

July 23, 2021

To the Australian Productivity Commission,

My name is MC Forelle. I am a researcher at Cornell University in New York, USA with a PhD in Communication. My research looks into the repair, maintenance, and modification of electronic consumer devices, and particularly the role of copyright in hindering reasonable repairs and modifications. I am writing to urge the Australian government to adopt stronger protections for the right to repair, in the service of social equity and environmental sustainability.

In my research on the impact of American copyright law on the repair, maintenance, and modification of cars, I have found that the aggressive over-application of copyright by automotive manufacturers is resulting in real harms to consumers and independent, third-party repair providers and parts vendors. These harms include economic harms, of course – by throttling competition, auto manufacturers can keep the price of repair high, and shutting out competition by third-party parts designers both limits the market for parts and stifles innovation. But these harms are also societal and cultural. The inability to tinker with their cars is impacting people's ability to learn important technical skills, participate in cultures of technical knowledge-sharing and craft, and develop a sense of personal stewardship over their vehicles.

I have submitted as a supporting attachment my recently published, peer-reviewed academic article analyzing the debates over how American copyright law has been applied in this space. It is my hope that this article will provide a comparative case that will help shed light on how important the proposed reforms are for Australian Right to Repair.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions on my work.

All the best,

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