

Wednesday, 14 August 2013

SUNCORP AND THATCHAM RESEARCH BRING ESCRIBE REPAIR TIMES & METHODS TO AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND: SUNCORP TO INVEST \$3.5 MILLION

Suncorp Group and UK-based independent vehicle research organisation Thatcham have signed an agreement to provide *escribe*, an online subscription-based vehicle accident repair information tool, to Australia and New Zealand from 1 November.

The partnership is a first of its kind and has been developed in response to the need for reliable, affordable and accessible vehicle repair information, fully researched and developed using the latest repair technologies and techniques in the Australian market place.

"With increasing vehicle complexity, it's imperative repairers are able to access fully researched repair times and methods to perform repairs at the highest level. Thatcham have delivered high quality and relevant repair information to the global repair community for more than forty years - Suncorp is proud to be able to bring the *escribe* product to our market," said Suncorp National Industry Relations Manager Rob Bartlett.

"*escribe* will provide easy and affordable access to fully researched and globally recognised repair times and methods for all repairers, motor assessors and eligible training organisations, saving repairers time and money," said Mr. Bartlett.

escribe will replace Thatchamnet, now no longer for sale in the Australian market. *escribe* subscriptions will be available for purchase from 1 November – initial enquiries or expressions of interest can be sent to: escribeenquiries@suncorp.com.au

"Thatchamnet was originally brought to Australia by PPG, and they should be highly commended for that. They have actively promoted it to repair shops and grown licence holders year-on-year. As a result, PPG has made a difference to the standard of vehicle repairs in Australia. Our involvement is to assist Thatcham in taking this service to the next level, with the significant investment in adding Australian cars a key feature of why we felt we needed to get involved," said Mr. Bartlett.

Already in use across 89% of the UK insurers approved repair network, *escribe* will offer not only vehicle repair methods, but also times, and as part of its introduction will look to dramatically increase coverage of vehicles that are uniquely popular in the Australian car park.

"Suncorp will invest \$3.5 million over the next five years to fund the development of Australian vehicle content in *escribe*. Seven vehicles will be included by Suncorp in the first year, with five vehicles being researched every year after that. In total, twenty-seven vehicles will be researched and included in *escribe* to enhance coverage for users in Australia and New Zealand.

"Our aim is to cover about half of all car makes and models in Australia within the next year; and about three-quarters of the Australian 'car park' within five years," said Mr. Bartlett.

"We're always looking for ways to assist and improve the industry. This isn't just an initiative for our aligned repairers and assessors - *escribe* will be available and priced the same for all repairers across the industry," said Mr. Bartlett. "*escribe* provides times for all methods researched - repairers may choose to use these times to assist in the preparation of quotes, in consultation with work providers."

escribe will also be available to insurance and independent assessors, and approved training organisations. While the system is user-friendly, additional training programs will be offered in the New Year.

"We expect independent repairers to be among the biggest beneficiaries. Over the past few years there has been a significantly increased focus on the use of correct repair techniques - access to the right information is at the heart of that. We see this as a way to improve consumer outcomes by enabling access to technical information for all repairers," said Mr. Bartlett.

Thatcham Commercial Director Lesley Upham said this is the first such partnership they have entered into internationally, with increased investment in research, times and methods, a potential breakthrough for the repair industry in Australia and New Zealand: "The Australian vehicle market remains among the most diverse in the world – *escribe* will reduce repair method complexity for repairers, and bring a higher and more consistent standard of repair for consumers. It will enable insurers and repairers to fill an urgent gap in technical information in the Australian marketplace.

"Thatcham has a track record of being an honest, independent broker between repairers, manufacturers and insurers to ensure the times and methods being used by repairers across the world are well researched, correct, and provided in a timely manner – ultimately for the benefit of consumers," said Ms. Upham.

More information on prices and how to purchase an *escribe* subscription will be available in the coming months.

About Thatcham Research

Based in the UK, Thatcham Research are experts in safety, security and crash repair. As the world's premier vehicle repair research centre, with more than forty years providing scientific research, Thatcham work closely with vehicle manufacturers to influence vehicle design and develop fully researched repair times and methods. Thatcham's repair times and methods are seen globally as the driving force behind standards in vehicle repair.

Media contact: Stephen Bell on (02) 8121 0273 or 0428 051 148