

Pennant lies in fight against insurance company rip-offs

John Pennant, owner of JP Auto Recovery Services, has a reputation for being a "tough" boss. He doesn't get paid by his staff without a written application.

He refuses to accept less than \$51.25 an hour for body repair work, when other shops are forced to take \$23.

Yet his business is booming, because to his customers, especially those who have been ripped off by insurers, he's the White Knight, the Lone Ranger, who goes to battle for them in disputes with insurance companies, right to the courthouse door and often right inside.

John fights for the customers' rights, and the customers not only keep coming back to him, but they keep on telling others about his service.

In the last nine years he has taken on 465 cases of disputed claims on behalf of customers and won 442 of them. About half the cases he deals with are settled out of court.

JP Auto Recovery Services is the claims settlement arm of the business, of which JP Auto Custom is the body repair operation.

In addition there's JP Car Rentals, providing vehicles for repair customers, JP Automotive Services, which handles mechanical repairs, and Short Circuit Auto Electrics for electrical repairs.

John doesn't go in to bat just for his customers. He has been active for years in rousing repairers to act against the unfair practices of the insurers, for equitable hourly rates and against discriminatory preferred repairer policies.

Lately, he has taken to defending parts suppliers against the restrictive action of insurers nominating preferred suppliers and insisting that repairers use their products exclusively.

In taking the fight to the insurance industry, he has made intelligent use of both print and electronic media. He is constantly in print in both local and metropolitan newspapers, has appeared on 'The Investigators' and been invited to join talk-back radio sessions.

What motivates him to keep up the fight and how is he able to achieve such success?

John told *MEN* that when he first started as an independent repairer in 1982, he lost the business after being "ripped off for many thousands of dollars" by an insurer and a finance company.

"That's when I decided to study motor vehicle accident, collision and insurance policy legalities," he said.

He took on courses in relevant subjects at TAFE colleges and spent years working for no remuneration, part-time in a solicitor's office to gain experience for the task he wanted to undertake.

Then he worked 18 hours a day at several jobs including delivering milk, lumping meat and serving drinks at a hotel, to get enough money together to restart in business in 1988.

His present 23,000sq ft premises, designed by himself and constructed by a builder friend, are the third the company has occupied since then, as business continued to expand.

Today, JP Auto Recovery handles about 20-25 disputed claims a month. John says people just don't

bring work up to me up to (extra) work after an unsuccessful repair, and I can get their names on file.

"I've also been able to get premiums financially reduced, after showing that an insurance company was ripping off the customer."

Backing up John's own investigative work on behalf of customers is some highly-qualified legal

work. John has a law partner in Melbourne, Margaret, and a solicitor, David, a private consultant, who is right in the city.

He is also qualified by V-Road for mechanical testing of motor vehicles, including taxis and trucks, and is taking a course which will qualify him to do the same for motorcycles.



John Pennant, owner of JP Auto Recovery Services, has a reputation for being a "tough" boss.

His auto shop will be a lean, Albanian and Greek, because he says those ethnic groups are especially vulnerable to insurance company rip-offs.



"I've also been able to get premiums financially reduced, after showing that an insurance company was ripping off the customer."

DANDENONG BENWICK (LEADER October 17 1992)

NEWS

Mechanic warns on shonky repairs

AUTO mechanic John Pennant has warned that shonky repairs are creating unnecessary danger on the roads and risking lives.

He said he was "flat stick" trying to keep up with the work. There was evidence that some smash repairers were not fixing cars properly in a "corner-cutting" exercise to save money.

Mr Pennant said he fixed a seat which had not been bolted in correctly by a previous repairer. He was now working on a car in which the pillars holding the doors were only half repaired. Although it was repaired after an accident,

the back door kept flying open, Mr Pennant said. "I don't mind repairing them... but we shouldn't have to do it. "It's putting public lives at risk," he said. Mr Pennant advised drivers to make sure smash repairs were done properly.



JOHN PENNANT

AUGUST 1996

CAR INSURANCE

It's not all the same...

If your car is involved in an accident, will it be repaired by someone you know and trust?

In many cases, not if the insurance company can help it. The Insurance Council of Australia - supposedly independent - is there to oversee the insurance industry but they display a conflict of interests at times and the question arises - is there the possibility that the theme "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours" applies to insurance claims?

Disputes on insurance policies, claims forcing repairers to cheat and take short cuts in motor body repairs lead, inevitably, to sub-standard repairs. Incorrect insurance ratings and charging wrong premiums annually is a common problem, often causing unwarranted hardship for car owners.

Company employed loss adjusters tend to have a bias to the company they represent and, thus, have little regard for the customer/client.

To obtain more work, the repairer will accept a lower repair figure, so as not to jeopardise the relationship he has with the insurance company and the probability of ongoing work.

The poor old car owner, looking at his damaged vehicle and wondering how good it will be before the jolopy is back on the road, doesn't know about the wheeling and dealing going on in the insurance company's back room - just to keep their liability to a minimum.

All this caving over never doing the car owner's chances of being looked after in a proper, professional manner.

The Government knew all this was happening, wayback in 1983 but, in typical Government fashion, sat back and allowed car owners to be ripped off by insurance companies.

There was just no independent place owners could go to for fair advice. Until now! The million dollar insurance companies have a problem. Stirrer John Pennant (pictured above), who runs J. P. Auto Recovery Service, is an expert in motor vehicle assessment and Claims Management and he's taking the insurance companies on - on their own ground.

He wants car owners, taking out or re-newing a policy, to contact his company first. He says this will ensure that the owner retains the right to choose

his or her own repairer. John will handle all the necessary paper work and red tape that goes hand in hand with accidents that need satisfactory end results and he'll keep clients informed of progress as things move along. He'll also explain about the questionable quality and standard of parts your car needs - even though it may affect the spare parts business in Taiwan - or didn't you know this? John also runs his own panel shop, does

mechanical, electrical and general repairs and offers a 24 hours, seven days a week breakdown service with his radio controlled vehicles. Bearing in mind that what you get is what you pay for, his phone number is 9794-6631. The roadside service hotline is 9883-0165 and the address is 5 Damian Court, Dandenong. That's no more than half an hour from the Out 'n' About delivery area. Who cares about thirty minutes when you get the best - and save money at the same time?

