



## Unauthorised work

### Unauthorised work – the basics

Unauthorised work is work that you did not agree to – but it was done anyway. It may be in addition to work that you did agree to, or may have been carried out before you gave permission to go ahead, when goods had only been taken in for inspection. The general rule is that you are not liable to pay for work that you did not authorise to be done.

### An example of unauthorised repair work

Marama took her car to the local garage to have a faulty fanbelt repaired. When she went to pick the car up and pay the bill she was told the mechanic had also replaced a fuel line that was wearing thin and done a general check up and tune. The total bill came to \$800.

When Marama protested she was told she could not have the car until she had paid for the work in full. Marama paid up, but made it clear she would dispute the matter further. She ended up going to the Disputes Tribunal, claiming she should only pay the cost of the fanbelt repair. The Tribunal referee agreed, and an order was made that the garage had to refund all the cost of the unauthorised work.

### Before you get work done

#### Be specific

State exactly what work or service that you want done. If you are too general about your requirements - eg, 'please fix my car' - you risk getting a huge bill because you have given the garage the go ahead to do anything to fix the car.

#### Put a limit

Place a limit on the amount you are prepared to pay. Tell the service provider how much you are prepared to spend on the repair. They cannot go over this amount. If it is not possible for the repair to be done within your limit the repairer should not do the work, or, after assessing the extent of repairs needed, should contact you first to discuss the likely cost.

If work done goes over your limit, then the service provider may be able to reverse the extra work. This is not always practical, however, where the work cannot be reversed without damage. In that case, the provider should not charge you for the unauthorised part of the service.

#### Get a quote or estimate

The best way to protect yourself against unauthorised work is to get either a quote or estimate from the company before the work is done, or put in writing your specific requirements and the amount you are willing to spend. This may reduce any misunderstanding that may arise after the work has been done.

#### Got a problem?

If you are billed for work that has been done which you did not authorise, you can refuse to pay that part of the bill.

If you dispute the bill but pay it anyway, you should state that you do not agree with it and will take the matter further.

In either situation, you can make a claim to the Disputes Tribunal for a decision and reimbursement of any amount in dispute.

[Find out more about the Disputes Tribunal here.](#)