The *Women Car Buyers Survey* (see Appendix 1) was distributed in the November/December 1999 issue of the NRMA's *Open Road* magazine. 2,445 responses were received from women. The results of the survey were analysed by the NRMA and Quadrant Research Services and a report of the survey findings was released.

The RACQ in Queensland distributed the same survey in the February 2000 edition of the *Road Ahead* magazine. The Queensland Office of Women's Policy and the Office of Fair Trading also developed a *Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services* (see Appendix 2) and distributed both surveys throughout the community via women's and consumer groups. The Motor Trades Association of Queensland and other members of the Queensland Reference Group provided input into the development of survey instruments and assisted with distribution.

Western Australia distributed both surveys on the Ministry's website and at a women's expo and advertised in the weekly publication called *Ms Perth* distributed in the Perth CBD. South Australia distributed the *Women's Car Buyers Survey* through the Adelaide Motor Show, International Women's Day functions, the Women's Information Service, the Women's Advisory Council, rural field days and through the Officer of Consumer and Business Affairs.

The Northern Territory included the surveys in mail outs by the Women's Advisory Council and mail outs of renewal notices sent out by the Automobile Association of the Northern Territory (AANT). Copies of the surveys were issued to the service crews of the AANT who distributed them to people requiring road service and were also distributed at government functions and through the Motor Trades Association and other interest groups.

Tasmania distributed the surveys via the 'Women Tasmania' web site. The survey was also publicised by a government media release and a link to the 'Women Tasmania' site was placed on the Tasmanian Department of Justice web site. Copies of the surveys were available from the Office of Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading.

Results of the two surveys, distributed by Queensland, the Northern Territory, Western Australia and Tasmania, were analysed by the Statistical Services Branch, Families, Youth and Community Care Queensland. South Australia's Office for the Status of Women conducted its own analysis of the surveys it distributed.

The numbers of female respondents to the surveys were as follows:

Jurisdiction	Car Buyers Survey	Repairs and Services Survey
Australian Capital Territory	Included in NSW figures	82
New South Wales	2445	
Northern Territory	284	134
Queensland	892	142
South Australia	310	
Tasmania	30	38
Western Australia	33	23
Total	3994	419

Table 1: Number of female respondents by jurisdiction to the *Women Car Buyers Survey* and the *Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services*.

The Women's Policy Office in Western Australia developed a further questionnaire which gave women the opportunity to talk about their experiences when purchasing, servicing and/or repairing vehicles. The questionnaire was distributed at a consultation the office conducted with government and community agencies. Forty-four responses were received.

Surveys - Phone

The New South Wales Department of Fair Trading conducted a Call Centre survey over an eight week period from March to May 2000 with enquiries relating to the motor vehicle industry. 53 women participated.

The 'Have Your Say' phone-in campaign was conducted by the Department for Women in New South Wales from March until May 2000. The campaign collected qualitative data from women consumers and representatives of the motor vehicle industry, in particular from regional and rural New South Wales, regarding their experiences relating to the purchase, servicing or repairs of a motor vehicle. In total, 101 people, predominantly women, contacted the Women's Information and Referral Service (WIRS) freecall number and case studies were collected from eighty-three callers.

Market research

Victoria commissioned market research consultants Newspoll to conduct quantitative research among 500 Victorian women (400 metropolitan, 100 regional) regarding their experiences in buying a car or having their car serviced or repaired. Respondents were selected by means of a stratified random sample process and interviews were conducted by telephone.

Case studies, workshops and reference groups

In Western Australia, New South Wales and Victoria case studies and workshops have been used to gather information. South Australia, New South Wales and Queensland have established reference groups with participants from industry, consumer and women's organisations to provide input.

Audit of Laws

Each jurisdiction conducted an audit of laws and regulations within their jurisdiction relating to the purchase, service and repair of motor vehicles. Completed audits were collated, evaluated and compared to determine gaps and specific consumer protection mechanisms which are in place in jurisdictions. These are available on request from local Offices/Departments of Fair Trading or Offices/Departments for Women's Policy.

Analysis of complaint data

Several jurisdictions analysed complaints data from the Offices of Fair Trading (See Appendix 3), Legal Aid and other relevant agencies. Similarly motor vehicle industry groups and automobile clubs collected complaints data for the project.

Background

The treatment of women by the motor vehicle industry has been the focus of a number of major reports and conferences over the past decade.

Women's perceived or real disadvantage when buying a motor vehicle was first highlighted in a 1994 report *Women as Consumers in Australian Franchised Automotive Dealerships*. While overall the analysis indicated that the concerns many female shoppers had about entering a car showroom were not validated by their actual experience, it did establish some key differences in how women were treated in comparison to male shoppers. The study concluded that in a number of cases either female shoppers were not treated as genuine customers with the ability to purchase in their own right, or that a significant number of salespeople were uncomfortable with, or ill-equipped to sell to female customers.¹

Allyson Foster's seminal report *Do Women Pay More?* identified several areas where women did not enjoy the same status as men in the marketplace including the motor vehicle sales and repairs industry. It found that despite the earning potential of women and the decision making power women have both independently and inside the family, women were still not receiving the same standard of service as men.²

This apparent dissatisfaction was reflected in a *Benchmark Survey of Consumer Issues in New South Wales* commissioned by the New South Wales Department of Fair Trading in 1997. The Survey found that consumer dissatisfaction with vehicle service/repairs was very high and identified this as an area in the marketplace in need of improvement.³

The perceived or real difference in how women consumers are treated in the motor vehicle industry was also a key finding in the New South Wales *Motor Vehicle Repair Industry Council (MVRIC) Study*, commissioned by the New South Wales Department of Women and MVRIC to survey the experiences of women consumers in the motor vehicle repair industry. The responses indicated that the majority of women who had been through a dispute process believed that they were treated differently by repairers and that this difference was more negative than positive.⁴

These research findings have not gone unnoticed. Foster's *Do Women Pay More?* report was used as a catalyst by the Commonwealth/State Ministers' Conference on the Status of Women to develop the theme of 'Women as Consumers'. New South Wales, through its Department for Women, was the first state to develop partnerships with industry to begin to address some of the emerging issues of concern.

In August 1999 the Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs endorsed the Queensland Minister for Women's Policy and Minister for Fair Trading Judy Spence's proposal for a national *Women as Consumers - Motor Vehicle Industry Project* and all states and territories expressed their commitment to examine this important issue. The Council endorsed the establishment of a National Working Party comprising representatives from consumer affairs agencies and women's policy areas of government across Australia. Queensland has secretariat responsibility for coordinating the project. This report is the outcome of the first stage of the project to gather data about women's experiences in the motor vehicle industry and to identify possible initiatives

¹ Martec Australia and Test Purchasing Australia, *Women as Consumers in Australian Franchised Automotive Dealerships*, April 1994

² Foster, Allyson, Consumer Law Centre Victoria, *Do Women Pay More?* November 1997

³ Keys Young P/L, Department of Fair Trading, *Benchmark Survey of Consumer Issues in New South Wales*, September 1997

⁴ Motor Vehicle Repair Industry Council (MVRIC), 1998, unpublished report

or strategies to address issues of concern. Stages two and three of the project will develop and implement the most appropriate strategies as determined by individual jurisdictions.

Marketplace Conditions

*“The dominant figure in retail car marketing has become the modern, pragmatic, young woman buying a new mini car at a no-haggle price.....without them the car market would be in dire trouble”.*⁵

Role of women in the motor vehicle industry

The enormous gains women have made both in a social and economic context over the past few decades have impacted on almost all parts of business and community life. As women’s participation in the workforce has increased, most industry sectors have changed to reflect these advances – either in the recruitment of women or in how they position themselves in relation to their female customer base. By comparison, some members of the motor vehicle industry have appeared reluctant to adapt to its changing environment.

There is a growing recognition within the motor vehicle industry of the urgent need for a much greater presence of women sales staff on the car showroom shop floor. Industry wide figures indicate only about 10 per cent of new car sales staff are women, with the figure even lower for used cars.⁶

An audit of vehicle related legislation in force in each jurisdiction revealed that seven out of eight jurisdictions have licensing requirements for the motor vehicle industry. Data obtained from three of the licensing authorities show that, including used car sales, an average of only 4.5 per cent of salespeople and managers are women and that women make up an average of only 8.9 per cent of people licensed as motor dealers.

Research indicates that women on the shop floor can improve the profitability of car dealerships. A recent research project titled *Used Vehicle Activities in Australia* found that dealerships that hired women to sell cars were more profitable than their all-male counterparts.⁷

Holden’s workforce profile is not uncommon. Of its 1670 sales consultants nationally, less than 100 are women.⁸ To shift the imbalance Holden recently took the unprecedented step of successfully seeking a special anti-discrimination exemption to allow them to advertise women-only sales positions. The successful recruits will receive specialised car sales training to assist them in their careers.⁹

Ford Australia has also recognised the need to create a better gender balance in its retail outlets. Geoff Polites, President of Ford Australia, in addressing the Australian Automobile Dealers Association National Convention in June 2000, explained that businesses are more effective when men and women are working alongside each other and understand each other in a professional environment. He maintained that the motor industry has “not created a universal environment where women feel comfortable doing business...”¹⁰ Polites pointed out

⁵ Greenan, Harvey, *Aargh! Auto alley nightmare*, The Bulletin, 1996, p19

⁶ Hudson, Fiona, *Wanted – women to sell cars*, Herald-Sun, 1st Edition, Wednesday, 12 April 2000

⁷ Brennan, Linda, *Used Vehicle Activities in Australia*, Research Paper 1/99, International Car Distribution Programme Australia, July 1999

⁸ Hudson, Fiona, *Wanted – women to sell cars*, Herald-Sun, 1st Edition, Wednesday, 12 April 2000

⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰ Polites, Geoff, President, Ford Australia, *Address to Australian Automobile Dealers Association National Convention*, June 9, 2000, p7

that 15 per cent of the Ford Australia management team now is women, as is 50 per cent of its new graduate hires. That is a massive change from just 30 years ago when the graduate program was an all male affair.¹¹

While car dealers are keen to remedy the gender imbalance in sales consultants, little research has been done on why women are reluctant to pursue a career in the motor vehicle sales industry. Industry sources suggests the long and irregular hours may be a deterrent. However it is interesting to observe that there is now a strong female presence in the real estate industry which was once almost the exclusive preserve of men and which also involves irregular, sometimes long hours.

The Used Vehicle Activities in Australia report cites inflexible working conditions as a possible contributory factor. It questions the wisdom of the industry being wedded to the notion that full-time and long retail trading hours are the only way the industry can be productive. It questions why this notion continues in direct contrast with other retail sectors where “the trend is to manage longer hours with a flexible workforce and relationship marketing strategies”.¹²

Women are also significantly under represented in the repairs and services sector of the motor vehicle industry. Data provided by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research shows that women are a small minority on Automotive Tradesperson apprenticeship and trainee schemes. During the period 1995-1999 an annual national average of 7534 people commenced Automotive Tradesperson apprenticeship or training schemes. Of these, a national average of only 2.2 per cent were women. In South Australia however this figure rises to an average of 6.7 per cent.¹³ The table below shows the mean percentage of women recorded as commencing Automotive Tradesperson traineeships or apprenticeships. A more detailed table is provided in Appendix 4.

	Commenced training		In Training	
	(inc SA)	(exc SA)	(inc SA)	(exc SA)
1995	1.6%	1.3%	1.1%	1.07%
1996	3.5%	1.9%	1.8%	1.2%
1997	2.4%	0.7%	2%	1%
1998	2%	1%	2.3%	1.1%
1999	1.5%	1.2%	1.9%	0.9%
Mean	2.2%	1.2%	1.8%	1.1%

Table 2: Mean percentage of women recorded as commencing Automotive Tradesperson traineeships or apprenticeships.

¹¹ Polites, Geoff, President, Ford Australia, *Address to Australian Automobile Dealers Association National Convention*, June 9, 2000

¹² Brennan, Linda, *Used Vehicle Activities in Australia*, Research Paper 1/99, International Car Distribution Programme Australia, July 1999, p46

¹³ National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Please note that a national mean was calculated including and excluding South Australia as the South Australian data shows a significantly higher proportion of women participating in the industry. This had the effect of skewing the results. With the exception of South Australia, those women who enter the Automotive Tradesperson apprenticeship or training schemes predominantly undertake 'motor mechanics' training modules. In South Australia however, a significant majority of women undertake 'vehicle body maker' training. This proportion of women and their presence on 'vehicle body making' training courses may be explained by the significant presence of Holden and Mitsubishi motor manufacturing sites in the state.¹⁴

An interim report, *Skill Shortages in the Retail Motor Industry* highlighted the lack of female apprentices and trainees in the industry and suggested that employers are missing out on a potentially valuable workforce by failing to meet the challenge of presenting the industry as an attractive career option, regardless of gender.¹⁵

An Automotive Retail Service and Repair Training Package endorsed by the National Training Framework Committee and agreed to by State, Territory and Commonwealth Vocational Education and Training Ministers in September 1999 may go some way to addressing this problem. The training package addresses a diverse range of enterprises including service stations, small mechanical workshops, dealerships, panel beating, repair services, etc. The package addresses eight specific areas of occupational outcomes including automotive administration, automotive electrical, automotive mechanical, automotive sales and automotive vehicle body. The introduction of an updated training package presents a timely opportunity to both attract more women into the industry and to tailor training to address issues raised by women consumers'.¹⁶

Despite the considerable advances made by the industry over the past few years, there is a long way to go before women are equitably represented within the industry. However, as one female Holden sales consultant observed "as more and more women enter the industry I think we'll become less of a novelty".¹⁷

Role of women as consumers

"Women don't like the shenanigans of car dealers, yet women have a huge say in the car people are buying, particularly the family car".¹⁸

Women's growing power as consumers in the industry is driving the need to recruit more women to the shop floor as car dealers realise that their profitability will benefit if they can capture the all-important female segment of the new and used car market.

While men still dominate car ownership in Australia, women are closing the gap. The *Women's Economic Status "Equal Worth"* report indicates that 77.9 per cent of men have a car compared with 72.9 per cent of women. Interestingly, single women living with other adults (73.9 per cent) are more likely than their male counterparts (64.1 per cent) to own a motor vehicle.¹⁹

¹⁴ National Centre for Vocational Education Research

¹⁵ Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce for the Automotive Working Group, *Skill shortages in the Retail Motor Industry: An Interim Report*, April 2000

¹⁶ Australian National Training Authority, Automotive Retail Service and Repair Training Package

¹⁷ Welsh, Jane, Holden sales consultant quoted in Hudson, Fiona, *Wanted – women to sell cars*, Herald-Sun, 1st Edition, Wednesday, 12 April 2000, p13

¹⁸ Mr Lowe, NRMA quoted in Burbury, Rochelle, *Girl power: How car makers woo women*, The Australian, 24 Sept 1998, p44

¹⁹ Yann Campbell Hoare Wheeler, *Women's Economic Status "Equal Worth" - Final Report: Output 4*, The Australian Commonwealth/State and New Zealand Standing Committee of Advisers for the Status of Women, May 1999, p64

It comes as no surprise then that women comprise close to 70 per cent of buyers in the small and medium car market²⁰ and constitute 40 per cent of private new car buyers.²¹ The industry estimates that two thirds of cars in the fastest growing sector of the market—small cars such as the Ford Festiva and the Mazda 121 – are bought by women.²² However the industry is wary of generating stereotypes when developing a profile of its female customer base. Significant numbers of women do drive the larger models such as Commodores and Falcons and they are well represented in the medium car market.²³

Women also play a significant role in family decision making. The NRMA contends that women handle 75 per cent of family finances and are influential in 80 per cent of purchase decisions.²⁴

Advertising strategies used by the industry to attract women customers give some indication of the huge changes which are occurring in how women are perceived. Gone are the days when the advertising pitch centred on vanity mirrors, the quality of the seat covers and special carpets to protect high heels. Failed marketing campaigns have forced the industry to reassess how they approach women. As Honda's marketing chief observed...“they are buying the same sort of cars as men for the same reasons as men, and they expect to be treated the same as men”.²⁵

Ford Australia's President Geoff Polites's address to the 2000 Australian Automobile Dealers Association Convention in Queensland reinforced the critical need for the industry to review the way that women customers are treated. He reminded members of the Association that 25 per cent of customer satisfaction ratings in regard to new vehicles are driven by the purchase and service experience. His message to members was clear: “..we cannot sustain a system that doesn't provide a warm and respectful welcome for all customers, or an environment in which they feel totally comfortable”.²⁶

While every effort is made to avoid stereotyping women, the industry is selective about the specific media it uses to target women. Aspirational advertisements in women's magazines are commonplace. In the 12 months to June 1998 manufacturers' advertising expenditure in women's magazines increased 34.3 per cent to \$9.78 million according to research by MMS Monitoring Services.²⁷

Arguably the most powerful indication of the industry's attempts to woo the female dollar is the relatively recent “innovation” of drive away pricing. Research to date has consistently cited women's dissatisfaction with the car buying experience particularly in relation to high pressure sales techniques. Drive away pricing has enormous appeal to women because it means that there is not the same pressure to negotiate.²⁸

²⁰ McKinnon, Bill, *The Hard Sell*, The Open Road, May/June 2000, p11

²¹ Polites, Geoff, President, Ford Australia, *Address to Australian Automobile Dealers Association National Convention*, June 9, 2000

²² Greenan, Harvey, *Aargh! Auto alley nightmare*, The Bulletin, 1996

²³ *ibid*

²⁴ McKinnon, Bill, *The Hard Sell*, The Open Road, May/June 2000, p11

²⁵ Devers, Tony, Honda Australia quoted in Paul Gover, *New Driving Force*, Herald Sun, 4/4/2000 p17

²⁶ Polites, Geoff, President, Ford Australia, *Address to Australian Automobile Dealers Association National Convention*, June 9, 2000, p8

²⁷ Burbury, Rochelle, *Girl Power:How car makers woo women*, The Australian, 24 September 1998

²⁸ Kildey, Leigh, *Drivetime: The femme force*, Melbourne Weekly, Sunday 25 June 2000

Legislative Context

Despite the extensive anti-discrimination provisions and consumer protection legislation which exists in all jurisdictions, research has identified that some women purchasing cars, or having them serviced or repaired, feel that they are treated unfairly or receive lower quality service than men. A brief discussion of these provisions and legislation gives some idea of its breadth.

Sex discrimination legislation

On 17 July 1980 Australia signed the *United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)* and on 28 July 1983 the Convention was ratified. The Convention provides that states should... “adopt appropriate legislative and other measures, including sanctions where appropriate, prohibiting all discrimination against women”.²⁹

The Commonwealth introduced the *Sex Discrimination Act* which came into force in Australia in August 1984. Its objectives included eliminating, so far as is possible, “discrimination against persons on the grounds of sex, marital status or pregnancy in the areas of work...(and)...the provision of goods, facilities and services....”.³⁰

All Australian jurisdictions have introduced sex discrimination legislation which states that it is unlawful to discriminate on the basis of sex or marital status in a number of areas including employment and the provision of goods and services.³¹

In the area of employment, the Commonwealth Act provides a list of general exemptions where it is a genuine occupational qualification to be a person of a particular sex. Further, all Acts provide for the granting of temporary exemptions. Applications for these exemptions are made to the respective state or territory Anti-Discrimination Commission or Equal Opportunity Board.³² As mentioned earlier, Holden sought, and was granted, a special anti-discrimination exemption to conduct a recruitment campaign to encourage women to apply for positions as car dealers in an attempt to address the gender imbalance in the motor vehicle sales industry.³³

Motor Vehicle Related Legislation

The National Working Party conducted an audit of laws to assess the level of regulation of the motor vehicle industry across Australia. While the level and means of regulation across the country vary there is already extensive regulation of the motor vehicle industry. All jurisdictions, with the exception of Tasmania, operate a licensing system to regulate the activities of motor dealers. Fair trading legislation in all jurisdictions prohibits the use of false or misleading representations about motor vehicles. Consumer rights regarding the merchantable quality, description and fitness for purpose of a vehicle also exist in each jurisdiction. Other provisions are only in operation in a proportion of the jurisdictions, for example:

- Unconscionable or deceptive conduct provisions in Victoria, South Australia and Queensland;

²⁹ Larmour, Consie, *Sex Discrimination in Australia*, Background Papers (Education and Welfare Group), Volume 19, 16 August 1993, p3

³⁰ *ibid*, p4

³¹ Taken from Larmour, Consie, *Sex Discrimination in Australia*, Background Papers (Education and Welfare Group), Volume 19, 16 August 1993

³² *ibid*

³³ Hudson, Fiona, *Wanted – women to sell cars*, Herald-Sun, 1st Edition, Wednesday, 12 April 2000

- the provision of statutory warranties in all jurisdictions except Queensland where they are currently under consideration;
- cooling off periods in Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory with Queensland and New South Wales currently considering their introduction;
- Mandatory Code of Practice for vehicle repairers in the Australian Capital Territory and a voluntary code operates in Tasmania.

The fact that women continue to feel that they are treated unfairly or receive lower quality service than men when dealing with the motor vehicle industry indicates that legislative measures are not sufficient by themselves. Indeed the following analysis of the key concerns raised by women indicate that behavioural measures rather than legislative remedies are more relevant and therefore more innovative, pragmatic solutions are required.

Profile of respondents *Women Car Buyers Survey*

- 19 per cent of respondents bought a car within the last 6 months and 54 per cent of respondents bought a car within the last 2 years.
- 60 per cent of respondents bought a new car and 39 per cent of respondents bought a used car.
- 64 per cent of respondents had a trade-in.
- 51 per cent of respondents paid less than \$20,000 for their car; 31 per cent paid between \$20,000 and \$30,000 and 18 per cent paid more than \$30,000.
- 20 per cent of respondents visited one dealer only; 36 per cent visited 2-3 dealers; 26 per cent visited 4-5 dealers and 17 per cent visited 6 or more dealers.
- 34 per cent of respondents earned an income of less than \$30,000; 29 per cent earned between \$30,000 and \$50,000 and 18 per cent earned \$50,000 or more.

Research Findings

Introduction

The following analysis is based primarily on survey and call centre/complaints data collated for this National Project by all states and territories in Australia. It is augmented by a considerable body of additional research conducted over the past six years which has examined how women fare as consumers of the motor vehicle industry.

It is important to consider the specific findings that this report concentrates on within the context of the overall results; namely that women consumers are largely satisfied in their interactions with the motor vehicle industry.

Women were keen to have their say. 3,994 women from around the country responded to the *Women Car Buyer's Survey*. This excellent response was due in part to the *Women Car Buyers Survey* being printed in publications of the NRMA and the RACQ. 419 women responded to the *Survey on Motor Vehicle Service and Repairs*. 500 women from metropolitan and regional Victoria also participated in a telephone survey regarding their experience in purchasing, servicing and repairing motor vehicles. Fifty-three women participated in the New South Wales Call Centre survey and 101 people participated in New South Wales 'Have Your Say' phone in campaign.

Motor vehicle associations around the country played a significant role in distributing the surveys and encouraging women to respond. This reflects their commitment to improving the industry.

It is important to note that the majority of respondents indicated a positive response to questions about service and treatment. For example, of respondents to the *Women Car Buyers Survey*:

- 75 per cent agreed that the salesperson understood what they wanted;
- 78 per cent agreed that they were served promptly and courteously;
- 72 per cent agreed that the salesperson have helpful answers to questions;
- 67 per cent agreed that the salesperson was interested in what they wanted;
- 62 per cent agreed that the salesperson understood the buying decision was theirs; and
- 61 per cent agreed that the salesperson did not treat them in a sexist, patronising manner.³⁴

Eighty-four per cent of Victorian women who had experience in buying a new or second hand car reported that they were satisfied with the treatment they received. There is an indication that the

³⁴ *Women Car Buyers Survey* (NRMA, NT, QLD, SA, TAS, WA)

**Profile of respondents
Survey on Motor Vehicle
Repairs and Services**

- 77 per cent of respondents to the survey were female.
- 80 per cent of respondents had their car serviced less than 6 months ago and 55 per cent of respondents had their car repaired less than 6 months ago.
- 42 per cent of respondents' cars were worth less than \$10,000; 34 per cent were worth between \$10,000 and \$20,000; 13 per cent were worth between \$20,000 and \$30,000 and 12 per cent were worth over \$30,000.
- 57 per cent of respondents contacted only one centre for their service or repair and 32 per cent contacted between 2 and 6 centres.
- 38 per cent of respondents found their service centre or repairer through a referral.

level of satisfaction was higher for women living in regional Victoria than for women living in metropolitan Melbourne.³⁵

Similarly in relation to the *Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services*:

- 86 per cent agreed that they were satisfied with their most recent service;
- 64 per cent agreed that they were satisfied with their most recent repair;
- 53 per cent agreed that they not were treated in a patronising manner;
- 81 per cent agreed that the service centre/repairer understood what they wanted;
- 68 per cent agreed that the service centre/repairer explained clearly what service/repairs were necessary;
- 54 per cent agreed that the service centre/repairer did not use technical terms which were difficult to understand;
- 64 per cent agreed that they could trust the service centre/repairer to do what was required to service/repair their car and do a good job; and
- 63 per cent agreed that they did not feel that they were being talked into unnecessary servicing/repairs.³⁶

Eighty-nine per cent of Victorian women who had experience in servicing or repairing their car were satisfied with the treatment they received. The level of satisfaction was higher for women living in regional Victoria than for women living in metropolitan Melbourne.³⁷

Despite indicating a largely favourable response to the experience of purchasing, servicing and repairing motor vehicles, women also expressed dissatisfaction in a number of areas. The following statistics demonstrates what most industry groups would regard as an unacceptable rate of customer satisfaction.

Of respondents to the *Women Car Buyers Survey*:

- Only 49 per cent of women said they enjoyed the car buying experience;
- 24 per cent said the sales person did not understand that the buying decision was theirs;
- 20 per cent felt they were treated in a sexist and patronising manner; and
- 20 per cent thought they paid more for their car than a male would have.³⁸

³⁵ Newspoll Market Research, *Women as Consumers Study June 2000*, Victoria - Note however that this difference is not statistically significant given the small sample size.

³⁶ *Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services* (ACT, NT, QLD, TAS, WA)

³⁷ Newspoll Market Research, *Women as Consumers Study June 2000*, Victoria

³⁸ *Women Car Buyers Survey* (NRMA, NT, QLD, SA, TAS, WA)

Profile of respondents
Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services

- 36 per cent of respondents had their work carried out by a franchise car dealer; 13 per cent by a service station; 8 per cent by a franchise repairer and 40 per cent by an independent or sole repairer.
- 90 per cent of respondents dealt with a male at their service centre or repairer.

Of respondents to the *Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services*:

- 49 per cent indicated dissatisfaction with having their car serviced or repaired;
- 36 per cent said that being a female had a bearing on how they were treated;
- Of those women dissatisfied with a previous service, 40 per cent did not make a complaint;
- Of those dissatisfied with a previous repair, 28 per cent did not make a complaint;
- 26 per cent said they were treated in a patronising manner; and
- 20 per cent said the service centre/ repairer used technical terms which were difficult to understand.³⁹

Thirteen per cent of Victorian women who participated in a telephone survey said they were not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the treatment they received when buying a new or second hand car. Ten per cent were not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the treatment they received when getting their car serviced or repaired.⁴⁰

Fifty-eight per cent of women who responded to New South Wales call centre survey felt they received worse treatment because of their gender.⁴¹ 95 per cent of respondents to the 'Have Your Say' campaign reported a negative experience and 64 per cent related to vehicle sales.⁴²

These critical areas of concern underpin the following analysis and should inform future strategies.

³⁹ *Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services* (ACT, NT, QLD, TAS, WA)

⁴⁰ Newpoll Market Research, *Women as Consumers Study June 2000*, Victoria

⁴¹ Department for Women, NSW, *Women Consumers – Motor Vehicle Industry*, Discussion Paper, June 2000, p5

⁴² *ibid*

“Women don’t want to be treated differently; they want to be treated equally and taken seriously”

(Peter Aldridge, marketing specialist Ford Australia quoted in Leigh Kildey, *Drivetime: The Femme Force*, Melbourne Weekly, Sunday 25 June 2000)

“Salesmen treat the female sex as incapable of making such a decision as buying a car, knowing the mechanics of a car or what to look for under the car”

(QLD Women Car Buyers Survey respondent)

“There’s no such thing as a specific way of selling to women. We listen to the customer and make sure we don’t categorise. It’s something dealers and manufacturers realise is very important if we are going to build a long-term relationship”.

(Debbie Clarke quoted in *Driven to Despair*, The Open Road November/December 1999 p 18)

Are women treated differently to men?

Women’s perception of on-going discrimination in the motor vehicle industry is clearly evident in this finding. On average, more than one third of women who responded to the *Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services* on the basis that they had had unsatisfactory dealings with the motor vehicle industry, indicated that being a woman had a negative bearing on their experience. In the Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania and Western Australia the results are even more alarming with 44 per cent or more of respondents reporting sexist behaviour.⁴³ The following table shows the percentages for each jurisdiction.

Jurisdiction	%	Number of respondents
ACT	55	82
NT	18	134
QLD	37	142
TAS	45	38
WA	44	23
Combined total	36	419

Table 3: Percentage of respondents by jurisdiction who felt that being female had a bearing on what occurred, *Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services*.

When asked how they were treated differently, women spoke of being patronised and spoken down to and treated as if they had little or no knowledge about motor vehicles. Some women also pointed to their own lack of self confidence and knowledge as being a contributory factor. Further analysis of these factors can be found in other sections of the report.

Market research conducted in Victoria found that of respondents who were dissatisfied with the treatment they received when they last bought a car (13 per cent of total respondents), 22 per cent stated that the cause of their dissatisfaction was being treated badly because they were female. Of respondents who were dissatisfied with the treatment they received when they last had their car serviced or repaired (10 per cent of respondents), 29 per cent identified poor service or being badly treated. A further 10 per cent of respondents identified being treated badly specifically because they were female.⁴⁴

Women’s different treatment from men was also highlighted in a survey by Martec and Test Purchasing Australia (1994). Generally the survey found that car salespeople did not perform well in product demonstration, negotiation and close and follow up, suggesting that “the dramatic differences in

⁴³ *Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services* (ACT, NT, QLD, TAS, WA)

⁴⁴ Newspoll Market Research, *Women as Consumers Study June 2000*, Victoria

“I felt that I was treated differently because I was a woman. One place I was ignored, another place they.....spoke to me as though I wasn’t a business woman and they didn’t treat me with any appropriate dignity. They were reluctant to take me for a test drive.”

(Newspoll Market Research, Women as Consumers Study June 2000, Victoria)

the experiences of male and female shoppers indicate that women may not be treated as genuine buyers in their own right”.⁴⁵

For example, despite the widely accepted industry practice of offering prospective car buyers a test drive, the survey found that only 41 per cent of women were offered test drives without prompting and a further 37 per cent were offered a test drive, but only after a specific request by the consumer.⁴⁶

A number of reasons are offered for this apparent reluctance to allow women behind the wheel: “many salespeople may not consider a test drive an important part of the sales process, or that they may be reluctant to let women drive new vehicles, or that they may not consider women genuine buyers”.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Martec Australia and Test Purchasing Australia, *Women as Customers in Australian Franchised Automotive Dealerships*, April 1994, p33

⁴⁶ *ibid* p33

⁴⁷ *ibid* p27

“ I asked a male friend of Dad’s to buy a car for me and he got a lower price than I could...and all the repairs and some extras done for free”.

(QLD Women Car Buyers Survey respondent)

Do women pay more?

Not only do women feel that they are treated differently because of their gender, they can also feel they suffer financially for it. Whether perception or reality, some women do feel that they pay more.

Overall one-fifth (20 per cent) of women who responded to the *Women Car Buyers Survey* agreed with the statement, ‘I probably paid more for my car than a male would have’.⁴⁸

The table below shows the percentages for each jurisdiction.

Jurisdiction	%	Number of respondents
NSW & ACT (NRMA)	20	2445
NT	16	284
QLD	19	892
SA	18	310
TAS	20	30
WA	33	33
Combined Total	20	3994

Table 4: Percentage of respondents by jurisdiction who agreed that they probably paid more for their car than a male would have, *Women Car Buyers Survey*.

Research conducted in Victoria found that 16 per cent of those who were dissatisfied with the way they were treated when they last bought a car felt they were overcharged and paid an unfair purchase price for the car. Thirty-three per cent of respondents who were dissatisfied with the way they were treated when they last had their car serviced or repaired felt that they had been overcharged.⁴⁹

Shopping with a male would appear to make a considerable difference to whether women feel they pay more.

Women who had not been accompanied by a male were more likely to feel that they paid more for their car than a male would have. This was most evident in the *NRMA Women Car Buyers Survey* where twenty-four per cent of respondents from New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory who were not accompanied by a male felt that this was the case compared with fourteen per cent of those accompanied by a male.⁵⁰

Evidence from New South Wales’s ‘Have Your Say’ campaign adds weight to this finding and highlights

⁴⁸ *Women Car Buyers Survey* (NRMA, NT, QLD, SA, TAS, WA)

⁴⁹ Newspoll Market Research, *Women as Consumers Study June 2000*, Victoria

⁵⁰ Quadrant Research Services, NRMA, *The Open Road Women Car Buyers Survey – Executive Summary*, March 2000

“Male or female, if you walk into a dealership without knowing what you want, or what it costs, you will end up with a deal, and a car, that suits the dealer’s balance sheet rather than your needs. You’ll be relegated to ‘wood duck’ status – a term used to describe car buyers who are basically walked down the proverbial garden path due to their own ignorance.”

(Bill McKinnon, *The Hard Sell, The Open Road*, May/June 2000 p14)

stereotyped views the industry still holds about women’s lack of negotiating ability. Eighteen per cent of women who participated reported that the dealer or salesmen had refused them the opportunity to negotiate on the price of a car or repairs.⁵¹

‘Have Your Say’ Case Study 2

A 43 year old woman from Bowral tried to negotiate a trade-in price for her car at a well known Sydney dealership. She was well aware of the car’s value, having been a buyer of Honda cars for 20 years, and on this occasion was with her brother when the dealer made her an offer. After considering the offer, the woman returned to the dealer by herself a week later. The dealer dropped the trade-in price by \$2,000 and when she told him that the price was unacceptable, he refused to negotiate with her, telling her she would have to “take it or leave it”.⁵²

This perception that women pay more if they are alone may account for the fact that 50 per cent of respondents indicated that they took a male with them when buying a new or used car.⁵³

Interestingly women were more likely to feel that they had paid more for their car when purchasing a used car in comparison to a new car. Of respondents to the *Women Car Buyers Survey* in the Northern Territory, Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia, 16 per cent of women who had purchased a new car agreed with the statement, ‘I probably paid more for my car than a male would have,’ and 23 per cent of women who had purchased a used car agreed.⁵⁴

In South Australia, 68 per cent of respondents who strongly agreed that they had paid more for their car than a male would have, purchased a used car compared with 32 per cent of those who purchased a new car.⁵⁵

In considering these findings, it is important to note that the car sales industry is a highly competitive one and that market values of motor vehicles do change. Therefore while the perception may be that being a woman impacted on the final price, the reality is that there may have been market forces at work. However the fact that the perception exists is cause for concern and invites some scrutiny of the adversarial negotiating process. It is also worth noting that this is an issue for both men and women.

⁵¹ Department for Women, NSW, *Women Consumers – Motor Vehicle Industry*, Discussion Paper, June 2000, p6

⁵² Department for Women, NSW, *Women Consumers – Motor Vehicle Industry*, Discussion Paper, June 2000, p7

⁵³ *Women Car Buyers Survey* (NRMA, NT, QLD, SA, TAS, WA)

⁵⁴ *Women Car Buyers Survey* (NT, QLD, TAS, WA)

⁵⁵ *Women Car Buyers Survey*, South Australia

“If you are honest with your customers and explain how the trade-in figure is arrived at and what market conditions are at work, there is understanding of the value of what you are offering.”

(Linda Jobling, Honda sales manager quoted in Ralph Bain, *The Soft Sell*, Canberra Times, Friday 24 March 2000, p15)

Foster also poses the question “do women pay more?” and concludes that in some instances they do. She cites research conducted in the United States in 1993 which said that “sales reps...are looking to make maximum profit, and will bargain harder against people they stereotype as either less informed or less assertive”.⁵⁶

Foster argues that “women paid more to protect themselves from possible discrimination”.⁵⁷ She refers to a Royal Automobile Club of Victoria market research survey of consumer attitudes when purchasing insurance which “found that women placed a high priority on services that would cushion them from unscrupulous traders”⁵⁸. On the basis of the survey Foster concludes that women “used mechanics recommended by a company on the assumption that the company would only deal with reputable repairers. Women, more than men, saw this as an added value service”.⁵⁹

The issue of price discrimination – where women and men are charged a different price for the same service - in the motor vehicle industry will be addressed in the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into marketplace discrimination against women consumers. The Family and Community Development Committee of the Victorian Parliament has been requested by the Minister for Consumer Affairs to: identify and examine the incidence and impact of price discrimination on women consumers in the purchase of goods and services, as well as discrimination based on the stereotyping of women consumers. The Committee will also consider whether intervention is necessary to reduce the incidence of discrimination against women consumers, and if so, what form that intervention should take. The Committee is required to report to the Parliament by 31 March 2001.

The unacceptability of price discrimination against women consumers was highlighted during the recent Victorian equal opportunity case involving Edward Beale hairdressing salon. The salon was the respondent in proceedings brought by an aggrieved woman customer and the Consumer Law Centre, in which it was alleged that women customers were charged more for the same haircut than male customers. The matter was settled on the basis that Edward Beale salons would cease charging on the basis of gender of the customer and only charge customers for the service

⁵⁶ Whittelsey, Frances Cera, *Why Women Pay More How to Avoid Market Place Perils*, Centre for Study of Responsive Law Washington D.C. 1993, p18 as cited in Foster, Allyson, Consumer Law Centre Victoria, *Do Women Pay More?* November 1997, p31

⁵⁷ Foster, Allyson, Consumer Law Centre Victoria, *Do Women Pay More?* November 1997, p34

⁵⁸ RACV Unpublished Market Research, *Attitudes to Purchasing Insurance* and RACV Unpublished Market Research, *Factors of Importance in Car Repair Management* as cited in Foster, Allyson, Consumer Law Centre Victoria, *Do Women Pay More?* November 1997, p34

⁵⁹ Foster, Allyson, Consumer Law Centre Victoria, *Do Women Pay More?* November 1997, p34

provided. According to the Director of the Consumer Law Centre, the case illustrates the need for a code of conduct or stricter regulations to stamp out the practice of price discrimination in all industries, including vehicle sales. The outcome of the hearing was supported by the General Manager of the Hairdressing and Beauty Industry Association who observed that the issue is a deeply rooted, cultural one.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Johnson, Lyall, *The Price of Victory Proves the Kindest Cut of All*, The Age, 28 June 2000, p8

“The salesman ...was extremely helpful but not patronising. For this reason I shopped around other car yards but went back to him to buy the car”.

(NRMA Women Car Buyers Survey respondent)

“I was treated as a non-existent person of no intelligence and no knowledge. It was presumed by the salesman that I was incapable of making a decision of this nature and that my husband was purchasing the car”.

(NRMA Women Car Buyers Survey respondent)

Are women patronised and treated in a sexist manner?

On average, one-fifth of women (20 per cent) who responded to the *Women Car Buyers Survey* agreed with the statement, ‘I was treated in a sexist, patronising manner’.⁶¹ The table below shows the percentage for each jurisdiction.

Jurisdiction	%	Number of respondents
NSW/ACT (NRMA)	20	2445
NT	17	284
QLD	18	892
SA	18	310
TAS	40	30
WA	18	33
Combined total	20	3994

Table 5: Percentage of respondents by jurisdiction who agreed that they were treated in a sexist, patronising manner, *Women Car Buyers Survey*.

Victorian women who participated in a telephone survey also reported being treated poorly because of being female. 22 per cent of respondents who said they were dissatisfied with the treatment they received when purchasing a new or second hand car nominated this as the source of their dissatisfaction. Comments made by participants included “I literally stood for 10 minutes while the sales people chatted amongst themselves because I was a woman on my own”, “I think they were trying to take advantage of the fact that I was a female and unaccompanied by anyone else” and “they treated me as if I was a second class citizen”.⁶²

Interestingly, women who were accompanied by a male were slightly more likely to agree with the statement ‘I was treated in a sexist, patronising manner’, than those who were not. In the *NRMA Women Car Buyers Survey*, 22 per cent of those accompanied by a male agreed compared with 19 per cent of those not accompanied by a male.⁶³

Purchasing a new or used car also elicited a different response. Women purchasing a used car were more likely to agree with the statement than those purchasing a new car. Of respondents to the *NRMA Women Car Buyers Survey*, 24 per cent of those purchasing a used car agreed compared with 19 per cent of those purchasing a new car.⁶⁴

⁶¹ *Women Car Buyers Survey* (NRMA, NT, QLD, SA, TAS, WA)

⁶² Newspoll Market Research, *Women as Consumers Study June 2000*, Victoria

⁶³ Quadrant Research Services, NRMA, *The Open Road Women Car Buyers Survey – Executive Summary*, March 2000

⁶⁴ *ibid*

“...when shopping for the car sales people were fairly dismissive of me and virtually all talked to my older male friend who was with me, rather than to me – even when answering questions I’ve asked!”

(ACT Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services respondent)

“I am currently wanting to buy a car with a trade-in. When I go by myself I am not treated seriously and when accompanied by my husband ignored.”

(WA Women Car Buyers Survey respondent)

While taking a male with you to buy a car may have some perceived benefits when it comes to negotiating a price, being patronised or ignored appears also to be one of the outcomes.

Forty per cent of respondents to the *NRMA Women Car Buyers Survey* accompanied by a male agreed that the salesperson was more interested in the opinions of their male companion and treated him as the decision maker.⁶⁵ Of respondents to the *Women Car Buyers Survey* in the Northern Territory, Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia, 15 per cent of respondents agreed that the salesperson was not interested in what they wanted and 23 per cent agreed that the salesperson did not understand that the buying decision was theirs.⁶⁶ In South Australia, 38 per cent of respondents accompanied by a male agreed that the salesperson was more interested in the opinions of their male companions and treated him as the decision maker and 17 per cent agreed that the salesperson was not interested in what they wanted.⁶⁷ Forty per cent of callers to New South Wales’s ‘Have Your Say’ campaign said that they had been patronised or ignored by a salesman when looking to purchase a vehicle.⁶⁸

Twenty-five per cent of Victorian women respondents who were dissatisfied with the treatment they received when they last had their car serviced or repaired stated that the service or repair person was rude, arrogant, unfriendly or gave the impression they did not care about them.⁶⁹ One respondent reported “I felt that they were sexist. they wouldn’t give me the same information as they have my husband. I just found it offensive”.⁷⁰

Similar responses were received to the *Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services*. More than one quarter of respondents agreed that they were treated in a patronising manner. Of those respondents who identified as having a problem or complaint, 47 per cent agreed that they were treated in a patronising manner.⁷¹ (Please note the respondents who identified as having a problem or complaint are respondents who answered Question 23: If you had a complaint with your service/repair, what was your overall level of satisfaction with how your complaint was handled?)

One woman in Queensland was prompted to write of her experiences when buying a motor car: “I shopped for a new car

⁶⁵ Quadrant Research Services, NRMA, *The Open Road Women Car Buyers Survey – Executive Summary*, March 2000

⁶⁶ *Women Car Buyers Survey* (NT, QLD, TAS, WA)

⁶⁷ *Women Car Buyers Survey*, South Australia

⁶⁸ Department for Women, NSW, *Women Consumers – Motor Vehicle Industry*, Discussion Paper, June 2000, p7

⁶⁹ Newspoll Market Research, *Women as Consumers Study June 2000*, Victoria

⁷⁰ *ibid*

⁷¹ *Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services* (ACT, NT, QLD, TAS, WA)

in 1994 and suffered these remarks: “You’d better bring your old man to have a look because no doubt he’ll be paying for it.” (He was not) “I suppose you only need something to drive to the shops?” (I did not) “So what colour are you looking for?” (I was not) “If you want to take it for a drive we’ll have to find you a nice quiet street”.

At last three salesmen did approach me. I was apparently invisible to other salesmen who offered male clients assistance while I was left standing like a stale bun on Easter Monday”.⁷²

Six years on it would appear that for some women at least not a lot has changed. The frustration of people who work in the industry and recognise the negative impact these outdated attitudes are having is palpable: “This doesn’t surprise me” says Debbie Clark, an executive in the new car sales area... “There are plenty of old school salesmen still in the industry, who don’t know how to relate to women and don’t understand the customer service culture”.⁷³

⁷² Letter to the Editor, Courier Mail, May 8 2000, p12

⁷³ Clark, Debbie, General Manager, New Car Sales, for the Brad Garlick group in Sydney quoted in McKinnon, Bill, *The Hard Sell*, The Open Road, May/June 2000, p11

“People want information about features, options and costs so that they can make up their minds. It’s pointless trying to push them into a particular deal. It’s far better to find out what they want, and help them get it”.

(Amanda Galvin, Assistant Sales Manager Holden quoted in *The Soft Sell* Canberra Times 24 March 2000 p 16)

Closing the deal

The ‘hard sell’ approach which traditionally has been a dominant feature of the motor vehicle industry has done little to endear women to the industry. High pressure sales techniques coupled with women’s lack of confidence can seriously undermine the car buying experience for women.

Women’s negative response to high pressure sales tactics is well documented in complaints data of Departments/ Offices of Fair Trading and Consumer Affairs and motor industry organisations. For example, analysis of the Legal Advice forms within the Consumer Protection Unit of Legal Aid Queensland found 17 per cent of complaints received were regarding the use of high pressure tactics and unconscionable conduct on the part of the car salespersons. Women had a notably higher number of complaints regarding the purchase of a vehicle where this type of conduct took place.⁷⁴ This complaint was also reported to the RACQ. Interestingly similar numbers of men and women complained of this.⁷⁵

Sixteen per cent of women who contributed to New South Wales’s ‘Have Your Say’ campaign described a negative experience when buying a car primarily because of the high pressure tactics of salesmen. According to the New South Wales Department for Women “these experiences related directly to being pressured to sign a contract of sale through sales techniques which included threats of ending the negotiation, refusal to disclose finance terms and dishonest representation of the contract’s binding nature”.⁷⁶

‘Have Your Say’ Case Study 6

A woman from Sydney’s northern suburbs found a car she wanted to buy at a dealership. When inquiring about their interest rates for finance, the dealer responded by filling out a lengthy form, detailing every aspect of the car in question. The dealer then pushed the completed form across the desk and told her he was not permitted ‘by law’ to reveal their finance rates until she had signed the document. When queried by the woman, the dealer strongly reiterated that ‘legally’ he could not reveal the interest rate until her signature was on the form. The form turned out to be a Contract of Sale and, if she hadn’t resisted the pressure, her signature would have made it legally binding.⁷⁷

Victorian research found that 32 per cent of Victorian women who were dissatisfied with the service they received when purchasing a new or used car cited the attitude of the salesperson as the problem, including salespeople behaving in a pushy, patronising or rude manner. One woman stated

⁷⁴ Legal Aid Queensland, Analysis of motor vehicle dispute legal advice, May 2000

⁷⁵ Complaint data supplied by RACQ

⁷⁶ Department for Women, NSW, *Women Consumers – Motor Vehicle Industry*, Discussion Paper, June 2000, p8

⁷⁷ *ibid* p8

“I think that car salesmen have an attitude towards female buyers that’s different to male car buyers...I intend to find a way of buying my next car without having to deal with these sort of male car salesmen”.⁷⁸

The New South Wales Department for Women in its Discussion Paper *Women Consumers – Motor Vehicle Industry Project* highlighted the lack of any legislative requirement in New South Wales for motor vehicle sales contracts to have a cooling off period after signing the contract. It argued that “it is possible that the absence of a cooling off period could act as an incentive for some dealers to perform hard-sell tactics as a direct means to extract a signature from customers”.⁷⁹

The Discussion Paper reiterated one of the key findings from the *Benchmark Survey of Consumer Issues in New South Wales* (1997) for “improved customer protection procedures such as cooling off periods” in contracts and regulations as one way to improve dealings between consumers and traders.⁸⁰

The audit of laws shows that cooling off provisions are currently in operation in the Australian Capital Territory and Victoria where there are cooling off periods of three days. A small fee is payable by the consumer if he or she decides not to proceed with the purchase. The cooling off period in Victoria applies to used cars only. A bill has recently been released in Queensland which proposes a cooling off period for the purchase of used cars of one full business day. Consumers would have a right to waive the cooling off period in each of the above states. New South Wales is currently considering the introduction of a cooling off period regime.

An examination of complaints received by jurisdictions’ fair trading/consumer affairs departments show that in South Australia, New South Wales and Queensland where cooling off provisions are not in operation complaints regarding the non refund of deposits feature in the three most common areas of complaints whereas, in Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory complaints of that nature are not significant.

⁷⁸ Newspoll Market Research, *Women as Consumers Study June 2000*, Victoria

⁷⁹ Department for Women, NSW, *Women Consumers – Motor Vehicle Industry*, Discussion Paper, June 2000, p8

⁸⁰ *ibid* p8

“They spoke down to me as if I would have no knowledge of the problems or the correct names of the car parts (my father was a motor mechanic so I understood the problems). They hurried me through quickly as if I were a hindrance.”

(ACT Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services respondent)

“The same old attitude ‘what do women know about cars?’ prevailed”

(NT Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services respondents)

Perceptions and realities of what women know about cars

Research indicates that the motor vehicle industry is still wedded to the traditional stereotype of women as knowing very little about cars and wanting to keep it that way. Foster maintains that women’s position is marginalised because of the prevailing assumption that “women know nothing about cars, so men are assumed to know a lot”.⁸¹

The reality is that just as there are men who know very little about cars so too are there women who know considerably more. As Bill McKinnon in *The Open Road* pointed out “cars like power tools, barbeque cooking and football, are regarded as secret men’s business, but in reality most men are as uninformed about cars, and how to buy them, as women. It’s just that they won’t admit it”.⁸²

Two key issues emerge from the research. Some women resent the false assumption made that they know nothing about cars. Others say that the attitudes of some in the industry exacerbate their own lack of confidence when buying a car or dealing with repair and service people.

Of particular interest is the perception that arises when women car buyers are accompanied by a male. As one female car sales executive commented, “If you’re buying a car for your own use, and you’re accompanied by a male, you’re sending conflicting signals to the salesperson.... Your male companion may have no idea about whether car A is better than car B, or about how to get the best deal, but by bringing him to the dealership you’re indicating that you’re not confident”.⁸³ This perception is of real concern to women given that the majority of consumers will take someone with them when making a large purchase decision. Interestingly, the same conclusions are not made for men.

On average, one in two women who responded to the *Women Car Buyers Survey* were accompanied by a male when looking for a car.⁸⁴ The table below shows the percentages for each jurisdiction.

⁸¹ Foster, Allyson, Consumer Law Centre Victoria, *Do Women Pay More?* November 1997, p28

⁸² McKinnon, Bill, *The Hard Sell*, *The Open Road*, May/June 2000 p13

⁸³ Clark, Debbie, General Manager, New Car Sales for the Brad Garlick group as quoted in McKinnon, Bill, *The Hard Sell*, *The Open Road* May/June 2000 p13

⁸⁴ *Women Car Buyers Survey* (NRMA, NT, QLD, SA, TAS, WA)

“I am quite confident and ‘do my homework’ before shopping for anything. No salesperson, male or female, patronises me. Know the products – do your research beforehand. Talk to your family and friends”.

(Women Car Buyers Survey respondent)

Jurisdiction	%	Number of respondents
NSW/ACT (NRMA)	48	2445
NT	60	284
QLD	52	892
SA	65	310
TAS	33	30
WA	42	33
Combined total	51	3994

Table 6: Percentage of respondents by jurisdiction who were accompanied by a male, *Women Car Buyers Survey*.

For many women taking a male with them is a strategy they employ to deal with their own lack of confidence. However the results indicate it may not be the best way to go. The research shows that women were more likely to encounter sexist attitudes from car salespeople if accompanied by a male (this is discussed further in *Women’s Consumer Behaviour*). The *NRMA Women Car Buyers Survey* shows that in 40 per cent of cases where women were with a male, the salesperson tended to discuss the technical aspects of the car with the male and matters of aesthetics with the woman.⁸⁵ A participant in research conducted in Victoria related that “I went to buy the car with my father and they always addressed him even though I was paying for it!”⁸⁶

A number of respondents to the *Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services* also indicated that their own lack of knowledge and confidence was a factor in a negative experience they had getting their car serviced or repaired. This was particularly the case with repairs.⁸⁷ However, a participant in Victorian research stated that, on occasion, repairmen reacted in a negative way towards her because she demonstrated that she had some mechanical knowledge. The participant attributed their attitude to the fact that “it gave me the option of questioning them”.⁸⁸

The other issue to emerge from the research is the negative impact on women when it is assumed they have no mechanical knowledge. As one respondent to the *Women Car Buyers Survey* commented, “Initially I had problems with the salesman until he realised I knew a bit about cars and that I wasn’t an idiot”.⁸⁹

The widely held perception that women know little about the mechanics of a car is also clearly evident when women

⁸⁵ NRMA, *NRMA Reveals the Hard Sell on Women Car Buyers*, Press release, May 2000

⁸⁶ Newspoll Market Research, *Women as Consumers Study June 2000*, Victoria

⁸⁷ *Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services* (ACT, NT, QLD, TAS, WA)

⁸⁸ Newspoll Market Research, *Women as Consumers Study June 2000*, Victoria

⁸⁹ Quote from *Women Car Buyers Survey*, Queensland

have their car serviced or repaired.

Forty-seven per cent of respondents to the *Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services* indicated that at some stage they had experienced a problem or complaint with having their car serviced or repaired and that in many cases this was exacerbated by assumptions made about their level of mechanical knowledge.⁹⁰ (Please note the respondents who identified as having a problem or complaint are respondents who answered Question 23: If you had a complaint with your service/repair, what was your overall level of satisfaction with how your complaint was handled?)

The following table illustrates the key concerns raised by women.

Statement	% Agreed	% Disagreed
The service centre/ repairer explained clearly what service/repairs were necessary	50	35
The service centre/repairer used technical terms which were difficult to understand	30	39
I felt like I could trust the service centre/repairer to do what was required and do a good job	44	30
I felt like I was being talked into unnecessary servicing/repairs	25	45

Table 7: Percentage of respondents identified as having a problem or complaint who agreed/disagreed with statements made in the *Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services*.

Women participating in Victorian research also reported concern at the lack of accessible information provided by some motor vehicle repairers and the use of overly complex and technical language.⁹¹

Failing to provide women with sufficient and appropriate information in accessible language contributes significantly to the distrust many women feel towards the service or repair person. The perception by many in the motor vehicle industry that women have little interest in knowing about cars only serves to heighten this distrust.

Thirty-six per cent of women who responded to the *Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services* indicated that being female had a bearing on a negative experience they had with getting their car serviced or repaired. Of these, 34 per cent felt that it was because it was assumed that they had little or no knowledge.⁹²

Jurisdiction	%	Number of respondents
ACT	31	82
NT	21	134
QLD	42	142
TAS	47	38
WA	20	23
Combined total	33	419

Table 8: Percentage of respondents by jurisdiction who felt that it was assumed that they had little or no knowledge, *Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services*.

⁹⁰ *Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services* (ACT, NT, QLD, TAS, WA)

⁹¹ Newspoll Market Research, *Women as Consumers Study June 2000*, Victoria

⁹² *Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services* (ACT, NT, QLD, TAS, WA)

Women complained of little or no explanation or information at the time of the service or repair and felt that they were taken advantage of because they had little knowledge. Women also said the service or repair person was not prepared to listen, less likely to discuss details with women than with men and did not think women would question the work done.

Women's Consumer Behaviour

A good understanding of the consumer behaviour of women is fundamental to identifying the most effective strategies to address the key concerns highlighted in this report.

The following analysis draws on the major research findings from this project and offers some interesting observations about how women behave as consumers of the motor vehicle industry.

Three key areas are discussed which shed light on the extent to which women shop around, whether women shop alone and how they behave when they are dissatisfied with a service or repair.

Shopping around

Almost 80 per cent of respondents to the *Women Car Buyers Survey* visited two or more dealers when looking for a car.⁹³ The table below shows the number of dealers visited by respondents.

Jurisdiction	% visited one dealer	% visited 2-3 dealers	% visited 4-5 dealers	% visited 6 or more dealers
Combined jurisdictions (NT, QLD, TAS and WA)	23	35	26	16
NRMA (NSW and ACT)	19	37	25	17
SA	20	35	19	20

Table 9: Percentage of respondents by jurisdiction who visited one, 2-3, 4-5 and 6 or more dealers, *Women Car Buyers Survey*.

In comparison women tended to shop around less when it came to getting their car serviced or repaired. Of respondents to the *Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services*, 56 per cent of respondents contacted one service centre or repairer and 31 per cent contacted 2-6 service centres or repairers. Thirty-nine per cent of respondents found the service centre or repairer through a referral followed by 13 per cent through the yellow pages. When deciding which service centre or repairer would do the work respondents made their decisions based on the following reasons: Twenty-four per cent of respondents based their decision on a referral or recommendation and 24 per cent based their decision on reasons relating to the manufacturer of the car or the dealer. Eighteen per cent based their decision on the convenience of the centre and 17 per cent on previous knowledge or satisfaction with work done by the centre.⁹⁴

When asked where the work was carried out, 34 per cent of respondents had their work carried out at a franchised car dealer, 14 per cent at a service station, 8 per cent at a franchised repairer and 40 per cent at an independent or sole repairer.⁹⁵

Shopping alone

On average, one in two women who responded to the *Women Car Buyers Survey* were accompanied by a male when they were looking for a car.⁹⁶ The following table shows the percentages for each jurisdiction.

⁹³ Women Car Buyers Survey (NRMA, NT, QLD, SA, TAS, WA)

⁹⁴ Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services (ACT, NT, QLD, TAS, WA)

⁹⁵ *ibid*

⁹⁶ Women Car Buyers Survey (NRMA, NT, QLD, SA, TAS, WA)

Jurisdictions	%	Number of respondents
NSW/ACT (NRMA)	48	2445
NT	60	284
QLD	52	892
SA	65	310
TAS	33	30
WA	42	33
Combined total	51	3994

Table 10: Percentage of respondents by jurisdiction who were accompanied by a male when looking for a car, *Women Car Buyers Survey*.

The majority of these were accompanied by their partner.⁹⁷ The table below shows of those respondents who were accompanied by a male what percentage were accompanied by their partner, friend and father when looking for a car.

Jurisdiction	% accompanied by partner	% accompanied by friend	% accompanied by father
Combined jurisdictions (NT, QLD, TAS and WA)	63	12	12
NRMA (NSW and ACT)	63	12	12
SA	74	5	11

Table 11: Percentage of respondents by jurisdiction accompanied by their partner, friend and father, *Women Car Buyers Survey*.

One of the most interesting findings from the surveys is the impact shopping with a male had on outcomes for women when buying a car. Overall, women seem to fare better when not accompanied by a male. The following statistics illustrate why.

Women who were not accompanied by a male were more likely to agree that the salesperson understood what they wanted and gave helpful answers to their questions.⁹⁸ This is shown in the following table.

Statement	% Combined jurisdictions (NT, QLD, TAS and WA) accompanied	% Combined jurisdictions (NT, QLD, TAS and WA) not accompanied	% NRMA (NSW and ACT) accompanied	% NRMA (NSW and ACT) not accompanied
Agreed that the salesperson understood what they wanted	72	77	74	79
Agreed that the salesperson gave helpful answers to their questions	72	73	71	77

Table 12: Percentage of respondents by jurisdiction who agreed with statements made in the survey, *Women Car Buyers Survey*.

⁹⁷ Women Car Buyers Survey (NRMA, NT, QLD, SA, TAS, WA)

⁹⁸ Women Car Buyers Survey (NRMA, NT, QLD, TAS, WA)

Furthermore, women who were accompanied by a male were more likely to agree that the salesperson did not understand that the buying decision was theirs, was not interested in what they wanted and treated them in a sexist and patronising manner.⁹⁹ This is shown in the table below.

Statement	% Combined jurisdictions (NT, QLD, TAS and WA) accompanied	% Combined jurisdictions (NT, QLD, TAS and WA) not accompanied	% NRMA (NSW and ACT) accompanied	% NRMA (NSW and ACT) not accompanied
Agreed that the salesperson did not understand that the buying decision was theirs	30	15	34	14
Agreed that they were treated in a sexist and patronising manner	19	18	22	19
Agreed that the salesperson was not interested in what they wanted	15	14	17	14

Table 13: Percentage of respondents by jurisdiction who agreed with statements made in the survey, *Women Car Buyers Survey*.

Respondents who were not accompanied by a male were more likely to know the make and model of the car they wanted before they started looking for a car. Of respondents to the *Women Car Buyers Survey* in the Northern Territory, Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia, 50 per cent of respondents who were not accompanied by a male knew what they wanted compared with 44 per cent of those who were accompanied by a male.¹⁰⁰

Surprisingly, respondents who were accompanied by a male were more likely to shop around. Of respondents to the *Women Car Buyers Survey* in the Northern Territory, Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia, 81 per cent of respondents accompanied by a male visited two or more dealers and 69 per cent of respondents not accompanied by a male visited two or more dealers.¹⁰¹

On the other hand, in relation to price paid, respondents who were not accompanied by a male were more likely to feel that they paid more for their car. Of respondents to the *Women Car Buyers Survey* in the Northern Territory, Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia, 24 per cent of respondents who were not accompanied by a male agreed that they probably paid more for their car than a male compared with 14 per cent of those accompanied by a male.¹⁰² This was similar for respondents to the NRMA survey where 24 per cent of respondents who were not accompanied by a male agreed compared with 17 per cent of respondents accompanied by a male.¹⁰³

In releasing the results of its *Women Car Buyer Survey* which are captured in the preceding analysis, the NRMA recommended that women should leave men at home when buying a car.

⁹⁹ Women Car Buyers Survey (NRMA, NT, QLD, TAS, WA)

¹⁰⁰ Women Car Buyers Survey (NT, QLD, TAS, WA)

¹⁰¹ *ibid*

¹⁰² *ibid*

¹⁰³ Women Car Buyers Survey (NRMA)

Whilst the recommendation to “leave men at home” may alleviate the issue of women not being taken seriously when they are accompanied by men the National Working Party wishes to emphasise that this does not necessarily mean shop alone. The adage that two pairs of eyes are better than one is especially significant to the purchase of a car where close inspection of the vehicle and the contract of sale are important. There is also less likelihood of an unscrupulous salesperson making false or misleading representations or pressurising a consumer into signing a contract when purchasers are accompanied by another person.

Complaints

Another interesting finding in terms of how women behave as consumers is in relation to making a complaint.

A large proportion of women respondents to the *Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services* who were dissatisfied with their service or repair did not make a complaint.

While overall respondents were satisfied with their repairs and service, it is instructive to look at how women responded when they were dissatisfied, particularly the difference in how women responded depending on whether their car was serviced or repaired.

Of respondents of the *Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services*, 25 per cent were not satisfied with their most recent repair and 38 per cent were not satisfied with a repair in the last two years.¹⁰⁴

Thirteen per cent of respondents were not satisfied with their most recent service and 24 per cent were not satisfied with a service in the last two years.¹⁰⁵ In Victoria, 10 per cent of respondents said they were not satisfied with their service or repair.¹⁰⁶

A closer look at the results across jurisdictions are shown in the following table.

Jurisdiction	% dissatisfied with most recent service	% dissatisfied with service in last 2 years	% dissatisfied with most recent repair	% dissatisfied with repair in last 2 years
ACT	18	28	41	49
NT	8	20	17	35
QLD	14	23	25	31
TAS	11	29	19	33
WA	22	26	25	63
Combined total	13	24	25	38

Table 14: Percentage of respondents by jurisdiction dissatisfied with their service or repair, *Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services*.

The table indicates higher levels of dissatisfaction in the Australian Capital Territory and Western Australia particularly with repairs.

The main problems cited by women included dissatisfaction with the quality of the work done, problems with customer service and problems with the cost involved.

¹⁰⁴ Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services (ACT, NT, QLD, TAS, WA)

¹⁰⁵ *ibid*

¹⁰⁶ Newspoll Market Research, *Women as Consumers Study June 2000*, Victoria

Interestingly women were more likely to make a complaint about their car repair. Of those respondents who were dissatisfied with their car service, 40 per cent did not make a complaint. By comparison, only 28 per cent of those women dissatisfied with their repair did not make a complaint.¹⁰⁷ The table below shows the results for each jurisdiction.

Jurisdiction	% Complaint made about service	% Complaint not made about service	% Complaint made about repair	% Complaint not made about repair
ACT	58	39	82	15
NT	61	36	55	42
QLD	59	37	75	25
TAS	50	50	50	42
WA	13	63	75	25
Combined total	56	40	70	28

Table 15: Percentage of respondents by jurisdiction who did or did not make a complaint regarding their service or repair, *Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services*.

Complaints statistics collected by Consumer and Business Affairs Victoria similarly found a greater representation by women complainants in the category of vehicle service and repair than in the categories of sale and purchase of motor vehicle, parts and assemblies, and manufacturers warranties.

The main reasons respondents gave for not making a complaint included: lack of time; not noticing the problem at the time; not confident that making a complaint would make any difference; not sure if they were correct; and not knowing what the problem was. A number of respondents also decided not to go back to the service provider instead of complaining.

Respondents were asked about their level of satisfaction with how their complaint was handled. Forty-four per cent of respondents were dissatisfied with how their complaint was handled and only 24 per cent of respondents were satisfied.¹⁰⁸

Complaint statistics collated by state and territory consumer affairs agencies indicate that women are under represented in complaints concerning motor vehicles when compared with women's level of complaints in other industries. For example, complaint statistics collected by Consumer and Business Affairs Victoria between 1 May 1999 and 30 April 2000 found that women represent 50 per cent of all complainants where the gender of the complainant is known, but only 38 per cent of motor vehicle complainants.

Complaint statistics collected by the New South Wales Department of Fair Trading in the last financial year (1998-99) found that 58 per cent of complaints relating to the motor trade were received by men and 22 per cent were received by women.

These findings reinforce the results of a survey undertaken by the Motor Vehicle Repair Industry Council of New South Wales for *Do Women Pay More?* It found that "women were less likely to complain than men, but when they did, more female complaints were resolved in the first round of investigation by the technical investigation than men's, and women were more frequently granted a refund".¹⁰⁹ This would suggest that women had cause for complaint.

¹⁰⁷ Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services (ACT, NT, QLD, TAS, WA)

¹⁰⁸ Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services (ACT, NT, QLD, TAS, WA)

¹⁰⁹ Foster, Allyson, Consumer Law Centre Victoria, *Do Women Pay More?* November 1997, p35

A similar outcome occurred when the complaints were referred to the second stage industry committee. When such a referral occurred, a higher percentage of women than men received a refund and there was less likelihood that women's complaints would be dismissed altogether.¹¹⁰

Foster concludes that "overall women fared better than men when their complaint was arbitrated by a recognised impartial dispute resolution board. Women's cases were more likely to be upheld and they were more likely to be compensated".¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Motor Vehicle Repair Industry Council (MVRIC), 1998, unpublished report

¹¹¹ Foster, Allyson, Consumer Law Centre Victoria, *Do Women Pay More?* November 1997, p35

Strategies for the Future

Women from all over Australia were keen to participate in stage 1 of the project. This demonstrates that not only is discrimination in the motor vehicle industry an issue which continues to resonate with women, but that women are keen for change to occur.

Given the commitment already shown by the motor vehicle industry to change its perceptions of women, there is genuine cause for optimism that the way ahead for the relationship between women consumers and the motor vehicle industry is a positive one.

The preceding analysis examined the key areas of concern for women. Based on this analysis the following three areas are identified as useful starting points on which to base strategies for the future. Many of these strategies were identified by the New South Wales Department for Women in its Discussion Paper, and reference groups and working parties around the country. The fact that many of the same strategies were identified independently by different jurisdictions, indicates there is already a degree of unanimity about what options are most appropriate.

It should be noted that both industry and government have already initiated some strategies to deal with these issues. The challenge ahead is to build on these and develop new strategies that will ultimately benefit all participants in the motor vehicle industry.

1. Changing the perceptions and attitudes of the motor vehicle industry towards women

While the industry acknowledges the need to change its perception of women, considerable work still needs to be done to ensure this translates to real outcomes for women.

Women want to be treated equally and taken seriously. They want to be extended the same rights and courtesies as those afforded to men. They don't want a perceived lack of knowledge or lack of confidence to disadvantage them when buying a car or having their car repaired or serviced. They don't want to be subjected to high pressure sales tactics nor feel that they've paid more than a male would have.

They want to enjoy the car buying experience and want to feel confident that they are receiving the best service possible and getting value for money when having their car serviced or repaired.

Three key areas have been identified by workshops and reference group meetings held in various jurisdictions and attended by representatives of the motor vehicle industry. These are:

- *Increasing the representation of women in the industry;*
- *Supporting women who choose to work in the industry; and*
- *Customer service training for people working in the industry.*

The following list of options under each of these areas could make a difference and deserve consideration.

➤ *Increasing the representation of women in the industry*

“Several dealers have discovered that having women on their sales force pays dividends, not only so that women can sell to women but to bring to the business a fresh perspective that appeals to many male buyers as well”.¹¹²

There is little doubt that the overtly male culture of the motor vehicle industry contributes to some of the discrimination women experience when buying a car or having their car serviced or repaired. Negative perceptions of women, particularly with regard to their perceived lack of mechanical knowledge also play a part.

The industry acknowledges that getting more women into the industry will go a long way to addressing some of these practices. The overwhelming majority of women who responded to the *Women Car Buyers* and *Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services* surveys dealt with men. New South Wales’s ‘Have Your Say’ campaign found that 16 per cent of women said that service would be improved if more women worked in the industry.¹¹³ Motor vehicle industry executive Debbie Clark explains why: “Women listen to customers, ask questions about their needs, and are more able to help them find the car that suits them. Males are more inclined to try to sell the customer a car that carries a bonus or will pay a big commission”.¹¹⁴

However, experience shows that attracting more women to the industry presents real challenges. The industry will need to be proactive and persistent if it is to achieve real outcomes in this area. The following options could be considered:

- ⇒ Set industry wide targets for the representation of women working in the industry. These could apply to both sales and repairs and services;
- ⇒ Target women in industry recruitment advertisements. This follows the example set by Holden where the company successfully sought a special anti discrimination exemption to allow them to advertise women-only sales positions.
- ⇒ Industry scholarships for female recruits;
- ⇒ Industry organisations and associations to develop a marketing campaign aimed at women which presents working in the motor vehicle industry in a ‘female friendly’ positive light;
- ⇒ Industry organisations and associations to promote opportunities for young women in the motor vehicle industry at appropriate career orientated events;
- ⇒ Establish links with Government employment initiatives such as Queensland’s Wider Opportunities for Women to increase the take up rate by women in automotive traineeships;
- ⇒ Approach the authors of the recently developed Automotive Retail Service and Repair National Training Package as endorsed by the National Training Framework Committee. Provide input to increase the attractiveness of a career in the motor industry to more women and to tailor training to address issues raised by women consumers; and
- ⇒ Introduce an updated automotive retail service and repair training package as endorsed by the National Training Framework Committee, to attract more women to the industry and to tailor training to address issues raised by women consumers.

¹¹² Bain, Ralph, *The Soft Sell*, Canberra Times 24 March 2000 p 15

¹¹³ Department for Women, NSW, *Women Consumers – Motor Vehicle Industry*, Discussion Paper, June 2000, p10

¹¹⁴ Clark, Debbie, General Manager, New Car Sales, for the Brad Garlick group in Sydney quoted in McKinnon, Bill, *The Hard Sell*, The Open Road, May/June 2000, p11

➤ *Supporting women who choose to work in the industry*

Attracting more women to the industry is only part of the solution. The reality for those women who do choose a career in the industry, at least in the short term, is that they are part of a strong masculine culture which some women find alienating.¹¹⁵

The industry should consider mechanisms to support women and ensure that there are opportunities for them to progress their career. The following options could be considered:

- ⇒ Industry organisations and associations establishing and endorsing support networks for women. These could be modelled on the Women's Automotive Network which was recently established by the Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce. The Network aims to improve the profile of women and recognise them as an integral part of the automotive industry and to raise awareness in the community of viable and rewarding employment opportunities for women;
- ⇒ Industry associations and motor vehicle companies to identify strategies to promote and support women in senior positions in the industry;¹¹⁶
- ⇒ Active promotion of women's successes in technical services, vehicle sales and managerial positions in industry newsletters, general publications and relevant websites; and¹¹⁷
- ⇒ Mentoring programs for new female recruits to the industry.

➤ *Customer service training for people working in the industry*

“There are plenty of old school salesmen still in the industry, who don't know how to relate to women and don't understand the customer service culture. Despite car manufacturers and some dealers spending large sums on customer service courses for sales people, there are still some dinosaurs out there who won't change”.¹¹⁸

Placing a high priority on providing quality customer service training for people working in the industry is essential if the industry is to better meet the needs of its female customer base.

Women have consistently identified customer service as a critical factor in their experiences in the motor vehicle industry. New South Wales's 'Have Your Say' campaign found that 38 per cent of women felt that customer service training for salespeople and repairers was necessary.¹¹⁹

Respondents to the Repairs and Services survey also identified customer service as an important factor which needed improvement. When asked what could have been done to prevent the problem in the repair/service experienced, 43 per cent of respondents to the question said 'better customer service'. Similarly when asked what could have been done to improve the handling of the complaint, 59 per cent of respondents to the question said 'better customer service'.

¹¹⁵ Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce, *Auto Update Media and Publications*, Vol 39 No 1 Jan 15 2000

¹¹⁶ Department for Women, NSW, *Women Consumers – Motor Vehicle Industry*, Discussion Paper, June 2000, p11

¹¹⁷ *ibid*

¹¹⁸ Clark, Debbie, General Manager, New Car Sales, for the Brad Garlick group in Sydney quoted in McKinnon, Bill, *The Hard Sell*, The Open Road, May/June 2000, p11

¹¹⁹ Department for Women, NSW, *Women Consumers – Motor Vehicle Industry*, Discussion Paper, June 2000, p11

The following options could be considered:

- ⇒ Customer service and communication skills courses for people who work in the motor vehicle industry;
- ⇒ New South Wales TAFE has recently included an Automotive Customer Relations module in the Automotive Mechanics course.¹²⁰ This could be used as a model for other States. Similar modules could be included in all relevant courses;
- ⇒ All training modules and courses to include an overview of some of the key concerns raised by women and how the industry can address those concerns. This could be achieved by providing feedback and input into the National Training Package;
- ⇒ Establishment of national competency standards which should include a focus on women as consumers. This could be achieved by providing input into the National Training Package;
- ⇒ Benchmarking and sharing of best practice ‘tips’ throughout the industry to encourage higher standards in customer service;
- ⇒ Use of customer service charters and service guarantees;
- ⇒ Industry to develop internal mechanisms to provide ongoing feedback to salespeople about their quality of service;
- ⇒ Awards or certificates for those industry players who practice excellent customer service; and
- ⇒ Motor Trades Associations to offer a course on marketing to women which should include information on anti-discrimination issues in sales training.

2. Enhancing women’s capacity to deal equitably with the motor vehicle industry

“Some women approach the car buying process with the attitude that they are entering a male dominated world, and that it is going to be unpleasant, so they are very aggressive from the start”.

Women also hold negative perceptions which can undermine their dealings with the motor vehicle industry. Their own lack of confidence and knowledge can contribute to this. Ensuring that women have access to information and advice about buying a car or having their car repaired or serviced is important if they are not to feel marginalised. The NSW Discussion Paper pointed out that many women who responded to its call centre survey “ did not know where to seek assistance and independent advice to address their dissatisfaction with the service provided”.¹²¹

The following options could be considered:

- ⇒ Publications aimed at women providing information on buying a car and repairs and services;
- ⇒ Information / advice on industry and Government websites. This information should not only include tips for buying a car or having a car repaired or serviced, but also where to make a complaint, details of courses on vehicle maintenance and other relevant information;
- ⇒ Training courses and workshops for women. A number of these are already conducted by industry and community based organisations;
- ⇒ Inclusion of information about buying a car, signing a contract and vehicle service and repairs in life skills courses at high school; and
- ⇒ Ongoing promotion of initiatives, information sheets etc at relevant industry and government events.

¹²⁰ *ibid*, p12

¹²¹ Department for Women, NSW, *Women Consumers – Motor Vehicle Industry*, Discussion Paper, June 2000, p12

3. Processes to protect consumers of the motor vehicle industry.

The two key areas of concern here are the reluctance of women to make a complaint and the dissatisfaction many women reported with being subject to high pressure sales techniques.

The following options could be considered:

- ⇒ A cooling off period such as is in operation in Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory. Queensland has recognised this mechanism as a means of addressing high pressure sales concerns and has included it in a recently released bill. New South Wales is currently considering the introduction of a cooling off period regime;
- ⇒ Industry to take responsibility for an effective internal complaints handling system;
- ⇒ Education about the complaints mechanisms which operate in each jurisdiction;
- ⇒ Awareness campaign about the rights and responsibilities of consumers of the motor vehicle industry; and
- ⇒ Development of codes of conduct by the industry, in cooperation with consumer affairs and fair trading agencies.

The options listed above are not a comprehensive list and could be considered on a national basis or by individual jurisdictions, depending on priorities and resources.

It is envisaged that subsequent to consideration of the report, jurisdictions will, in partnership with industry, consumer and relevant community organisations, select the most appropriate options and determine the most appropriate strategies to implement either individually or on a national basis.

Evaluation of these strategies will be conducted in the final stage of the project.

Recommendation

That States and Territories, in partnership with industry and other relevant organisations, conduct a stocktake of resources and initiatives and develop an action plan drawing on the options raised in this paper.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Women Car Buyers Survey

WOMEN CAR BUYER'S SURVEY

As part of a Queensland led national project aimed at women as consumers in the motor vehicle industry, the Office of Women's Policy would like to hear about your experiences when buying a car.

The project, which aims to ensure women get a fair go in the car sales yard and in the service workshop, has the support of Women's Policy Units and Offices of Fair Trading and Consumers Affairs nationwide.

An important component of the project is gathering data about the experiences of customers when buying a car.

This survey is reproduced courtesy of the NRMA and The Open Road magazine.

All surveys will be treated with the strictest confidence.

Please tick the appropriate box where indicated.

1. How long ago did you last buy a car from a dealer?

<input type="checkbox"/> 6 – 12 months	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 – 5 yrs
<input type="checkbox"/> 12 months – 2 yrs	<input type="checkbox"/> More than 5 yrs
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 –3 yrs	
2. Was the car new or used?

<input type="checkbox"/> New	<input type="checkbox"/> Used
------------------------------	-------------------------------
3. What make, model and year was the car?

Make & Model:

Year:
4. Did you have a trade in?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
------------------------------	-----------------------------
5. If you had a trade in, what make, model and year was it?

Make & Model:

Year:
6. Including all on-road costs, what was the total amount you paid for your new or used car?

<input type="checkbox"/> \$0 - \$19,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$40,000 - \$49,999
<input type="checkbox"/> \$20,000 - \$29,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50,000 - \$59,999
<input type="checkbox"/> \$30,000 - \$39,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$60,000 or more
7. How many dealers did you visit when looking for your car?

<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 – 5
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 – 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 6 +
8. What was the name of the dealership where you bought your car?

.....
9. Did you know the make and model of the car you wanted before you started looking?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
------------------------------	-----------------------------
10. Were you accompanied by a male when you were looking for your car?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
------------------------------	-----------------------------
11. If you were accompanied by a male, what was his relationship to you?

<input type="checkbox"/> Partner	<input type="checkbox"/> Relative
<input type="checkbox"/> Father	<input type="checkbox"/> Friend
<input type="checkbox"/> Brother	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
12. At the dealership where you bought your car, was the main salesperson you dealt with male or female?

<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female
-------------------------------	---------------------------------

13. Based upon your experience when buying your car, how strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Please circle one:

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know/not applicable

The salesperson understood what I wanted.

1 2 3 4 5 6

I was served promptly and courteously.

1 2 3 4 5 6

The salesperson gave helpful answers to my questions.

1 2 3 4 5 6

I enjoyed the car buying experience.

1 2 3 4 5 6

The salesperson was not interested in what I wanted.

1 2 3 4 5 6

The salesperson did not understand that the buying decision was mine.

1 2 3 4 5 6

The salesperson was more interested in the opinions of my male companion, and treated him as the decision maker.

1 2 3 4 5 6

I was treated in a sexist, patronising manner.

1 2 3 4 5 6

I probably paid more for my car than a male would have.

1 2 3 4 5 6

14. If there is anything else you would like to add, please use the space below.

.....

.....

.....

.....

Demographic information:

1. Are you:

Male Female

2. Postcode where you live?.....

3. Postcode of dealership if known?.....

4. Age group:

24 or less 45-54

25-34 55+

35-44

5. Annual gross personal income:

Less than \$20,000

\$20,000-29,999

\$30,000-39,999

\$40,000-\$49,999

\$50,000 +

For any questions please phone: (07) 3224 4062.

Please return the survey by **24 March 2000** to Louise McCosker Principal Policy Officer, Office of Women's Policy, PO Box 390, Albert Street, Brisbane 4002 or in the reply paid envelope attached.

You can also have your say by email. The address is www.qldwoman.qld.gov.au.

Thank you for your participation. Your assistance in completing this survey is greatly appreciated.

Appendix 2: Survey on Motor Vehicle Repairs and Services

SURVEY ON MOTOR VEHICLE REPAIRS AND SERVICES

As part of a Queensland led national project aimed at improving the way women are treated in the motor vehicle industry, the Office of Women’s Policy would like to hear about your experiences – both women and men – when having your car repaired or serviced.

The project, which aims to ensure women get a fair go in the car sales yard and in the service workshop, has the support of Women’s Policy Units and Offices of Fair Trading and Consumers Affairs nationwide.

An important component of the project is gathering data about the experiences of customers – both women and men – when having a car repaired or serviced.

All surveys will be treated with the strictest confidence.

1. Please indicate in the boxes provided the number of times in the past 2 years you have had your car serviced or repaired?

Serviced Repaired

2. How long ago was your current car serviced or repaired?

Serviced	Repaired
<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 6 months	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 6 months
<input type="checkbox"/> 6 – 12 months	<input type="checkbox"/> 6 – 12 months
<input type="checkbox"/> 12 mths – 2 years	<input type="checkbox"/> 12 mths – 2 years
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 years +	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 years +

3. What was the make, model and year of manufacture of the car that had been serviced/repaired?

Make & Model:

Year:

4. What is the approximate current market value of the car?

<input type="checkbox"/> \$0-9,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$30,000 - \$39,999
<input type="checkbox"/> \$10,000-\$19,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$40,000- \$49,999
<input type="checkbox"/> \$20,000 – 29,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50,000 & over

5. Were you satisfied with your most recent service or repair?

Service	Repair
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> No

6. Have you always been satisfied with the other services or repairs you’ve had in the past two years?

Service

Yes No

No other services in the past 2yrs

Repairs

Yes No

No other repairs in the past 2yrs

7. If dissatisfied, what was the nature of your dissatisfaction?

With your service.....

.....

.....

With your repair.....

.....

.....

8. a) Did you make a complaint?

Service

Yes No

Repair

Yes No

b) If not, why not?

.....

.....

9. From your experience, please choose one to answer the remaining questions:

Service or Repair

10. In deciding on your service/repairer, how many service centres/repairers did you contact?

.....

11. How did you find the service centre/repairer?

Yellow Pages Drive in
 Referral Other

12. Was the work carried out by a:

Franchise car dealer Franchise repairer
 Service Station Independent / Sole Repairer

13. How did you decide which service centre/ repairer would do the work?

.....
.....
.....

14. Were you given a written estimate which detailed work to be done?

Yes No (go to Q16)

15. Did you authorise for the work outlined in the written estimate to go ahead?

Yes No

16. Did the invoice exceed the estimate?

Yes No

17. Was any additional work performed?

Yes No (go to Q20)

18. Did you authorise for additional work to be performed?

Yes No

19. Did the invoice detail the additional work carried out?

Yes No

20. Did you ask to see the old parts?

Yes No
 Not applicable

21. Were you shown the old parts?

Yes No
 Not applicable

22. Was the main person at the service centre/repairer you dealt with:

Male Female

23. If you had a complaint with your service/repair, what was your overall level of satisfaction with how your complaint was handled. Please circle your response on a scale of 1 – 5.

- 1 = Very dissatisfied
- 2 = Dissatisfied
- 3 = Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- 4 = Satisfied
- 5 = Very satisfied

24. What could have been done to prevent the problem in the repair/service you experienced?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

25. What could have been done to improve the handling of the complaint?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

26. Do you think being a male or female had any bearing on what occurred?

Yes No

If yes, why do you think so?

.....

27. Were there any other personal factors which you think may have had a bearing on what occurred? (for example age, ethnic background, etc.)

.....

28. Based upon your experience when having your car repaired or serviced how strongly do you agree with the following statements:

Please circle one:

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know/not applicable

The service centre/repairer understood what I wanted. 1 2 3 4 5 6

The service centre/repairer explained clearly what service/repairs were necessary. 1 2 3 4 5 6

The service centre/repairer used technical terms which were difficult to understand. 1 2 3 4 5 6

I felt like I could trust the service centre/repairer to do what was required to service/repair my car and to do a good job.

1 2 3 4 5 6

I felt like I was being talked into unnecessary servicing/repairs.

1 2 3 4 5 6

I was treated in a patronising manner.

1 2 3 4 5 6

29. If there is anything else you would like to add, please use the space below.

.....

Demographic information:

1. Are you: Male Female
2. Postcode where you live?.....
3. Postcode of service centre/repairer if known?.....
4. Age group:

<input type="checkbox"/> 24 or less	<input type="checkbox"/> 45-54
<input type="checkbox"/> 25-34	<input type="checkbox"/> 55+
<input type="checkbox"/> 35-44	
5. Annual gross personal income:

<input type="checkbox"/> Less than \$20,000
<input type="checkbox"/> \$20,000-29,999
<input type="checkbox"/> \$30,000-39,999
<input type="checkbox"/> \$40,000-\$49,999
<input type="checkbox"/> \$50,000 +

For any questions please phone: (07) 3224 4062.

Please return the survey by **24 March 2000** to Louise McCosker Principal Policy Officer, Office of Women's Policy, PO Box 390, Albert Street, Brisbane 4002 or in the reply paid envelope attached.

You can also have your say by email. The address is www.qldwoman.qld.gov.au.

Thank you for your participation. Your assistance in completing this survey is greatly appreciated.

Appendix 3: Comparison of consumer complaints data across jurisdictions

Data received from: QLD, ACT, VIC, VIC consumer agencies, SA and NSW

TAS can't collect/collate

No record of data from: NT and WA

	QLD	ACT	NSW	VIC	MEAN
Total complaints (12 mths)	9742			6096	
Total vehicle complaints	963/ 9.9%	381	1790 (6mths) 16%	561/ 9.2%	11.7%
% Women complaints of total vehicle complaints where gender is known	34%	33%	28%	38%	33.25%
Vehicle sales complaints as a % of vehicle complaints	77%	62.5%	54.2%	62.6%	67%
% Women of vehicle sales complaints where gender is known	36%	33%	30%	38.8%	33.5%
Vehicle repairs & servicing complaints as a % of vehicle complaints	22.8%	37.5%	13%	22.8%	24%
% Women of vehicle repair & servicing complaints where gender is known	28%	34%	30.6%	43.7%	34%

Table 16: Comparison of consumer complaints data across jurisdictions.

Main areas of complaint**Queensland - Sales****Women**

1. Warranty, documentation, unlicensed trading, non return of deposit
2. Defective goods
3. Selling techniques, including misrepresentation, pressure sales

Men

1. Defective goods
2. Warranty, documentation, unlicensed trading, non return of deposit
3. Selling techniques, including misrepresentation, pressure sales

Queensland - Servicing & Repairs**Women**

1. Substandard service,
2. Misleading claims, misrepresentation, unfair pressure
3. Contractual, eg. Unfair terms, non authorisation of work, difficulty rectifying faults

Men

1. Substandard service
2. Pricing, including value for money
3. Misleading claims, misrepresentation, unfair pressure

ACT - Sales

1. Sales service, misleading advice, misrepresentation, warranty
(34% women & 66% men)
2. Defective goods
(33% women & 67% men)

ACT - Service & Repair

1. mechanical engine repair
(35% women & 65% men)
2. unsatisfactory service of wheels & tyres
(33% women & 67% men)

Victoria

1. Mechanical parts and assemblies
2. Warranty
3. Body parts & assemblies

Victoria - Consumer Agencies

1. Warranty
2. Contractual issues
3. Quality

South Australia

1. Warranty, documentation, non return of deposit etc
2. Defective goods/ quality
3. Repairs not completed correctly

New South Wales**Women and used car sales**

1. Quality/defective goods
2. Warranties
3. failure to refund deposit/bond

Women and new car sales

1. Quality/defective goods
2. Warranties & unsatisfactory goods

Repair & service

1. Quality of product & non performance of service
2. Repairs and maintenance
3. Conduct, eg. loss or damage to customer property

Relevant legislative provisions relating to the above jurisdictions**SALES****Licensing**

QLD, NSW, SA & VIC require licence to be held to sell motor vehicles

ACT no licensing requirement but must have sufficient finance to trade

Qualifications

QLD & VIC Mandatory qualification

SA Voluntary sales diploma

ACT & NSW No specific qualification

Code of conduct

No mandatory code

VIC Voluntary

SA MTA code mandatory for members only

False and misleading representations provisions

QLD, VIC, SA, NSW

Applies in ACT to advertisements

Misleading or deceptive conduct

QLD, VIC & SA

Unconscionable conduct

QLD, VIC & SA

Provisions relating to harassment and coercion

SA, QLD, VIC

Implied conditions relating to merchantable quality, fitness for purpose, good title, description (civil)

All jurisdictions

Statutory warranty under certain circumstances

All jurisdictions with the exception of QLD

Being incorporated into new QLD legislation.

Cooling off provisions

VIC (used cars only), ACT, QLD (pending, new bill will include the provision)

SERVICING & REPAIR**Qualifications**

VIC mandatory qualification

Code of conduct

ACT mandatory code

Unconscionable conduct, false or misleading conduct or representations

QLD, VIC, SA