

23-7-2021.

WCA-VIC BRANCH:

SUBMISSION TO THE ACCC-PRODUCTIVITY:

COMMISSION WITH REFERENCE TO RIGHT TO REPAIR HEARINGS:

To commissioner Paul Lindwall and Julie Abramson.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to make a written submission to the ACCC-productivity commission, on behalf of the Watch and Clockmakers of Australia.

As outlined to the commission, the members of the WCA are highly trained, skilled Watch & Clockmakers, who are able to repair 500 year old timepieces, through to today's watches and clocks with multiple complication.

Our skills and competency have not been questioned.

In the past companies would run technical seminars, supply bulletins, parts lists and supply parts at reasonable prices.

This began to change in the 1990's when parts supply was gradually restricted and all repairs were carried out, in house by the major Swiss companies, not just warranty work, but any repair to the timepiece, would have to be returned to the manufacturer.

This is not just an Australian problem but an International one, affecting Europe, the UK and America and I am sure most other countries.

Cousins in the UK a major watch and clock parts supplier has taken action in Switzerland against the Swatch group, for its refusal to supply spare parts.

The outcome of this action should be known shortly.

We ask the ACCC not to wait for outcomes from Europe but to be bold, set the precedent here and force these powerful, multinational companies to supply parts and information to independent repairers.

It is to the benefit of consumers to be able to choose their own repairers.

What do these companies contribute to Australia in the way of intellectual property manufacturing, contribution to support trade training or engagement with trade associations.

It is fair to say none, their main focus is importation of their products, retail sales, advertising of their products through major sporting events and employing a small number of local Watchmakers and some 457 visa holders or equivalent.

These foreign owned companies sell 100's of millions of dollars worth of product in Australia without any commitment to improving standards in related industries or society in general.

RESRTICTION OF TRADE LEGISLATION:

I would like the ACCC to investigate the obvious linkage between restriction of trade. IE; the refusal to sell parts to independent watch and clockmakers and their right to repair.

The right to repair means nothing if we cannot access spare parts at reasonable prices.

ENVIROMENT:

There is no product that are more Environmentally friendly than a good quality watch or Clock, most house holds have at least 1 or 2 of Grandma and Grandpa's watches and Great Grandpa's pocket watches in a draw, just waiting to be brought back to life by their local watchmaker.

The modern good quality watch (not just the luxury brands) is incredibly reliable, running 24/7 days a week with amazing accuracy and giving years of service and satisfaction to its owner, these products can be repaired over and over again.

The flood of cheap fashion watches is of great concern to the WCA, we would like to see strict quality control on items brought into Australia, not just watches but any product with a short life expectancy, that will end up in landfill.

BUTTON BATTERIES:

The majority of batteries used in watches are Silver oxide and as such have a Silver content, which is recoverable. There are a number of state and national firms that collect and process this valuable resources.

Regards,

Graeme Baker.

WCA Vic Vice President.