



## INTERNET SWEEP

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The internet has become an indispensable tool for virtually all aspects of our professional and private lives, especially for businesses trying to reach the largest number of possible customers. Unfortunately, the smell of huge potential financial gains is enough to lure predators, who circle unsuspecting customers looking for opportunities to strike.

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In late February and early March the ACCC led a 61-member consortium of consumer protection bodies from around the globe in an international internet sweep searching out misleading or fraudulent on-line traders.

The sweep, an annual event run through the International Consumer Protection and Enforcement Network, focused particularly on high-traffic sites with fine print buried in disclaimers on websites. These traders attempted to sign customers up for hidden charges, to gain their permission for insidious downloads or to waive them of their statutory rights.

Over 48 hours the sweep scoured thousands of traders' websites in Australia and abroad. A number of areas came in for special focus during the sweep, including sites offering mobile phone ring tone and other premium services, on-line car sales, ticket sales, jewellery and on-line auctions.

A confidential interim report of the sweep's findings has been sent to the participating members, some of which may lead to follow-up enforcement.

A final report on the sweep and any resulting enforcement will be presented to the ICPEN members towards the end of the year.

*Know your rights when buying goods over the internet. It's not as simple as click and beware —see page 13.*