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Digital service records – the cloud on the horizon



The last bolt has been tightened, you jump through the ever-shrinking hoops of resetting the service reminder and then go to stamp the logbook. But wait – where is the logbook?

A cloud looms overhead but they didn't predict rain today. It's the other type of cloud – cloud-based storage digital service record (DSRs).

Mazda Europe first introduced DSRs back in 2005. Unlike our Australian models, they did away with a paper logbook, allowing dealers and independent repairers alike to register for access to update maintenance records.

So why the change? What's wrong with a stamp? Well, it's fair to say the manufacturers are a bit like Big Brother. They want to know everything and more – who currently owns the car, where it is, who is working on it and what they are doing. Mazda alone has already logged more 10 million DSR entries – that's a lot of data.

Under the traditional logbook arrangement, Big Brother is left in the dark when Mrs Jones comes to an independent repair centre for servicing. By logging everything electronically, however, the manufacturer can easily implement cost-effective customer-based marketing strategies.

The positive spin-off for the vehicle owner is the ability to access their records anywhere, anytime (sort of like a paper book that stays in the glovebox, right?). Apps such as 'Mercedes Me' allow the owner to access their maintenance records and include genuinely useful features such as a GPS vehicle locator so you can never lose your three-tonne Mercedes G Wagon in a carpark again.

The true goal of these apps is a foot in the door to the hub of an owner's life – their phone. Any independent repairer worth their salt will be issuing service reminders but now the manufacturer can, too. Even if they haven't seen the car since the original sale, they have accurate information on when and what that vehicle needs, allowing them to target marketing directly to that customer.

Implementation of DSRs has been slower in Australia but will pick up pace because it really is a no-brainer for manufacturers.

The lack of a paper logbook is common in Europe, with everyone from Land Rover through to Subaru going digital. EU rules state that independent garages should be able to access DSRs for update free of charge.

The reality is the systems are often less than intuitive and require a reasonably sound level of IT knowledge to ensure that – once you've found the manufacturer's DSR burrow hole – you are using the right internet browser and Java version, etc.

Toyota North America still supplies a physical logbook but also has a DSR that even allows the owner themselves to update the records with their own DIY repairs.

With every cloud, there is a silver lining. DSRs are a great way to elevate your workshop above the competition. By staying ahead of the curve and obtaining access when possible, you can show how tech-savvy your workshop is.

When it comes to manufacturers not quite playing fair, many workshops are taking the opportunity to print out their own branded service book, a reasonably low-cost idea to gain customer loyalty.

The Australian Automotive Aftermarket Association (AAAA) states:

'It is likely that access to e-logbooks will be a feature of the new Mandatory Industry Code for Sharing Service and Repair information. Until this new code is signed off by the government and becomes enforceable, it is recommended that workshops record the service and recommend that customers retain a copy in their glovebox. It's not ideal but it's a stop-gap measure to support consumers until the new code is enacted.'

The OEM-info resource on the TaT website – accessible from the main member homepage (www.tat.net.au) – is a great source of knowledge on manufacturer-specific information, including each brand's portal web addresses.

TaT's current day-to-day use of DSRs in Australia is as follows:



Volkswagen Audi Group (VAG)

Access the specific manufacturer site at the following web addresses (one set of Erwin log-in credentials will allow access to all):

- <https://erwin.volkswagen.de>
- <https://erwin.audi.com>
- <https://erwin.skoda-auto.cz>

Once logged in, follow these steps to log a service record on a suitable late-model VAG vehicle:

- Products and Services.
- Digital Service Schedule.
- Enter a valid late-model vehicle identification number (VIN) from that manufacturer.
- Open DSS.
- Create Maintenance Table.
- Follow the prompts to fill out the form and save a new record.
- Print record to show to customer.



BMW/MINI

■ <https://aos.bmwgroup.com>

Last year we posted a video walking through the whole process of logging a BMW DSR:

■ Go to www.tat.net.au and enter 'BMW AOS' into the search bar or search 'BMW' on the TaT YouTube page

BMW Service MINI Service
ISPA Light

VIN entry: Search VIN:

Vehicle identification no.: WBA3A16020NS37113
Model designation: 316i 3A26
Series / Engine type: F30 / N13
Color: B30 mineral-grau metallic
Production date: 20-03-2014
Date of first registration:

Mileage (central data): 35,376 km

Central data	Order base / inspection	Central vehicle data
Service history		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Maintenance date	Mileage
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	25-04-2015	37,244 km
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	27-06-2017	25,081 km
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	09-11-2016	20,161 km
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	05-10-2015	9,766 km
	Dealer title	
	60015471 Steve Sorenson Mechanical, BROWNS PLAINS	
	21473 Motorline BMW, Daisy Hill	
	21473 Motorline BMW, Daisy Hill	
	21473 Motorline, Daisy Hill	



BMW has since changed its registration options. If you choose independent repairer, you will notice Australia is not listed. Instead choose, 'User Group -> Other' (please justify your request). Australia will now be available in the country drop-down box. You can then carry on registration from there.

It should be noted that updating the AOS site will update the DSR but won't instantly update the service history that is viewable in the in-car centre-screen menu – this in-car data, however, can be updated using a select few scan tools such as Autologic.

Jaguar Land Rover

Although we have first-hand knowledge of a handful of independents obtaining registration in Australia, attempts last year and more recently have resulted in futile email responses ending with 'In the Australian market, we do not have Block Exemption like in Europe so we do not give anyone access'. Where does this leave the customer?

We have lodged several incidences of these email trails with the AAAA and recommend you do the same.

The reality is DSRs are going to creep in and become the norm. As independents, we need to be ahead of the curve before it becomes another reason for customers to visit the dealer. It may seem cumbersome and over the top compared to a logbook but there are real benefits for all parties involved providing we stick to our guns and obtain fair access – and charge accordingly for the extra time spent on each service, just as the dealers do.

If you have any access difficulties that affect your ability to provide a complete logbook service for your customer, let the AAAA know at info@aaaa.com.au. This will help it continue gathering data for the Right To Repair campaign.

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