

EDITORIAL

With a federal election drawing ever closer, competition issues are sitting squarely at the centre of a number of important national debates. Concerns are being raised over competition in sectors ranging from fruit and vegetable pricing through to petrol and the ability of smaller retailers to compete with large, integrated national companies.

These debates are taking place against a background of proposed changes to the law that, if passed by parliament, would have profound implications for many of the country's large and small businesses—and potentially for their customers.

Some of these changes—such as amendments to the Trade Practices Act in the area of collective bargaining—are already being felt. Others, such as proposed criminal sanctions for hard-core cartel activity, remain in the pipeline.

This edition of *ACCC update* looks at some of the issues heating up as we head towards the end of the year, including the ACCC's inquiry into petrol pricing. The ACCC is travelling around the country holding public hearings and taking submissions from a wide range of sources, to try to get to the heart of what really drives the prices motorists pay at the pump.

The nation's broadband infrastructure is also shaping up as an important election issue. We look at some of the options being discussed to deliver a new network to the country and the ACCC's role in ensuring that users are given the greatest choice and most competitive prices possible.

A recent spate of scares over faulty toys for children has refocused attention on Australia's safety standards and the tests imported products need to pass before they can legally be sold in this country.

With a federal election on the way, debate on these issues can only intensify.