2014 CONSUMER CONGRESS

**Consumer rights in the digital age**

Empowering consumers to shop smart online

Hosted by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission

Thursday 13 March 2014 | GRACE HOTEL, 77 YORK STREET, SYDNEY

**Draft program**

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| **9:00–9:25** | **REGISTRATION** | | |
| **9:25–9:30** | **Welcome** | | |
|  | *Congress MC* | Delia Rickard, Deputy Chair, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission | |
| **9:30–9:35** | **Welcome to Sydney** | | |
|  | *Speaker* | The Hon. Stuart Ayres MP, NSW Minister for Fair Trading | |
| **9:35–10:00** | **Chairman's address** | | |
|  | *Speaker* | Rod Sims, Chair, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission | |
| **10:00–10:25** | **Keynote address: The importance of a strong consumer law in the digital age** | | |
|  | *Speaker* | The Hon Bruce Billson MP, Minister for Small Business | |
| **10:25–10:50** | **Keynote address: A consumer advocate's perspective on the root-&-branch review** | | |
|  | *Speaker* | Alan Kirkland, Chief Executive Officer, CHOICE | |
| **10:50–11:10** | **MORNING TEA** | | |
| **11:10-11:15** | **Introduction** | | |
|  | *Moderator* | Catriona Lowe, Chair, ACCC Consumer Consultative Committee | |
| **11:15–11:50** | **Convergence and consumers** | | |
|  | *Synopsis* | Convergence is reshaping shopping and payments in both the traditional & virtual shop front, allowing consumers to experience integrated shopping in an increasingly personalised way. Omni-channel retailing, apps, digital wallets, geo-blocking, tailored offers based on individual data, social gifting – the potential for converging the physical store with the digital world is significant. Now consumers have the opportunity to access content, products and services whenever they want, but where are they left if something goes wrong? Retail may be having a face lift, but how different are the issues faced by consumers, businesses and regulators? | |
|  | *Panellists* | * David Holmes, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Interactive Media Industry Association * Matt Levey, Director, Campaigns and Communications, CHOICE * Chris Green, Regional Commissioner, Australian Securities and Investments Commission * Marcus Bezzi, Executive General Manager, Australian Competition & Consumer Commission | |
| **11:50–12:30** | **The commoditisation of consumer information: what Is being collected, how it is being used & what its impact is on online experiences** | | |
|  | *Synopsis* | When we go online, chances are there's someone watching. Consumer data has become a valuable commodity in the digital economy as third parties such as digital advertisers analyse and use it to target the individual with content and marketing. Can consumers benefit from data mining to make better decisions, and at the same time protect their privacy? | |
|  | *Panellists* | * Professor Geoff Web, Monash University * Alastair MacGibbon, Director, Centre for Internet Safety     *Featuring a video presentation by Dr David Rawlins from the UK Department for Business, Innovation & Skills on the 'midata' program*  *More speakers to be announced* | |
| **12:30-13:10** | **Empowering consumers to shop smart online - consumer trust, comparator sites and online reviews** | | |
|  | *Synopsis* | | With the move from the physical to the virtual shopfront, consumer trust in representations have become a core part of the digital transaction. Price comparator sites and online reviews can help consumers make better and informed decisions, however what happens when consumer trust is undermined - can they really know if they are comparing apples with apples, or reading a real customer review? How can we empower consumers to shop smart online and use a critical eye when considering what to buy? |
|  | *Panellists* | | * Andrew Willink, Chair, CANSTAR Group & Chair & Founder, RateCity,com.au * Delia Rickard, Deputy Chair, Australian Competition & Consumer Commission * Jo Benvenuti, Executive Officer, Consumer Utilities Advocacy Centre * Teresa Corbin, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Communications Consumer Action Network |
| **13:10–14:00** | **LUNCH** | | |
| **14:00–14:40** | **Congress soapbox: spotlight on consumer research, initiatives and campaigns** | | |
|  | *Convenor* | | Gordon Renouf, Deputy Chair, Consumers Federation of Australia |
|  | *Panellists* | | *Interested consumer representatives to contact Gordon* |
| **14:40–15:00** | **Keynote address: Beyond graduated response - legitimate access to content versus ISP policing** | | |
|  | *Speaker* | | * Dr Rebecca Giblin, researcher, Monash University; co-host, ABC Drive's *Geek Club* radio |
| **15:00–15:20** | **AFTERNOON TEA** | | |
| **15:20–16:15** | **Parallel sessions** | | |
|  | **SESSION 1** | | **Debt: What happens when you want to pay, but can’t?** |
|  | *Synopsis* | | A lot is happening in the debt collection space, including new initiatives designed to help vulnerable consumers in financial difficulty. There are still many issues however with how the “system” works, particularly for vulnerable consumers. This session will run along the lines of the ABC’s Q&A, with discussion between the panellists and questions from the audience. |
|  | *Convenor* | | Fiona Guthrie, Executive Director, Financial Counselling Australia |
|  | *Panellists* | | * Matt Thomas, Managing Director & CEO, Collection House * Colin Neave, Commonwealth Ombudsman * Gerard Brody, Chief Executive Officer, Consumer Action Law Centre * Dennis Nelthorpe, AM, Adjunct Professor, Victoria University |
|  | **SESSION 2** | | **Ethical consumption** |
|  | *Synopsis* | | These days many consumers are prepared to pay a premium to buy products that have been ethically produced, putting purchases under the moral microscope for reasons such as their treatment of animals or environmental sustainability. In deciding what to buy, consumers rely on credence claims, but the vote is still out on what exactly some of these ethical terms mean. How do we really know if a product is 'green' or 'free range'? How has industry responded to changes in the market place? And where can consumers go for help in making ethical decisions? |
|  | *Convenor* | | Angela Cartwright, Campaigns Manager, CHOICE |
|  | *Panellists* | | * Chris Preston, Director, Legal and Regulatory, Australian Food and Grocery Council * Melina Tensen, Senior Scientific Officer (Farm Animals), RSPCA * Gordon Renouf, Deputy Chair, Consumers Federation Australia * Rhys Bollen, Director of Policy, New South Wales Fair Trading |
| **16:15–16:30** | **Spotlight on enforcement: regulatory challenges In the digital age** | | |
|  | *Speaker* | | Sarah Court, Commissioner Australian Competition and Consumer Commission |
| **16:30–16:40** | **Closing address: The digital horizon - where are we going?** | | |
|  | *Speaker* | | Delia Rickard, Deputy Chair, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission |
| **16:40** | **CLOSE** | | |