

**Question on Notice  
No. 204  
Asked on 27 April 2004**

**MR ENGLISH** asked the Minister for Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development (Ms Keech)—

**QUESTION:**

Will she detail any services provided by her department which assist private car buyers in discovering information about the vehicle they are interested in purchasing?

**ANSWER:**

I thank the Member for Redlands for his question and commend him for his interest in protecting the rights of car buyers.

The Office of Fair Trading (OFT) provides two key services and several sources of practical and valuable information for consumers considering buying a car privately. Consumers considering the private purchase of a vehicle can conduct Register of Encumbered Vehicles (REVS) and Written-Off Vehicle Register (WOVR) checks to discover important information about the vehicle they are interested in purchasing. Only REVS and WOVR searches can tell buyers whether a used car still has money owing on it, has been wrecked or is unregistrable.

A REVS certificate gives peace of mind, knowing there is no finance outstanding - a clear title - on the car and that it has not been recorded as written-off due to water damage. The REVS certificate protects the buyer against repossession, provided they buy the vehicle before midnight on the day the certificate is issued. Buyers are recommended to conduct the check before handing over money for the car.

Between December 2003 and February 2004, more than 36,850 vehicles were sold privately in Queensland but only 5,982 REVS checks were undertaken through OFT's database. That means that approximately five out of every six Queenslanders, who bought a car privately in the last few months, took the risk that the vehicle might be legally repossessed if money was owed on it.

With a quick telephone call to provide key details such as the vehicle's registration number, vehicle identification number (VIN) or chassis number, engine number, together with their credit card details, consumers can get a REVS check to protect their potential new investment. Buyers can do a search over the telephone with a valid credit card, post in a cheque or money order, or visit their local OFT or Smart Service Provider to pay by card, cash, cheque or money order, or go through an on-line broker. OFT's REVS line, 3246 1599, is open Monday to Saturday 8.30am - 4.45pm except on Tuesdays when it is 9.30am - 4.45pm, and most public holidays. OFT's fee to do a REVS search is \$10.10 to have the certificate posted, or \$13.60 to have the certificate faxed.

If buying a car from a licensed motor dealer, buyers do not need to conduct a REVS check as the dealer is required, under the *Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act 2000*, to provide a REVS certificate to the customer on the day of the transaction and guarantee clear title of that vehicle.

The written-off vehicle certificate produced by Queensland Transport details if the vehicle's VIN or chassis number has a current write-off status, the type of damage sustained (eg fire), the date and the State where the vehicle was written-off. If the vehicle is on the written-off list on the WOVR, this will affect the vehicle's eligibility for registration and transfer of ownership. For a small fee, businesses and consumers can purchase the WOVR certificate from Queensland Transport, through OFT or an on-line information service provider. A list of providers is published on the Queensland Transport website [www.transport.qld.gov.au](http://www.transport.qld.gov.au).

OFT works to increase consumers' awareness of the benefits of getting REVS and WOVR checks when privately purchasing motor vehicles. This includes running State-wide newspaper classified advertising in the used car sections and issuing regular warnings and advice to consumers. I have recently issued a series of media releases, giving practical advice to consumers about:

- REVS and WOVR checks (issued 27 April 2004);
- cooling-off periods available if buying through a licensed dealer (issued 23 April 2004); and

- statutory warranties applicable if buying through a licensed dealer (issued 29 March 2004).

In addition to running the REVS register and providing WOVR checks, OFT provides useful publications that give practical information and advice to those considering buying a car privately and through licensed dealers. These include the *The Glovebox Guide to buying and owning a car*, fact sheets on buying a used car and REVS, and OFT's website which contains these tools and much more. The hardcopy resources are available free from OFT on 1300 658 030 or by logging on to its website at [www.fairtrading.qld.gov.au](http://www.fairtrading.qld.gov.au).