

# Consumer Affairs Excellence

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# Consumer Affairs Excellence

- Why we created the course
- What are you going to achieve



# Consumer Affairs Excellence

## What is Consumer Affairs?

*“Consumer protection is government regulation to protect the interests of consumers, for example by requiring businesses to disclose detailed information about products, particularly in areas where safety or public health is an issue, such as food. Consumer protection is linked to the idea of consumer rights (that consumers have various rights as consumers), and to consumer organizations which help consumers make better choices in the marketplace.”*

# History for Consumer Affairs

- Restrictive Trade Practices Act 1965 (Cth)
- 1960s-1970s Introduction of State consumer protection legislation; Small Claims Tribunals established.

# Factors leading to consumer protection legislation

- Rapidly increasing variety of goods and services,
- Growing size and complexity of the production and distribution system,
- More sophisticated marketing and selling practices,
- Complex terms and conditions,
- Consumer credit and rental schemes,
- Growth of large corporations and multinationals,
- Poor access to litigation and redress.

# From “caveat emptor” to .....

- 1973 Interim Commission on Consumer Standards
- 1974 Trade Practices Act (TPA) and Trade Practices Commission established
- 1976 Ombudsman Act (Cth)
- 1977 National Consumer Affairs Advisory Council
- 1982 Freedom of Information Act (Cth)
- 1995 Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (formerly Trade Practices Commission) formed to administer the TPA 1974 and other Acts.

# The Battle For Uniformity

- 1971 WA State Ombudsman Act
- 1987-1992 State Fair Trading Acts
- Early 1990s Deregulation reforms: need for mutual recognition
- 1992 Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs

# International Influences

- 1957 Launch of ***Which?*** Magazine (UK)
- 1960 International Organisation of Consumer Unions (IOCU) formed, now Consumers International
- 1962 Consumer rights enunciated by President Kennedy
- 1962 Molony Report on Consumer Protection (UK), leading to establishment of new national Consumer Council and increased protective legislation
- 1960s Ralph Nader, US, ***Unsafe at any speed***, with ongoing consumer advocacy
- 1972 Consumer Product Safety Act (US)
- UN, OECD developments

# The Consumer Landscape

- Influence of women's organisations
- 1959 formation of Australian Consumers Association, first issue of "Choice" magazine published in April 1960.
- Australian Federation of Consumer Organisations, now Consumers Federation of Australia
- Other lobby and specialist groups, eg disability organisations, consumer utilities advocacy, environmental groups
- The new way: public participation, online discussion/feedback forums?

# Heroes

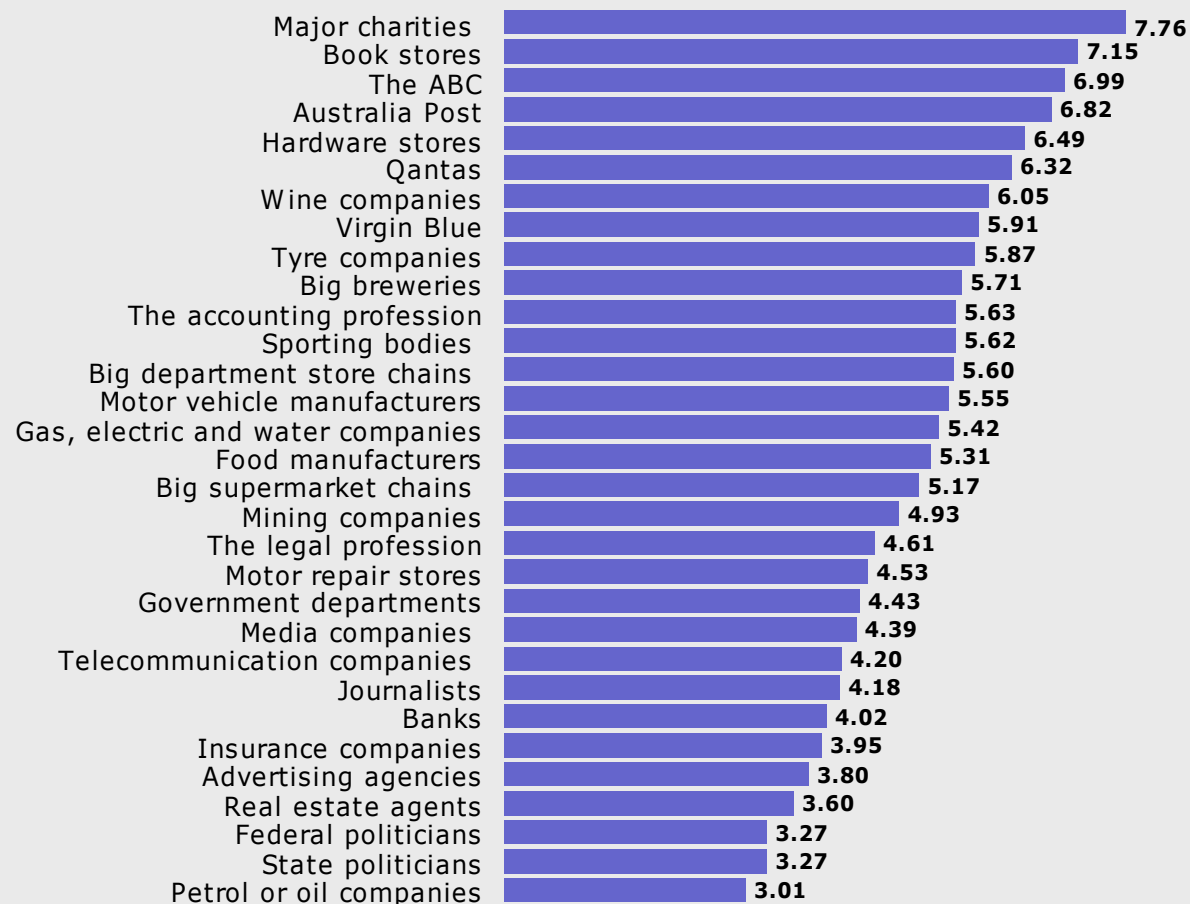
- Ruby Hutchinson (1892-1974)
- Lionel Murphy (1922-1986)
- Professor Allan Fels AO
- Others?

# The Evolving Role Of The Practitioner

- What have been the major influences?
- What changes are occurring?

# Rating Of Trust

Mean rating on a 10 point scale



Sweeny Research 2006

# Future Issues Affecting Consumer Affairs Practitioners?

- What are some current consumer issues you face?
- These issues can be examples from your organisation or more general issues

# Future Issues Affecting Consumer Affairs Practitioners?

- What issues do you think will affect consumer affairs practitioners in the future?

# References

- Smith, S (ed) “In the Consumer Interest – A selected history of consumer affairs in Australia” SOCAP, 2000
- Field, C. “Consumer Advocacy in Victoria” Consumer Affairs Victoria Research Paper No 7, March 2006  
[http://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/CA256902000FE154/Lookup/CAV\\_Publications\\_Reports\\_and\\_Guidelines/\\$file/consumer\\_advocacy.pdf](http://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/CA256902000FE154/Lookup/CAV_Publications_Reports_and_Guidelines/$file/consumer_advocacy.pdf)
- Hamilton, C and Denniss, R “Affluenza: When too much is never enough” Allen & Unwin, 2005
- [http://www.neogroup.net/new\\_eco\\_order/new\\_eco\\_order.html](http://www.neogroup.net/new_eco_order/new_eco_order.html)
- Sweeney Research 2006
- SFI Research Return on Investment (ROI) 2006

# Links

- [www.consumer.gov.au/](http://www.consumer.gov.au/)
  - See related sites at [www.consumer.gov.au/html/relatedsites.htm](http://www.consumer.gov.au/html/relatedsites.htm)
- [www.accc.gov.au](http://www.accc.gov.au)
- UN Guidelines on Consumer Protection  
[www.un.org/esa/sustdev/publications/consumption\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/publications/consumption_en.pdf)

# Areas Covered By This Course

1. Consumer Protection
2. Marketing To Consumers
3. Effective Consumer Communication
4. Consumer Relationship Management

# Program Benefits

- Key consumer affairs related skills and knowledge readily applicable to the workplace
- Exposure to relevant industry experts
- The opportunity to learn and network with other consumer affairs professionals
- Marketing and innovation techniques to enhance consumer affairs effectiveness
- Essential customer/consumer relationship management techniques
- Understanding the legal and political environments relevant to consumer affairs

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