

Chairman targets consumer welfare

Rod Sims took the reins as Chairman of the ACCC in August with a personal brief to focus on two things: to look after the long-term interests of consumers and to maintain and even enhance the professionalism and reputation of the ACCC.

Quite obviously there's a lot more to the job than that, but he's made it clear in his first few months that those objectives will remain at the top of his agenda.

'I have a long list of things I hope to achieve in my time here, but they are essentially my two high-level goals,' he said.

'I want Australians to understand that the ACCC is working tirelessly for their long-term interests—I want consumers to know we are fundamentally here for them.

'We are in a period of considerable economic uncertainty and during times like these people can lose sight of the importance of maintaining competitive markets.

'The ACCC will continue to be a strong voice for the benefits of competition across the economy and its benefits for consumers.'

Of equal importance is preserving—and even enhancing—the strength, professionalism and reputation of the organisation.

'Our society depends on the strength of its core enforcement institutions, and the ACCC is an important one of those.

'It is a strong and professional organisation, full of talented people, and I'm a very firm believer in its role—I wouldn't have taken on this job if it were otherwise.

'I intend making sure I nurture and guard those qualities.'

With a background in the private and public sectors spanning 35 years, including a period early in his career advising and negotiating on behalf of developing countries, he brings to the chair a wealth of experience, credibility and business nous.

But despite his high-level credentials, Rod is the product of a small business family.

Growing up in country Victoria, most of his family were involved in small business. Family members at various times ran the draper's shop, bus company, hardware store and pub in Apollo Bay, and his father ran a general store and later a service station in Rod's home town of Lorne.

His father was also the local taxi driver and tow-truck operator. Other relatives were farmers and his aunt was a real estate agent.

Such a diverse background helps give him a good insight into the needs—and expectations—of a range of stakeholders.

Before his appointment to the ACCC, Rod was Chairman of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of NSW, Commissioner on the National Competition Council, Chairman of InfraCo Asia, Director of Ingeus Limited, and member of the Research and Policy Council of the Committee for Economic Development of Australia.

He was also a Director of Port Jackson's Partners Limited, where he advised the CEOs and Boards of some of Australia's top 50 companies on commercial corporate strategy over many years.

He relinquished all of these roles on becoming ACCC Chairman.

'The ACCC's diverse and growing portfolio covers what in many other countries would be done by two or three or even more agencies,' Rod said.

'It's a big job and I knew it would need my full attention.'

Rod is also a past Chairman of the NSW Rail Infrastructure Corporation and the State Rail Authority and has been a director of several private sector companies.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, he worked as the Deputy Secretary in the Commonwealth Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet responsible for economic, infrastructure, industry, trade and social policy and the Cabinet Office.

He also worked as Deputy Secretary in the Department of Transport and Communications.

Rod holds a first-class honours degree in Commerce from the University of Melbourne and a Master of Economics from the ANU.