

**Question on Notice
No. 1592
Asked on 31 August 2010**

MR WENDT ASKED THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND FAIR TRADING
(MR LAWLOR) —

QUESTION:

With reference to Seniors Week—

Will the Minister outline for seniors in Ipswich West some timely warning of their consumer rights when they are approached at home by door-to-door traders or salespeople offering anything from handyman services to a new product for the household?

ANSWER:

Informing and educating both consumers and business about their fair trading rights and responsibilities is a priority for the Bligh Government and helps everyone make smart decisions about doing business in Queensland's marketplace.

I regularly issue warnings through the media to consumers cautioning them about dodgy businesses or rogue door-to-door traders in particular areas. I strongly encourage Queenslanders to lodge a complaint with the Office of Fair Trading when they feel they have been misled.

It is important for consumers to be aware that when they buy anything worth more than \$75 from a door-to-door trader, there is an automatic 10 day cooling off period during which traders cannot accept payment (including deposits), commence work, or provide any goods.

The *Fair Trading Act 1989* includes many consumer protection provisions to ensure Queenslanders are treated fairly by door-to-door traders.

Under the Act, door-to-door salespeople must:

- only contact customers between 9am and 6pm from Monday to Friday, and 9am and 5pm on Saturdays. Calls on Sundays or public holidays are prohibited;
- produce an identity card with the dealer's full name and address; and
- provide a written contract clearly stating the breakdown of costs including GST and the total price for the sale of goods or services valued at more than \$75.

The Office of Fair Trading has undertaken recent enforcement action against a number of non-compliant door-to-door traders.

An example of a recent enforcement action is a court-enforceable undertaking entered into by Fair Dinkum Rentals Pty Ltd. The Office of Fair Trading acted quickly to stop Fair Dinkum Rentals, a Victorian-registered company, from entering into unfair contracts for rented household goods with hundreds of Queensland residents.

Representatives from the company visited towns from Dalby to Hope Vale including Indigenous communities at Cherbourg, Woorabinda and Wujal Wujal signing people up for rental agreements on fridges, washing machines and electrical items such as home entertainment systems and cameras.

After putting out an alert about the door-to-door trader, the Office of Fair Trading formally interviewed the company director and negotiated to have 800 contracts cancelled and \$10,000 refunded to consumers. A further \$2 million of debt was avoided.

The Office of Fair Trading works closely with interstate fair trading agencies and the Queensland Police Service to gather intelligence about traders engaged in this type of activity and takes court action where appropriate.

Well informed consumers are less likely to fall prey to fraud or undesirable marketplace practices. Many resources are available to Queenslanders to help them make good decisions when spending their hard-earned money.

The fair trading website at www.fairtrading.qld.gov.au offers tips on how consumers can protect themselves and I would encourage your constituents to download a copy of the 'BuySmart' booklet from the Fair Trading website or by calling 13 QGOV (13 74 68).

The simplest piece of advice I can offer your constituents, and indeed all Queenslanders, is that if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.