

Andrea Michaels MP **Minister for Consumer Affairs**

Wednesday, 21 September 2022

Cross border collaboration

The recent Commonwealth, State and Territory Consumer Affairs Ministers meeting in Adelaide saw a renewed commitment to collaboration across borders and to strengthen consumer protections.

Ministers attending the meeting, chaired by South Australian Minister for Consumer Affairs Andrea Michaels, discussed and agreed on priorities for future work, which include:

- legislation to make unfair contract terms unlawful and subject to penalties under the Australian Consumer Law (ACL)
- increasing existing penalties for breaches of the ACL
- improved capability and collaboration to combat scams
- considering reforms to consumer guarantees and supplier indemnification provisions
- consulting on proposed reforms to address unfair trading practices
- releasing a discussion paper on travel services to inform ACL learnings across all service sectors following COVID-19

Ministers welcomed the bill recently introduced by Minister Jones into the Commonwealth Parliament that will strengthen the consumer protection framework for consumers of small amount credit contracts and consumer leases, through the introduction of new obligations for providers of these credit products.

Ministers also welcomed an update in relation to state and territory fundraising law reform as an important issue to support the charitable sector.

Ministers look forward to continuing to work together closely on progressing these issues.

Attendees included:

- Commonwealth Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services, Stephen Jones
- New South Wales Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Small Business, and Fair Trading, Victor Dominello
- Western Australian Minister for Commerce, Roger Cook

- Australian Capital Territory Attorney-General and Minister for Consumer Affairs, Shane Rattenbury
- Tasmanian Minister for Justice Elise Archer; and

Senior departmental officials from Victoria, Queensland and Northern Territory also attended.

Quotes attributable to Andrea Michaels

Consumer Affairs Ministers are determined to improve the protections available to consumers – at a state, territory and national level.

Unfair contract term reforms are a significant part of strengthening these protections, and Ministers were pleased to see progress of new legislation that is due to be introduced to the Commonwealth Parliament shortly. Importantly, under this legislation penalties will be introduced for unfair contract terms.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on businesses and consumers. Ministers discussed and agreed to undertake further work on the lessons learned and emerging trends.