

A LIFETIME WARRANTY

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

WHAT IS A LIFETIME WARRANTY AND HOW DOES IT PERTAIN TO COMPONENTS IN MY KITCHEN?

FIRST OFF, WE NEED TO DEFINE THE TERM:

- A lifetime warranty is a guarantee that a manufacturer will repair or replace any defective part of their product and comes at no additional cost to the consumer. The “lifetime” may reference the suggested lifetime of the product (when used as intended), or the time that the product is in production (or some years after that date). It rarely means the lifetime of the buyer.

Lifetime warranties are a way for manufacturers to back their products’ quality.

WHY SUPPLIERS OFFER A LIFETIME WARRANTY?

- **They believe in the quality of their products.** If something was made poorly and it is going to break in the first year of use, suppliers are at risk of losing a lot of money repairing and replacing shoddy products.
- **They have infrastructure to make repairs or offer replacements.** Suppliers don’t want consumers to have failures with their products, but if they do, they need a way to address them.
- **The product brand and quality permits them to price appropriately to offset the risk they’re taking.** Suppliers need to have a sense of the fail rate of their product. How often will they need to repair or replace it, and what the cost implications will be?
- **They can define “lifetime warranty” in a way that works for them.** Some suppliers’ lifetime warranties apply only to the original purchaser, whereas others can go through multiple owners and still be valid. Some consider 12 - 15 years as a ‘lifetime’, while others consider 15 - 20 years as a ‘lifetime’. They can also determine their unique warranty parameters and exclusions.

Each product has its own lifetime - If we look at hardware (hinges, drawer runners etc) - these are usually tested by the manufacturer, opening and closing cabinetry fitted with the hardware until the product fails. These opening and closing times are measured and determine the expected lifetime of

that product. In general, a hinge should be able to operate a door opening and closing approximately 120 000 - 1 500 000 times before failure, depending on the make and quality. Similarly, a drawer runner should be able to operate a drawer opening and closing approximately 80 000 times before failure, providing the drawer is not overloaded and the handling weight is adhered to.

When you make a claim on a lifetime warranty a supplier will normally check to ensure the product has been installed correctly, and that care, maintenance, and cleaning instruction specific to their product have been adhered to. Only then will they look to repair or replace the item. The supplier must ensure you have access to these warranty conditions, but it is the consumers responsibility to adhere to them. Related labour costs for the removal or replacement of the item fall to the consumer and are not covered by the lifetime warranty.

All claims that fall outside of the parameters of the supplier’s warranty conditions will be excluded from the lifetime warranty (this type of exclusion is accepted by consumer legislation). For example, external conditions and influences that may cause the product to fail such as **air pollutants** and **climatic conditions** (e.g. corrosion and UV exposure in coastal regions due to salt and high humidity).

To claim for a repair or replacement the consumer would be required to produce the defective product and proof of purchase. If the supplier required you to register the warranty on purchase of the product you will need proof of this too. The complaint must be registered within 30 days of the problem occurring. Leaving the issue unattended and unreported, with the product still in full use, will negate the warranty.

A product’s lifetime warranty does not equate to your lifetime but rather to the expected lifespan of the product as determined by the manufacturer. It is usually only offered on quality, high-end goods and materials and is a clear sign the manufacturers fully back their product. It is vital that you check to ensure if the warranty only applies to the original purchaser or can be transferable. It is also vital that you understand the exclusions and fulfil the manufacturer’s warranty requirements in terms of maintaining and using the product or the warranty will be void. In short, a lifetime warranty signifies quality and is a good reason for selecting a particular product, but it is not a hall pass to mistreat and abuse a product in the belief it will be replaced or repaired at any point in your lifetime.