



MEDIA RELEASE

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One national consumer law for Australia

Thirteen different consumer protection laws will become one under a Bill introduced into the Australian Parliament today.

The Trade Practices Amendment (Australian Consumer Law) Bill 2009 will introduce a single national consumer law and start the process of replacing consumer laws in place across Australia and the consumer protection provisions of the Commonwealth *Trade Practices Act 1974*.

Reforming consumer protection laws would, as estimated by the Productivity Commission, save Australians up to \$4.5 billion a year.

These reforms to a century-old problem constitute an historic milestone through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to move Australia towards a seamless national economy.

The Bill will also introduce a national unfair contract terms law that will apply to standard form business-to-consumer contracts.

In relation to business-to-business contracts, the Government is currently reviewing both the unconscionable conduct provisions of the Trade Practices Act and also the Franchising Code of Conduct.

Since these reviews relate to business-to-business contracts, the Government will consider the issue of business-to-business standard form contracts when these reviews are complete.

The Government will refer the Bill to the Senate Economics Committee.

I acknowledge the fine work of my predecessor, the Hon Chris Bowen MP, and the Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs, for their efforts over the past year to deliver these important national reforms.

A second Bill, to be introduced in early 2010, will complete the Australian Consumer Law.

Once fully in place, the national consumer law will implement a national approach to product safety. If a product is unsafe for consumers in one state it is surely unsafe for consumers in all other parts of Australia.

Under the national approach to product safety, a state imposing an interim ban on a product will notify the Australian Government immediately. The Australian Government will be able to apply that interim ban nationally and then commence a process to determine whether a permanent national ban should be made.

The states and territories will apply the entire Australian Consumer Law as part of their own laws by 1 January 2011. Further information on the reforms can be found at:
www.treasury.gov.au/consumerlaw

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