

Community information

The ACCC's task is to promote compliance with the Trade Practices Act — and that includes preventing and stopping price exploitation during the transition to the New Tax System.

To do that, it is educating both business and consumers through a

communication strategy about price exploitation. The strategy is raising the awareness and understanding of businesses' obligations in adjusting prices under the New Tax System, and it is informing consumers about what price changes they can expect.

Consumers are encouraged to report price exploitation.

A special strategy has been developed for people from non English-speaking and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

The price exploitation guidelines

The price exploitation guidelines, first released mid last year and then revised in March 2000, set out clearly and simply the ACCC's role in checking prices during the lead-up to 1 July 2000, and afterwards. The ACCC consulted widely with industry and consumer representatives, as well as government, in developing the guidelines.

In December 1999 amendments to Part VB of the Trade Practices Act expanded the ACCC's powers so it could act against any business that increased its prices in anticipation of the New Tax System. The guidelines were then revised to reflect this and other issues. For example, it was implied in the first edition that prices should not rise by more than 10 per cent. This has now been expressly stated in the updated guidelines to remove uncertainty.

Small business compliance guide

This publication explains the price exploitation guidelines in detail, with numerous examples and illustrations. It also contains practical compliance tips and checklists. The publication, which will serve as a reference manual throughout the transition period, will be available in hard copy and electronic form through the website and CD.

The guide will be promoted through industry associations, accountants and other business advisers.

What's in it for business

The key elements of the business strategy are:

- small business compliance guide
- small business cost estimator — a software tool that assists businesses calculate likely cost changes in business inputs arising from the New Tax System changes
- general business publications and others directed at specific industries such as jewellery, taxis, transport and tourism
- GST Checklist
- seminar program
- business information network
- industry association liaison and business presentations

The ACCC has arranged to distribute these publications through industry associations. They will also be available on the website.

What's in it for consumers

The key elements of the consumer strategy are:

- prices expectation booklet
- advertising campaign
- point of sale material
- National Consumer Liaison Group
- consumer information network
- GST Talk publications — covering electronic goods, residential rents, price exploitation and consumers, weddings, holidays and knowing what to pay
- how to make a complaint brochure
- consumer newsletter