

**Question on Notice
No. 343
Asked on 7 March 2007**

MR FENLON ASKED THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM, FAIR TRADING, WINE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND WOMEN (MRS KEECH)—

Will she advise what services Fair Trading offers for Queensland consumers?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for his strong interest in consumer issues in the Greenslopes electorate.

The Beattie Government is proud of its consumer protection regime.

The Office of Fair Trading contributes to Queensland's diverse economy by protecting consumers and fostering business and consumer confidence in the marketplace through the delivery of a number of services to Queensland consumers.

In regulating the marketplace, the Office of Fair Trading regulates the trader-consumer relationship in almost every aspect to stamp out unfair or undesirable trade practices.

The Office of Fair Trading also has special purpose regulatory control over industries as diverse as real estate agents, motor dealers, security providers, cooperatives, retirement village schemes, residential services and travel.

Office of Fair Trading services include:

- occupational licensing;
- registration of business names and associations;
- dealing with consumer complaints;
- providing advice and information to business and consumers;
- educating Queensland consumers and traders about their rights and responsibilities under legislation administered by the Department of Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development;
- carrying out audits, compliance and prosecution functions in respect of marketplace legislation; and
- policy and legislative development to ensure marketplace and consumer laws remain contemporary and continue to meet the needs of Queenslanders.

In providing licensing and registration services, the Office of Fair Trading effectively ensures only eligible business and individuals operate in the marketplace, thereby protecting consumers.

In 2005-06, the Office of Fair Trading was responsible for:

- 47,283 licensing services;
- 347,976 registration services;
- 1.04 million searches of its public register;
- 866,993 certificates for motor vehicle encumbrance searches;
- providing information and advice to 2.7 million customers;
- finalising 10,513 consumer complaints; and
- obtaining approximately \$2.9 million in redress for Queensland consumers including more than \$1.4 million in redress conciliated with traders on behalf of consumers.

To protect consumers Fair Trading maintains a focus on proactive compliance services targeting inbound tour operators, introduction agents, property agents, motor dealers, security providers, second-hand dealers and pawn brokers.

In 2005-06, 6,849 proactive compliance checks were conducted – a 5.9% increase on the previous year. In this same year, 113 actions in tribunals and courts and 3,125 enforcement actions against traders were finalised resulting in fines, costs, penalties and compensation orders exceeding \$1.2 million.

Queensland's product safety proactive compliance program is one of Australia's toughest and in 2005-06 the Office of Fair Trading checked 4,000 toys at 196 premises State-wide.

A contemporary consumer policy framework is essential in ensuring the rights of consumers continue to be protected in today's marketplace. The Office of Fair Trading proactively researches emerging issues and develops timely and efficient policy and legislative responses.

Since 1 July 2005, the Office of Fair Trading has conducted legislative reviews of the *Security Providers Act 1993*, *Retirement Villages Act 1999*, *Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act 2000*, and the *Associations Incorporation Act 1981* and finalised amendments to the national uniform *Consumer Credit Code*.

Additionally, Queensland has played a key role in the reform agenda at a national level, including initiatives such as the regulation of finance brokers and amendments to the regulation of fringe credit providers.