



## DELIA RICKARD JOINS THE ACCC

*Delia Rickard joined the ACCC in June as one of the two Deputy Chairs. She replaces Peter Kell, who has been appointed to the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC).*

### **Can you tell us a little bit about your background and career so far?**

I did an Arts/Law degree many years ago and, after a stint as a legal academic and working for the Australian Law Reform Commission, I got a job working for the then Justice Minister, Senator the Hon. Michael Tate.

Shortly after I started with him, he was given portfolio responsibility for consumer protection and I discovered the area and issues that I really loved working on.

Twenty-two years on I still feel the same way.

I went on to run the then Trade Practices Commission's consumer protection branch for five years. While there I had a year-long stint at Treasury working on the Wallis Inquiry. That led to me moving to ASIC, where Peter Kell and I set up their consumer protection area back in 1999.

I spent 13 years at ASIC doing the full spectrum of consumer protection work. It presented a never-ending array of interesting and important issues to work on, and the opportunity to deliver real benefits to consumers.

### **What interests you the most about the ACCC?**

The ACCC has always offered the opportunity to make a difference to the quality of people's lives and to be involved in a wide array of interesting, worthwhile and challenging issues. This is as true today as when I first worked there.

Some of the issues that particularly interest me, at the moment, include improving price comparability between telcos, and between utilities, so that consumers can better benefit from competition. Also, credence claims, particularly in the environmental and fair trade areas, using the Australian

Consumer Law to stop unfair practices, and assisting vulnerable consumers.

### **Before you were appointed Deputy Chair, what was your knowledge of and experience with the ACCC?**

The responsibilities of the ACCC have expanded greatly since I was last here. Back then the main focus was on Parts IV and V of the *Trade Practices Act 1974* and the regulatory role was just starting.

My experience was primarily in the Part V consumer protection area. I've continued to follow the work of the ACCC over the last 13 years. While many of the issues of the day have changed, and the jurisdiction has expanded, some are perennial issues, and the Commission's basic approach to doing business seems largely the same.

### **What will your previous experience bring to your new position at the ACCC?**

I have a solid background in consumer protection and good relationships with, and respect for, the consumer sector, the state and territory fair trading agencies, and many in industry. Much of my work over the last 20 years has involved bringing industry, the consumer sector, and government together to find win-win solutions to issues causing problems for consumers. I hope I will be able to work with the Commission's staff to continue to do this in my new role. I'm also a big believer in regulators having an educative role as well as an enforcement one.

### **Are there any specific challenges you feel the ACCC faces in the next 12 months?**

I don't think there is ever a year that the ACCC doesn't have specific challenges. Some that come immediately to mind include providing adequate consumer protection in an increasingly globalised and online environment; bedding-down the ACL and incorporating it as a core part of the ACCCs tool box; overseeing the integrity of carbon-pricing claims; continuing work to help consumers compare pricing plans for telcos and—with the AER—utilities. Also there are some challenges that have been with us for too long, such as stopping Indigenous consumers being the subject of attention by unscrupulous sellers, and also putting an end to scams.