



Australian
Competition &
Consumer
Commission

2016 National Consumer Congress

A fit-for-purpose consumer law?

The Australian Consumer Law Review

Hosted by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
Wednesday 16 March 2016—The Ivy 1/330 George Street, Sydney

A fit-for-purpose consumer law? | The ACL Review

8.45–9.15 am

Registration

9.15–9.20 am

Welcome

Congress MC Delia Rickard, Deputy Chair, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission

9.20–9.25 am

Welcome to Sydney

Speaker The Hon. Victor Dominello MP, NSW Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation

9.25–9.40 am

ACCC Chairman's address | Making markets work for consumers

Speaker Rod Sims, Chairman, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission

9.40–10.00 am

Keynote address | From good to great—the Australian Consumer Law Review and beyond

Speakers Gerard Brody, Chief Executive Officer, Consumer Action Law Centre
Nicole Rich, Chair, CHOICE

10.00–10.10 am

Keynote address | Improving consumer wellbeing through effective regulation—getting the balance right

Speaker The Hon. Kelly O'Dwyer MP, Minister for Small Business and Assistant Treasurer

10.10–10.55 am

Q&A | The Australian Consumer Law Review—now is the time

Synopsis Delia Rickard will lead a Q&A session on what parts of Australia's consumer protection law and framework can be strengthened to enhance consumer experiences.

Moderator Delia Rickard, Deputy Chair, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission

Panellists Gerard Brody, Chief Executive Officer, Consumer Action Law Centre
Nicole Rich, Chair, CHOICE
Rod Sims, Chairman, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission

10.55–11.15 am

Morning tea

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11.15 am–12.00 pm Panel | New models, old law—how can our consumer protection regime adapt to an online world?

Synopsis In online markets, platform providers are in a key position to self-regulate the transactions and interactions that occur through these forums. At the same time, regulators cannot leave it all to business to police what happens on their turf, with the proliferation of fake online reviews demonstrating the need for regulatory oversight. How can business and government work together online to ensure that consumer protections are upheld?

Moderator Alan Kirkland, Chief Executive Officer, CHOICE

Panellists Brad Kitschke, Director of Public Policy Australia and New Zealand, Uber
Dawn Routledge, Executive Director Strategic Policy, NSW Department of Finance, Services and Innovation
Dr Ric Simes, Partner, Deloitte Access Economics

12.00–12.45 pm Panel | Alternative technologies and the energy sector—consumer protection in a rapidly transforming market

Synopsis The Australian energy market is experiencing a surge in innovation and consumers are being offered products and services not contemplated when energy laws were being written. This creates challenges and opportunities for businesses, regulators and energy customers.

Join Michelle and the panel as they discuss how to balance consumer protections with encouraging innovation.

Moderator Michelle Groves, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Energy Regulator

Panellists Dr Ron Ben-David, Chairperson, Essential Services Commission Victoria
Denise Boyd, Director, Policy and Campaigns, Consumer Action Law Centre
Dr Paul Harrison, Director, Centre for Consumer and Organisational Wellbeing, Deakin University

12.45–1.30 pm Lunch

1.30–1.50 pm Keynote address | From the field—a personal perspective on product safety in Australia

Synopsis As an Emergency paediatrician, Dr Ruth Barker knows the impact that unsafe products can have on children and families. However, recognising product related injuries in the emergency department is not always as easy as it may seem and there are significant impediments to detailed reporting of product related injuries through health services.

Dr Barker is exploring innovative ways to improve product safety in Australia, including novel uses of existing data and alternatives to product-by-product standards. Dr Barker will discuss recognising unsafe products, effective regulation and the complexity of Australia's product safety regime—a timely discussion in the context of the ACL Review.

Speaker Dr Ruth Barker, Emergency paediatrician, Lady Cilento Children's Hospital

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1.50–2.50 pm

Workshop | Empowering and protecting disadvantaged and vulnerable consumers

- Synopsis** 'A nation's greatness is measured by how it treats its weakest members'—*Gandhi*
- Australia's consumer laws are only as strong as the protections they offer those who are most disadvantaged or vulnerable. With the Australian Consumer Law Review now in full swing, it is timely to consider whether the words on paper apply as intended in the real world. And are laws even the answer?
- Join the panel as it reflects on some of the current and emerging issues facing vulnerable consumers, and asks what impact the Australian Consumer Law and other laws have had. The panel will lead an interactive session considering the following questions:
- Are vulnerable consumers better or worse off since the implementation of the Australian Consumer Law? What is working well and what needs to change for vulnerable consumers?
- Is the balance between prevention, regulation and enforcement right in order to protect vulnerable consumers?
- Has the Australian Consumer Law changed the culture and incidence of predatory commercial behaviour towards vulnerable consumers?
- Moderator** Sue McGrath, National Policy Manager, COTA Australia
- Panellists** Kevin Cocks AM, Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, Queensland
Carmen Daniels, Founder, Research and Communications, Indigenous Consumer Assistance Network
Fiona Guthrie, Executive Director to Chief Executive Director, Financial Counselling Australia
Dr Melika Yassin Sheikh-Eldin, International and Community Development Manager, AMES Australia

2.50–3.10 pm

Afternoon tea

3.10–3.25 pm

Keynote address | Is my Consumer Law broken and can I get a refund?

- Synopsis** In 2015, ABC TV show *The Checkout* was nominated for a Logie Award in the category of 'Best Comedy about a 1400 Page Statute', losing narrowly to Channel Nine's smash hit *I'm a Corporations Lawyer...Get Me Out of Here*. Over three series since 2013, *The Checkout's* revolutionary new wonder diet of clinically proven* consumer infotainment has been hailed by critics as 'marginally better than A Current Affair'.
- Checkout Executive Producer Julian Morrow presents a glib and poorly-thought-through assessment of the Australian Consumer Law that promises to be as confusing and excessively fast as the program he founded.
- *Terms and conditions apply. Objects in mirror are closer than they appear. Batteries not included. This presentation is not a floatation device. If pain persists, see your doctor.*
- Speaker** Julian Morrow, Executive Producer, The Checkout

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3.25–4.10 pm

Soapbox | Spotlight on consumer research and gaps

Synopsis A number of consumer representatives will join Gordon to discuss current and possible future research areas to better understand consumer behaviour, experiences and areas for reform.

Convenor Gordon Renouf, Deputy Chair, Consumers Federation of Australia

4.10–4.25 pm

Wrap-up | Congress take-aways

Synopsis Our final session will wrap up the key discussion threads from the day and discuss how participants can provide meaningful input into the Australian Consumer Law Review.

Speaker Catriona Lowe, Chair, ACCC's Consumer Consultative Committee

4.25–4.30 pm

Closing remarks

Speaker Delia Rickard, Deputy Chair, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission

4.30 pm

Close