

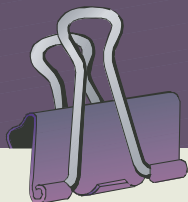


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From the Chair

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Consumer welfare is the watermark running through every page of the Trade Practices Act.

As the agency with the responsibility of administering the Act, the ACCC has two primary functions.

Firstly, to promote vigorous, lawful competition which involves taking action to prevent or halt anti-competitive conduct with the fundamental objective of providing a fair, competitive environment in which business—big, medium and small—have the opportunity to thrive and conduct their business in a manner consistent with the interests of the Australian public, the Australian consumer.

And secondly, to protect business and consumers against unconscionable and misleading and deceptive conduct in the marketplace.

2004 priorities

Consumer regulation is a never ending struggle and the ACCC's enduring priority is to enforce vigilant consumer protection. The ACCC continues to look for avenues to strengthen international cooperation between regulators as necessitated by the increasingly globalised marketplace.

In terms of misleading and deceptive conduct and unconscionable conduct, the ACCC is particularly addressing behaviour that targets and seeks to exploit disadvantaged and vulnerable consumers. We are also seeking to bring about a more responsible attitude on the part of the media outlets, to the publication of misleading and deceptive material.

We are currently improving online trading, working to secure competition in broadband internet and ensuring everyone involved in misleading or deceptive advertising is held responsible.

The ACCC also remains committed to fostering a competitive environment through detecting and busting open domestic and international cartels which have potential to do far more damage to our economy, to business and to consumers, than many of the worst consumer scams.

Graeme Samuel

ACCC Chair

Extract of the speech delivered to the National Consumer Congress in Melbourne, 15 March 2004. A complete copy of this speech is available at www.accc.gov.au