



MEDIA RELEASE

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Minister for Competition Policy and Consumer Affairs
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CONSUMER AFFAIRS MINISTERS BACK TOUGH NEW UNCONSCIONABLE CONDUCT LAWS

Today's meeting of the nation's consumer affairs ministers in Perth has backed Rudd Government moves to strengthen the Trade Practices Act to crack down on unconscionable conduct by unscrupulous businesses, Federal Consumer Affairs Minister Craig Emerson said.

Dr Emerson welcomed his colleagues' support which means Australian consumers and small business operators will be better protected against bad behaviour from more powerful businesses.

The new national law means the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and the courts can take strong action against business operators who bullied, harassed or coerced others in a weaker position.

"Importantly, the changes will make it clear the law covers bad behaviour before, during and after the signing of a business agreement," Dr Emerson said.

"The actual contents of an agreement and its ongoing operation will be covered by the stronger laws, giving consumers and smaller operators greater security against unscrupulous behaviour."

The clarification of the unconscionable conduct provisions of the Trade Practices Act complements the commencement on 15 April of stiff new penalties (up to \$1.1 million for companies and \$220,000 for individuals) for offenders.

The communiqué from the Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs is attached.

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