



CONSUMERS WIN THROUGH COOPERATION

More than \$20 million in compensation and penalties was paid as a result of action taken by Australia's consumer protection agencies in 2015-16.

A number of high profile companies were among the subjects of enforcement action throughout the financial year, with cases detailed in a report released today by Consumer Affairs Australia and New Zealand (CAANZ).

The report, which focuses on the administration of the Australian Consumer Law, also highlights important legislative changes and campaigns aimed at consumer safety and education.

Action by CAANZ members during 2015-16 included:

- initiating a total of 149 court cases, issuing 195 infringement notices and 66 public warnings, and signing 33 enforceable undertakings;
- the creation of new standards for country of origin labelling on food, and the development of standards for free range egg labelling;
- the introduction of legislation to extend unfair contract term protections to small businesses;
- action against misleading advertising in financial services, including insurance and superannuation;
- a \$1.7 million penalty against Reckitt Benckiser for misleading promotion of its Nurofen pain relief products;
- a \$3.057 million penalty against Woolworths for breaches of the ACL relating to safety issues with Homebrand products sold in Woolworths supermarkets and Big W and Masters stores;
- a \$102,000 penalty against Woolworths for a misleading meat discount voucher;
- an enforceable undertaking signed by Penguin Australia for failing to fact-check a book by Belle Gibson, who falsely claimed to have treated her cancer with natural remedies;
- a pilot for a "do not knock" town concept in Wujal Wujal in Far North Queensland to minimise consumer harm from unlawful door-to-door trade;
- a national project that led to court action against six private training providers for leading prospective students to believe courses were free of charge;
- the introduction of a new mandatory safety standard to ensure the safety of hover boards; and
- raising awareness on key issues, including toppling furniture, property spruikers, ACL for small business and button batteries.

CAANZ Chair Simon Cohen said the report highlights the great results that can be achieved through cooperation of agencies across the country.

“During 2015-16, agencies have undertaken a wide range of activities to enforce laws, and to educate both consumers and businesses about their rights and obligations,” he said.

“New laws and information standards have also been introduced, and work is well underway on a review of the Australian Consumer Law. This review is examining how the law could better help to protect consumers into the future.”

To view the report, visit: <http://consumerlaw.gov.au/>

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