

# DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

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## Executive Office

8 May 2007

Our Ref: P200705326

Consumer Policy Inquiry  
Productivity Commission  
PO Box 80  
Belconnen ACT 2616

Dear Commissioners

### **RE: CONSUMER POLICY INQUIRY**

I am pleased to provide a submission in regards to the issues paper *Consumer Policy Framework*.

My Department is responsible for the implementation of consumer policy in the Northern Territory at the local level. Nationally, co-operative arrangements exist with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and the Australian Securities Investment Commission to facilitate information sharing. Cross-jurisdictional agreements exist with State and Territory fair trading offices to facilitate matters that extend beyond Northern Territory boundaries.

The implementation of consumer policy in the Northern Territory faces the challenge of:

- operating a fair consumer market in a location physically isolated from other main centres in Australia;
- meeting the needs and expectations of consumers over an extensive geographical area with limited resources; and
- adapting conventional consumer policy to meet the often different needs of indigenous consumers.

For any consumer policy framework to be effective in the Northern Territory it must provide for:

1. local service delivery. Knowledge of the Northern Territory is essential to understanding relevant consumer issues and solutions. It is also essential to keep policy makers up to date with relevant consumer issues. Due to the fact it is not feasible to provide a physical presence in every corner of the Territory, service provider networks in the remote communities are fundamental to ensuring the flow of information and to prevent itinerant or unscrupulous traders from exploiting these areas. This is of particular concern in regard to Indigenous consumers who are more likely to reside in a remote area; and

2. that the body delivering the service is accountable at a local level for their actions. A single national regulator would greatly reduce the capacity of Territory consumers to contribute to the consumer policy debate. This is especially true of indigenous consumers who would be at risk of marginalisation.

I thank you for an opportunity to respond to this inquiry and look forward to receiving a copy of the draft report. The contact officer for any queries is Traci Keys who can be contacted on 08 8935 7665.

Yours sincerely

**Greg Shanahan**  
Chief Executive Officer