



MODERN CAR KEYS

WHY ARE THEY SO EXPENSIVE ?

During the 1990s car theft around the world became a major problem for police forces, insurers and the motorist. Thieves could steal a car in minutes. Something had to be done, leading to the development of the electronic immobilizer. A number of different electronic immobilizer systems have been developed around the world, with the transponder chipped key the most common.

The introduction of the electronic key by car manufacturers required the actual key with the matched chip or electronic coding to be used to start the car – if the correct matched key is not used the onboard computer will not allow the car to start. This process started in the late 1990's and the vast majority of new cars sold in Australia since 2000 have electronic key immobilizer security.

It is now much harder to reproduce an extra key and/or remote for the modern car, as special equipment and software are required to cut and program the key. Additionally, specialized techniques and software are required to produce central locking remotes, which in many cases are incorporated in the key head.

TYPICAL COSTS

The cost to supply a replacement key or remote for your vehicle in normal working hours may be in the range of \$150 - \$400, and in some cases even more, even if you have an existing key or remote. The lower cost keys are generally "cloned" (where the electronics can be copied). However, not all keys/remotes are able to be cloned and some must be programmed into the vehicle using special equipment and processes.

ALL KEYS LOST ?

The process of providing a "first" key or a key from scratch is a lot more complex. The car may need to be unlocked, security alarm reset and key codes ascertained using specialist diagnostic equipment. Car owners are advised to always maintain a spare key – loss or failure of an only key will result in considerable additional expense, often to the tune of hundreds of dollars.

Some cars on the Australian market require the on-board computer to be removed and re-programmed. This requires the new key/remote to be introduced to the car using further specialist equipment and techniques. To provide working keys for a vehicle where no working key is available will generally cost in excess of \$400 and, in many cases, depending on the make and model exceed \$1000. Prices may vary depending on the location of the vehicle and out of normal business hours service charges. Some models require a minimum of two keys for successful programming.