
Guidance and information

ACCC presents submission to industry self-regulation taskforce

The Commission has recently presented its submission to the Taskforce on Industry Self-Regulation, set up by the Hon. Joe Hockey MP, Minister for Financial Services and Regulation and Minister with responsibility for Consumer Affairs, in August last year.

The Commission's submission sets out the goal of self-regulation as the effective management of trade practices compliance. While the Commission has developed preferred models of compliance, self-regulation is essentially voluntary in that businesses can manage their TPA compliance as they see fit.

The key points in the submission reflect the Commission's concern to ensure a systematic and coherent approach in any consideration of industry self-regulation.

In announcing the taskforce, the Minister said, 'My objectives in setting up this taskforce are to reduce the regulatory burden on business, to identify best practice in self-regulation and to ultimately improve market outcomes for consumers'.

The taskforce will be chaired by Professor Berna Collier, the Clayton Utz Professor of Commercial Law and Director of the Centre for Commercial and Property Law at the Queensland University of Technology.

Paper released on Internet networks

A discussion paper, *Internet interconnection: Factors affecting commercial arrangements*

between network operators in Australia, was released on 17 February 2000.

It invites comment on how the Internet industry can reach fair and equitable agreements on the interconnection of networks.

This interconnection, or peering, directly affects the interests of consumers in the price they pay to Internet service providers (ISPs) for access to the Internet.

The paper discusses various ways in which a competitive Internet industry should develop in Australia and invites submissions from the industry and interested parties.

The paper is at <http://www.accc.gov.au>.

Informing small ethnic enterprises about the New Tax System

The ethnic small business community has a right to know about how the New Tax System will affect their businesses.

The Commission has the important role of monitoring prices and to make sure that tax savings are passed on in full to the consumer.

The Small Business Program of the Commission has made a point of communicating with small business operators of non-English speaking backgrounds by working closely with other government agencies, ethnic media and business groups.

An example of Commission activity is its cooperative program with the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) at Vietnamese New Year Festivals in Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and Brisbane during February 2000.

For most Vietnamese, the TET-Vietnamese New Year represents one of the most important days of the year, and the festivals are well attended social events by the respective local Vietnamese communities. Businesses and government bodies now recognise the opportunity the festivals provide to bring their message to Vietnamese communities.

The Commission makes wise use of taxpayers' money by distributing its Vietnamese language leaflet on its New Tax System role at the ATO stand at each festival.

Meanwhile the Chinese community has been made aware of the Commission's new responsibilities by the distribution and promotion of its Chinese language brochure through the Chinese media and local distribution chains nationally. This activity follows the successful dissemination of a brochure on unconscionable conduct and the Franchising Code of Conduct to the Chinese community in early 1999.

'These two examples demonstrate an ongoing commitment by the Commission to make sure its education strategies reflect the diversity of Australian small business', said Philip Eliason, National Manager of the Commission's Small Business Program.

Energy magazine

The Commission has published a new magazine examining the regulatory framework and infrastructure of the energy industry across Australia. This industry has been dramatically restructured since the early 1990s with Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments all introducing reforms to establish competitive wholesale and retail electricity and gas markets.

A major objective of the reforms is to create more nationally integrated gas and electricity markets and to increase the industry's international competitiveness. Ultimately, the Commission hopes the reforms will reduce business and household energy costs.

The publication is one of three magazines written in plain language about three major utilities markets — energy, aviation and

telecommunications. The aviation magazine will be released soon, and telecommunications is planned for later in the year.

Energy is available free from all Commission offices.

Current ACCC Commissioners

Professor Allan Fels

Chairman of the Commission from November 1995 to 5 November 2000

Mr Allan Asher

Deputy Chair from 1995 to 5 November 2000

Mr Sitesh Bhojani

Reappointed until 10 November 2003

Mr David Cousins

Appointed until 13 July 2002

Mr Ross Jones

Appointed until 14 June 2004

Mr John Martin

Appointed until 6 June 2004

Mr Rodney Shogren

Appointed until 29 April 2002

New CEO

After the retirement of Hank Spier in July, Brian Cassidy will take up the position of Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission.

Previously, Mr Cassidy was head of the Structural Policy Division in Treasury and is currently with the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Mr Spier has been CEO of the Commission since it began in 1995, and before that was the long-serving General Manager of the Trade Practices Commission.