

NORTHERN TERRITORY

CONSUMER

AFFAIRS

# NORTHERN TERRITORY CONSUMER AFFAIRS 2024-25

## ANNUAL REPORT





**Casuarina Beach,  
Casuarina Coastal Reserve  
Garramilla (Darwin)**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

Northern Territory Consumer Affairs acknowledges the Larrakia and Arrernte peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live, Garramilla (Darwin) and Mparntwe (Alice Springs), respectively.

We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and future, and we acknowledge the continuing connection of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to land, sea and community.



**Lhere Imatukua (Todd River)  
Mparntwe (Alice Springs)**



The Hon Marie-Clare Boothby  
Attorney-General  
Parliament House  
DARWIN NT 0800

Dear Minister

**Re: ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25**

The 2024-25 Annual Report prepared by the Attorney-General's Department includes performance reporting on Consumer Affairs in conformity with requirements of the *Public Sector Employment and Management Act 1993* and the *Financial Management Act 1995*.

The Commissioner of Consumer Affairs is a statutory officer and is required to report to the Minister annually pursuant to:

- Section 12 of the *Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading Act 1990*
- Section 15 of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999*
- Section 11 of the *Retirement Villages Act 1995*
- Section 14 of the *Business Tenancies (Fair Dealings) Act 2003*
- Section 20 of the *Caravan Parks Act 2012*
- Part 5A of the *Building Act 1993*

In accordance with the requirements outlined above, I have the pleasure of presenting the Commissioner's Annual Report for the year ended 30 June 2025.

Yours sincerely

A blue ink handwritten signature, appearing to read "Traci Keys", is positioned above the printed name.

**Traci Keys**  
Commissioner  
Northern Territory Consumer Affairs  
26 September 2025

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# MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER



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I am pleased to present my second Annual Report as Commissioner of Consumer Affairs, a year that has been full of challenges and opportunities.

A challenge for all Territorians is the increased cost of goods and services. Cost-of-living pressures mean Territory consumers and businesses are doing it tough. In such times, strong consumer protection is critical. Territorians need clear and timely information on their rights and obligations. Northern Territory Consumer Affairs (NTCA) works hard to provide clear, practical information to consumers and businesses.

NTCA also responds to this need by providing a free and responsive conciliation service for consumers and businesses. NTCA continues to achieve positive outcomes for parties in dispute, removing the need for costly litigation and reducing the pressure on our court and tribunal system. Some of the success stories from this process are set out in this report.

We are also active on the compliance front. Non-compliance may be reported to us by members of the public, organisations, or we may discover the conduct ourselves. We work with businesses to address unlawful conduct. We take compliance and enforcement action against a business if they do not cooperate, when we have the resources, and when it is in the public interest. Most businesses do the right thing when approached and fix the consumer issue. Examples of unlawful actions we saw in 2024-25 were:

- motor vehicle repairs
- door-to-door sales
- non-delivery of services paid for.

To support this work, NTCA regularly undertakes visits to businesses to educate them about their rights and obligations to prevent consumer harm, and to support businesses do the right thing. In 2024-25, we

visited 759 businesses throughout the Territory.

Educating and providing information to the public is a large part of our work. In 2024-25, we continued to receive a high volume of enquiries to our call centre. Notable was an increase in contacts relating to items of low value. This may reflect the cost of living pressures being faced by Territorians. The enquiries came from consumers and businesses.

Also of note this year was the high number of Territorians who:

- needed help writing a letter to complain to a business; or
- who could not access the internet to send or make a complaint.

This reveals the struggles of vulnerable consumers in actioning their rights. NTCA continues to work to find ways to reduce the barriers for vulnerable consumers so they can action their rights.

We also continue to maintain a strong social media presence, a critical forum for educating the public about rights and obligations, as well as warning them about scams, fake websites, public warnings, and product safety issues. To complement this work, I continue to engage in regular media to respond to topical issues in the Top End and Central Australia, undertaking monthly media appearances with ABC and CAAMA radio. I have also recently added the Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasting Association (TEABBA) to this list.

On the reform front, NTCA has had the opportunity to have input into a number of national reforms. A long-term issue for consumers and retailers is suppliers who fail to provide refunds for faulty goods. The law requires suppliers to do this. Retailers report

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that in practice, this often does not happen. This can leave the consumer or the retailer out of pocket. Reforms being contemplated for the Australian Consumer Law (ACL) aim to address this. New laws will enable regulators to take action against suppliers who fail to provide a remedy when required. This reform is welcome. It will help create a fairer trading environment for consumers and retailers.

Also on the horizon are possible prohibitions on unfair trading practices. This reform focuses on unfair behaviours that are creeping into consumer transactions. It will include the use of dark patterns by online platforms. Dark patterns aim to deceive consumers into purchasing more than they intended. The reform will also include online subscriptions that are designed to be easy to sign up for but difficult to cancel.

Finalised in this reporting period was the registration of a new information standard on seafood labelling. It will start on 1 July 2026. NTCA will educate businesses about the new standard over the next year. It will cover retailers of seafood in a hospitality setting and requires businesses to identify the origin of seafood on their menus. This will allow consumers to be confident about the origin of the fish they are eating.

Regarding residential tenancies, key issues emerging from our call centre and compliance area included tenancy agreements not complying with the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999 (NT)* and disputes over bonds. My team have also undertaken considerable training with social and public housing providers in the NT to promote understanding of rights and obligations under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999 (NT)*.

Also echoing the cost-of-living issues is the increase in Business Tenancy dispute applications received in this reporting period. The applications have been a mix of matters



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relating to rental arrears and disputes over terms and conditions. In contrast, we have seen a drop in Residential Building dispute applications, which may reflect a change in the appetite for building, following the announcement of new homeowners' grants late last year, with consumers delaying building to ensure they are covered by the higher grant.

Finally I would like to mention my team. This year we saw some changes within NTCA. We farewelled valued staff members Mali De Castro and Oliver Vo, and were delighted to welcome back Shelagh Leonard, our former Senior Fair Trading Officer, who re-joined the team after a short retirement break. We also welcomed long-time Territorian Gregory Cusbert as a new Fair Trading Officer.

I would like to acknowledge the great assistance of my team this year. It makes my job easier to have a team committed to solving consumer and business issues. I would like to particularly acknowledge the support of my Deputy, Rebecca Davey, who has stepped into the role of Commissioner while I have been absent. I would also like to acknowledge Hilbert Wienekamp and Danielle Wilks, who acted as Deputy Commissioner during these periods.

**Traci Keys**  
Commissioner

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## ABOUT CONSUMER AFFAIRS

NTCA operates with a dedicated team of 17 across Darwin and Alice Springs. NTCA is responsible for administering and enforcing consumer protection legislation in the Northern Territory. We do this through education and dispute resolution services to consumers and businesses, as well as investigations to ensure compliance and detect potential breaches of the law.

The Commissioner of Consumer Affairs is an independent statutory office holder, appointed by the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice under the *Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading Act 1990 (NT)*. The Commissioner is tasked with promoting fair trading practices and protecting consumer interests, and also carries statutory responsibilities under additional roles including Commissioner of Tenancies, Commissioner of Residential Building Disputes, Commissioner of Business Tenancies, and Controller of Prices.

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A large part of our work is administering the ACL. We focus on raising awareness among consumers and businesses about key areas such as guarantees on goods and services, misleading and deceptive conduct, and unfair contract terms. As part of a national multi-regulator model, NTCA contributes to cross-jurisdictional efforts to ensure consistent application of the ACL and to respond to consumer issues of national relevance.

Another key legislative responsibility is the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999 (NT)*. Through this work, NTCA continues to assist Territory residents in understanding their rental rights and obligations, and how to navigate disputes. Educational initiatives targeting landlords and real estate agents play a crucial role in promoting compliance and reducing disputes in the rental market.

A full list of legislation administered by NTCA is provided in Appendix A.

## CORE FUNCTIONS

**Promote consumer awareness through consultation, education and conciliation**



**Respond to consumer policy issues of local and national importance**



**Provide a compliance and enforcement service to protect Territorians**

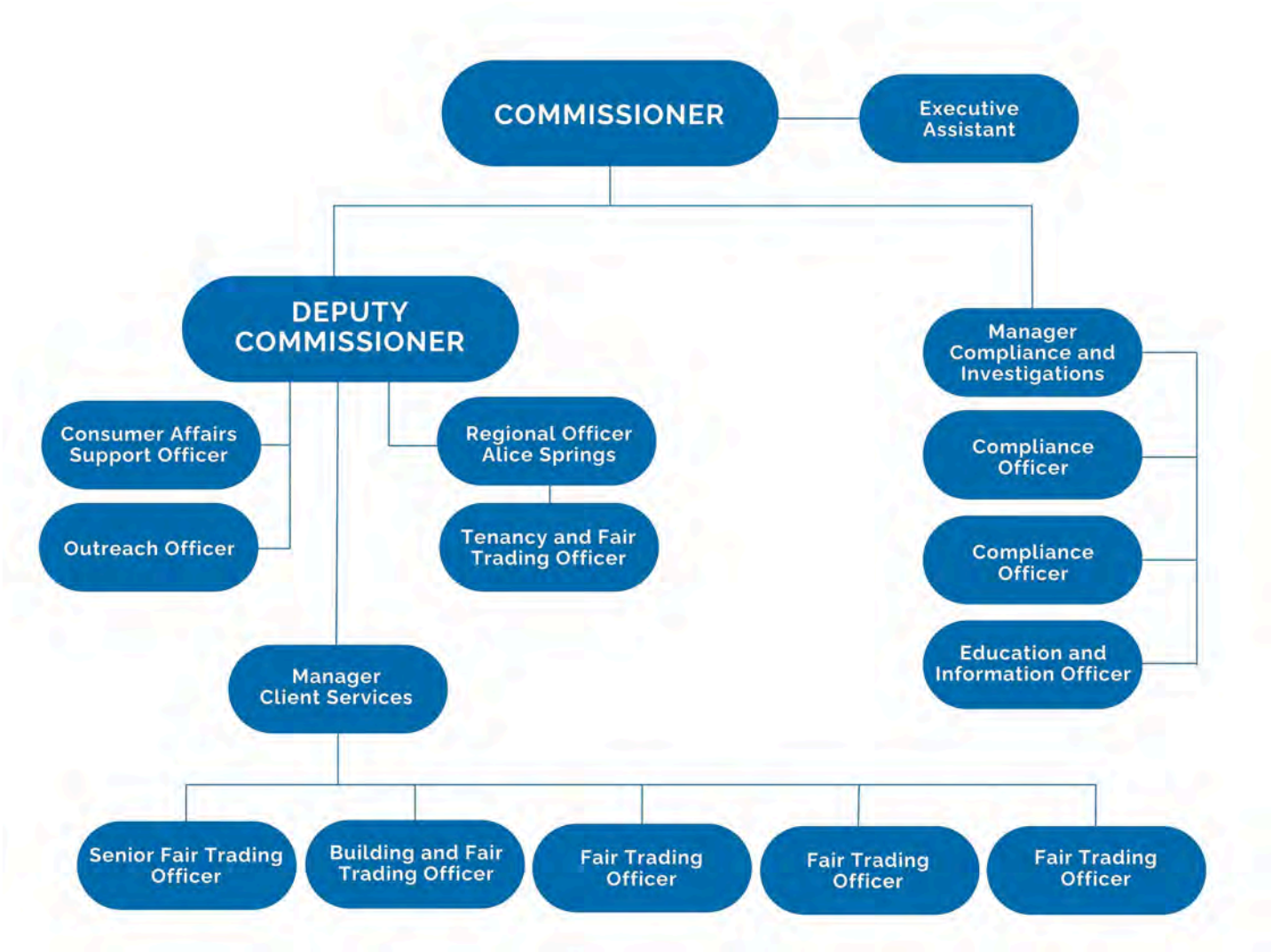


**Administer the MyFuel NT scheme**



# ORGANISATIONAL CHART

With 17 staff operating out of our central office in Darwin and our regional office in Alice Springs, NTCA is well-positioned to deliver high-quality services across the Territory.



NTCA's organisational chart, showing roles, sections and reporting relationships.



## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2024-25



# 87%

Scheduled trader education visits

# 100%

Quarterly fuel price compliance checks for registered urban outlets

## Delivered Client-centred Services



**45** seconds

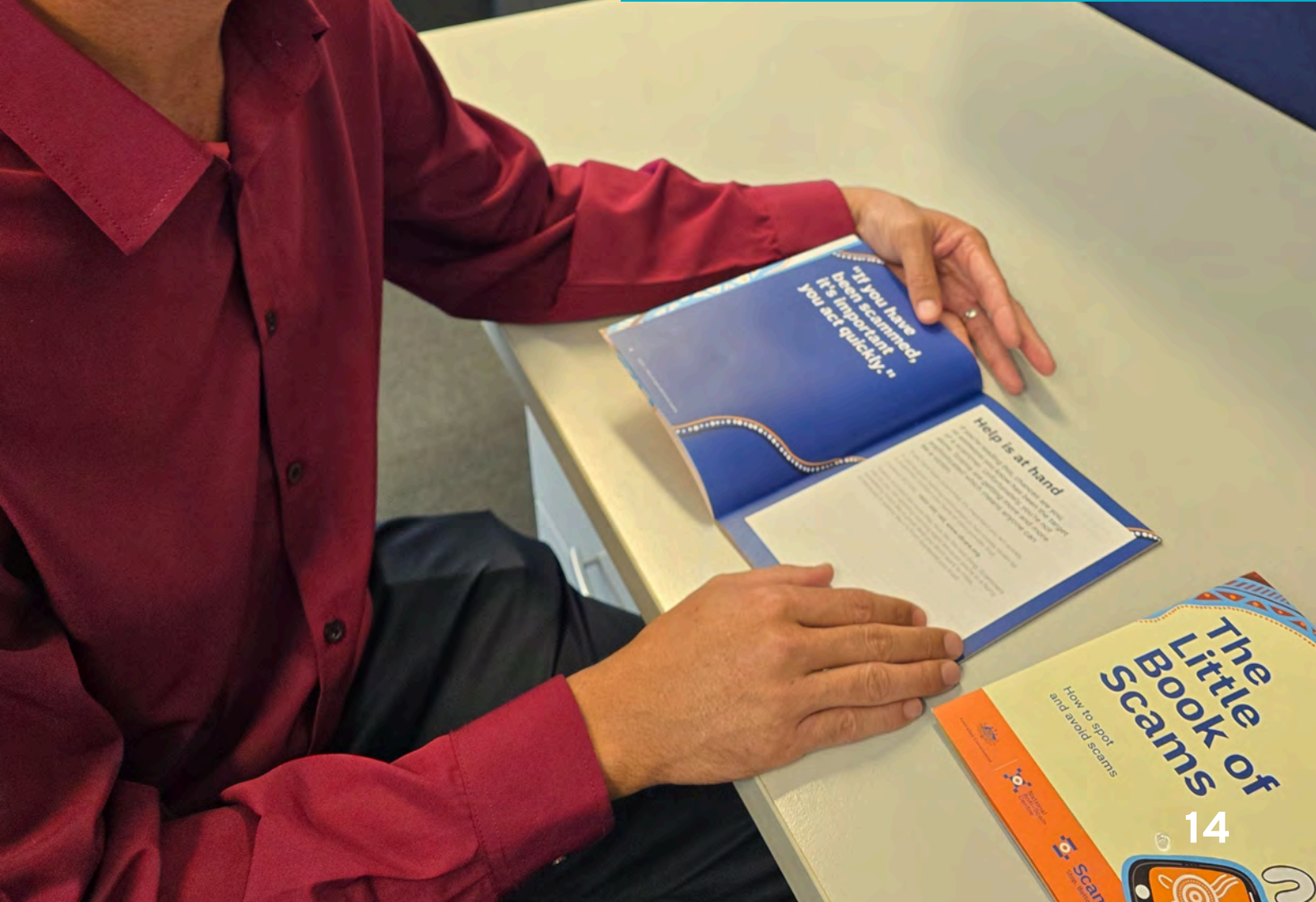
Average call centre wait time

**7.3%**

Average abandoned call rate

**99%**

Applications notified of acceptance within 10 business days



# Improving Outcomes for First Nation Territorians



# 113 %

Increased regional and remote community engagement from previous year

Commenced monthly radio segments on TEABBA



Developed NTCA Onboarding Procedure and  
Induction Manual

All staff completed all NTPS essential  
training courses

# SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

This year, NTCA committed to increasing our involvement in activities that benefit our local community. Staff-led initiatives created greater connection and engagement both within our organisation and the wider community.

Spearheaded by Fair Trading Officer, Jade Smith, a number of fundraising and community outreach activities were successfully carried out throughout the year. Jade's coordination and enthusiasm were instrumental in making these efforts a success.

## *Vinnies NT Christmas Hamper*

As the festive season approached, NTCA staff rallied to collect non-perishable food items, clothing, and toys in support of the St Vincent de Paul Society's annual Christmas appeal. Contributions were distributed to families and individuals in need throughout Darwin and remote areas, including the Tiwi Islands and Daly River regions. Thanks to our neighbours from the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal who contributed to bringing some joy to Territorians doing it tough at Christmas time.





## Morning Tea

In another initiative aimed at fostering community connection, several NTCA staff members visited the Pearl Retirement Resort to host a morning tea with residents. This informal gathering provided a valuable opportunity for intergenerational engagement and offered insights into the challenges faced by senior Territorians, who are often among our most vulnerable consumers.

NTCA remains committed to championing social responsibility, and we look forward to building on these efforts in the coming year by exploring new ways to support and uplift our community.

## Out of the Shadows Walk

To mark World Suicide Prevention Day on 10 September 2024, NTCA staff took part in the national 'Out of the Shadows Walk'. This walk served as a meaningful opportunity to honour the memory of those lost to suicide and to raise awareness about mental health. NTCA proudly raised \$1,542 for Lifeline Australia's suicide prevention services, including crisis support and counselling.





## PROMOTING CONSUMER AWARENESS EDUCATION

Educating consumers and traders about their rights and responsibilities remains one of the most powerful tools for strengthening consumer protection. By promoting awareness and understanding, NTCA works to foster voluntary compliance, reduce disputes and legal conflicts, and ultimately minimise harm within the community.

To support this mission, NTCA offers multiple accessible channels for the public to engage with our services. These include our call centre, walk-in offices in Darwin and Alice Springs, email correspondence, media appearances, participation in community events, tailored education sessions, trader outreach, social media platforms, and a user-friendly website.

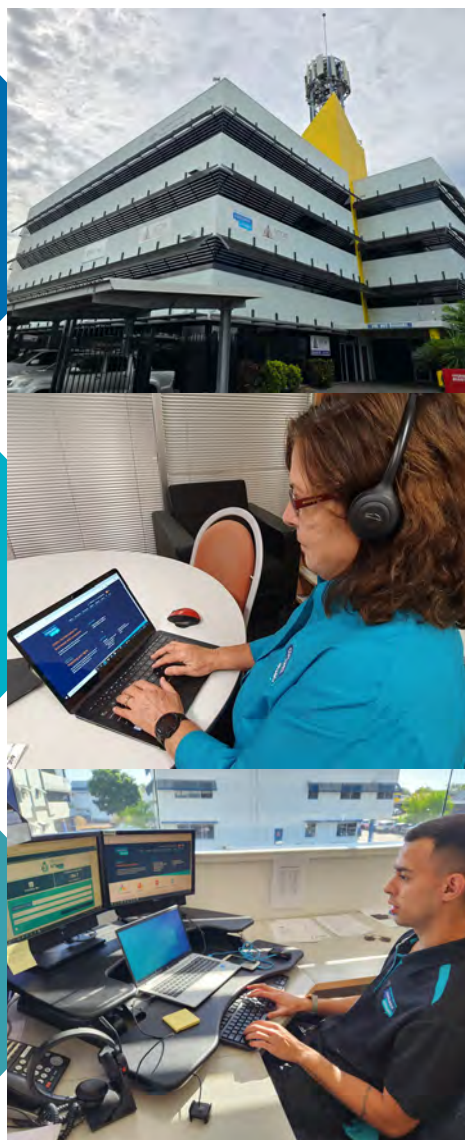
## Enquiries

At the core of our frontline service are the dedicated Fair Trading Officers. They play a critical role in helping Territorians navigate their rights and responsibilities under the ACL and the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999 (NT)*. Each year, they respond to thousands of enquiries, providing clear, accurate, and practical advice to consumers, tenants, landlords, and businesses across the Territory. With a strong understanding of the legislation and a commitment to fair outcomes, our Fair Trading Officers are a trusted source of support for the Territory community.

**288 WALK-INS**

**6,017 TELEPHONE  
ENQUIRIES**

**6,696 EMAILS**



## Website

The NTCA website remains a vital information hub for Territorians seeking guidance on consumer rights, rental matters, and business responsibilities. Purposefully designed for full compatibility across desktops, tablets, and mobile phones, the website's responsive layout ensures seamless accessibility for all users.

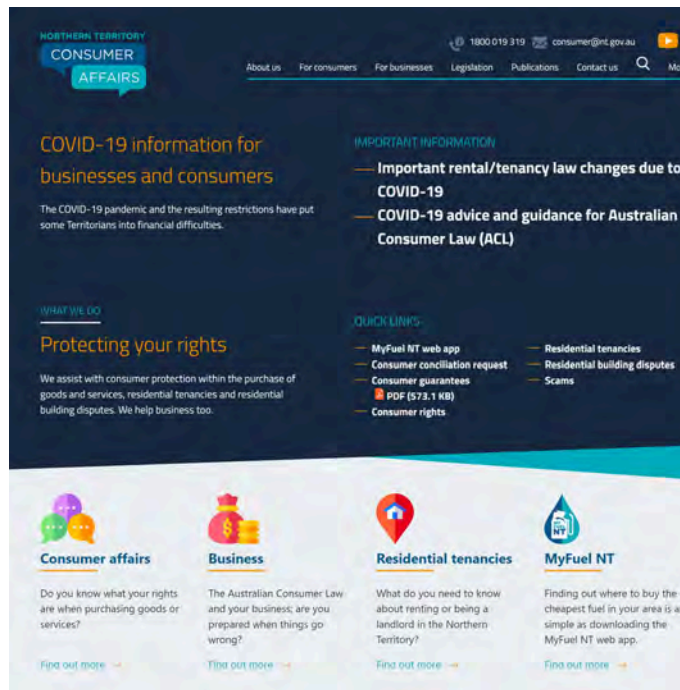
The site is updated regularly to reflect changes in legislation and highlight new consumer risks. This ensures that the content remains current, relevant, and reflective of the real-world issues faced by consumers and businesses in the Northern Territory.

This year, NTCA expanded its online offerings by developing six new fact sheets on critical and emerging consumer protection topics. These included:

- Gym Membership: explanation of gym membership and common consumer issues.
- Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL): explanation of how BNPL schemes operate and warnings about consumer issues.
- Dark Patterns: describes dark patterns and how to identify them and avoid their influence.

The following is a ranked order for webpage engagement, illustrating the importance that Territorians place on certain information:

- Renting in the NT
- Website homepage
- MyFuel NT
- Complaints and disputes
- Search
- Contact us
- Scams



68,078 VIEWS

25,552 ACTIVE  
USERS

87 AVERAGE  
VIEWS PER DAY



*Garramilla (Darwin) in the distance with Sadgroves Creek winding through the mangroves of Darwin Harbour.*

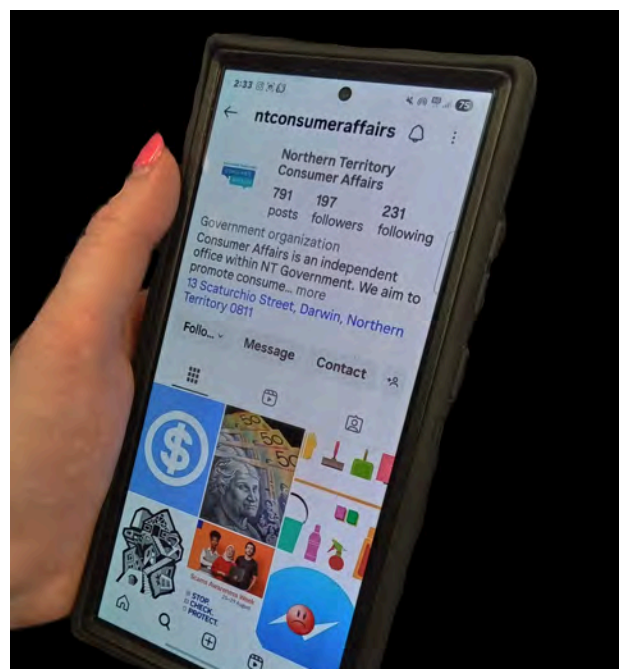
## Social Media

Social media remains a powerful tool in our communication strategy, enabling us to share timely, relevant, and accessible information directly with consumers and businesses. In 2024-25, NTCA maintained an active presence on three key social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. These platforms are popular in the Northern Territory and offer a cost-effective method of reaching a wide demographic, ensuring that our messaging reaches different audience groups, including younger Territorians, senior Territorians, and those living in regional and remote areas.

Our Facebook page served as the primary platform for public engagement, providing a space for interactive discussions, direct messaging, and sharing information. Posts related to tenancy rights and real-time scam alerts consistently achieved high engagement, with users liking, sharing, and commenting to spread awareness across their networks.

Instagram is used to connect with younger demographics through visually engaging content, while YouTube allows us to publish longer-form educational videos, which provide in-depth guidance on consumer protection topics and are shared by community organisations, educators, and other government agencies.

We published 362 stories on our Facebook account and 338 on our Instagram account this year. These stories garnered a total of 91,438 views, resulting in 499 shares and 2,960 likes.



NTCA also works in partnership with other state and territory consumer protection agencies to raise awareness of consumer issues across the nation. Here are some of the Consumer Education Network campaigns NTCA participated in during the year:

- Fair Trading 2024
- Scams Awareness Week 2024
- Sleep Bub Safe 2024
- Shopping and Key Consumer Rights 2024
- Well Winter 2025





*John-Ross Pearce-Scharnberg, Radio Broadcaster at TEABBA with Rebecca Davey, Deputy Commissioner of NTCA. [Photo by TEABBA]*

## Media

A key component of NTCA’s communications strategy is our regular participation in radio broadcasting, which has proven to be one of the most effective ways to reach a wide and diverse audience across the Territory. NTCA has maintained a long-standing monthly segment on ABC Radio Darwin, where the Commissioner or Deputy Commissioner provide practical advice and updates on emerging consumer issues, and respond directly to listener questions in real time.

NTCA also continued monthly radio segments on CAAMA (Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association), Australia’s oldest First Nations-owned and operated radio network, reaching thousands of First Nation listeners across Central Australia. In 2024-25, NTCA expanded its media outreach through the Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasting Association (TEABBA). TEABBA is based in Darwin, broadcasting 24/7 to 29 remote communities across the Northern Territory. These trusted community broadcasters help us connect with First Nation audiences across both urban and remote regions, broadening our reach and ensuring information is shared in a culturally sensitive and accessible format to one of our most vulnerable consumer groups.



*Traci Keys, Commissioner of NTCA, with broadcaster Floyd Doyle in the CAAMA Radio studio, Alice Springs.*

# OUTREACH

The primary objective of our outreach programs is to enhance community awareness of our services and ensure all Territorians understand how we can assist with consumer protection and tenancy matters. By maintaining a strong physical presence across the Northern Territory, our staff are able to engage directly with individuals and communities, listen to their concerns, and provide tailored information and education. This face-to-face approach is particularly effective in building trust and reaching those who may have limited access to online or telephone-based services. Through these direct interactions, NTCA supports informed decision-making and promotes greater confidence in navigating consumer and tenancy rights and responsibilities.

Outreach activities also contribute to the development and strengthening of partnerships with government agencies, service providers, non-government organisations, and community networks. These collaborations facilitate a coordinated response to complex issues affecting Territorians and help ensure that support services are accessible, culturally appropriate, and aligned with community needs. For example, NTCA recently partnered with Larrakia Nation to develop a consumer education program for their aged care clients.



NTCA significantly strengthened its outreach and community engagement efforts across the Northern Territory during the 2024-25 financial year.



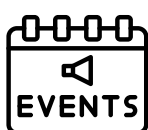
**759 Trader visits**



**101 Presentations**



**3,693 Community engagements**



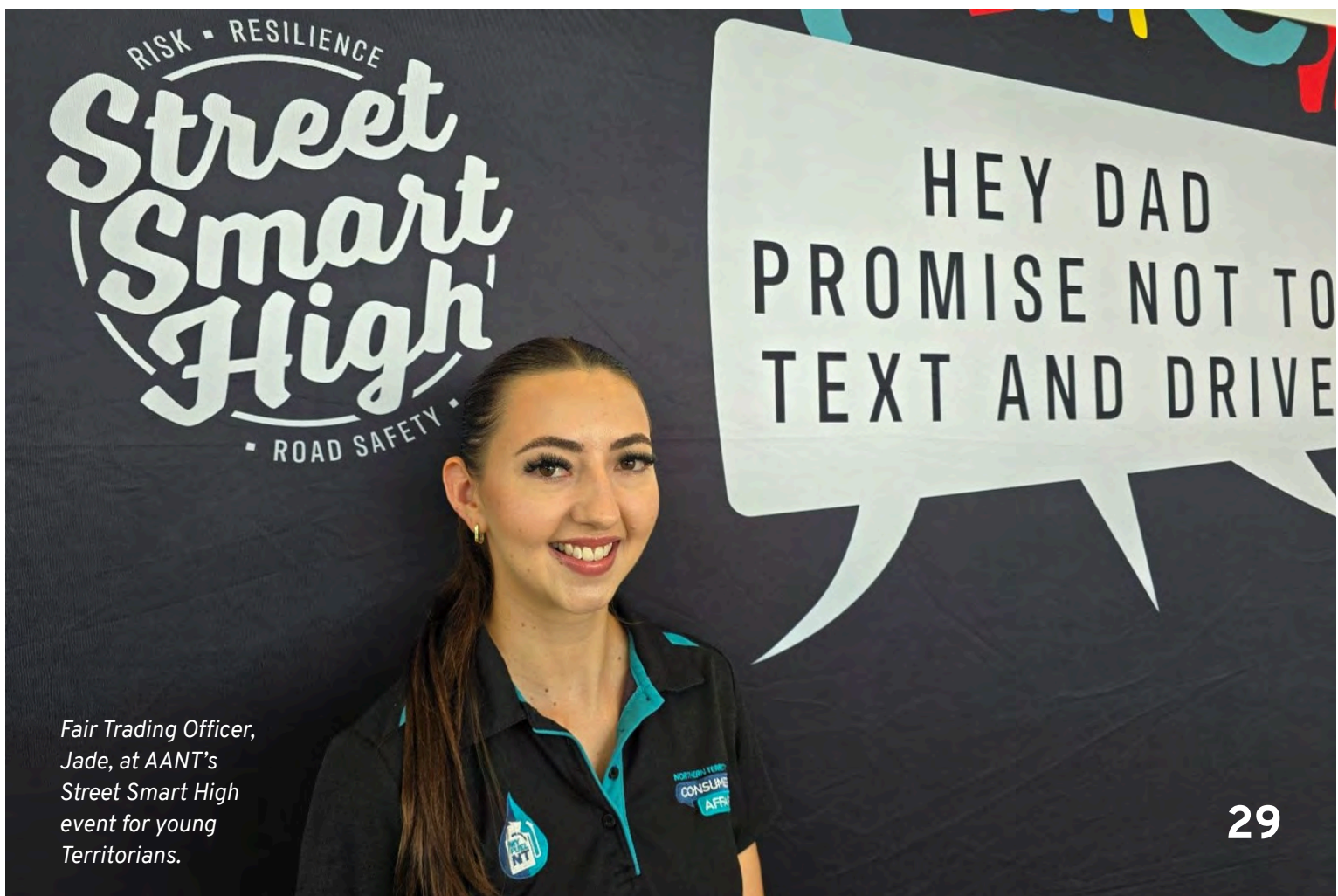
**34 Events**

## Community Engagement

NTCA participated in a wide range of expos, school-based events, and awareness campaigns in the Top End, including the COTA Seniors Expos (Darwin and Katherine), All Abilities Expo, Darwin High School Health and Wellness Expo, NT Electoral Commission's Democracy Dash, AANT's Street Smart High, Welcome to the Top End Expo, Anglicare NT's Youth Homelessness Matters Day, and the Top End Youth Conference.

Community engagement efforts were equally robust in Central Australia. NTCA staff were invited back to the annual NAIDOC community celebration in Alice Springs, engaging with 116 members of the public and networking with other local service providers. The monthly information stall at the Alice Springs Public Library continued for a second year, offering themed materials in line with national campaigns such as Scams Awareness Week and NAIDOC to a total of 122 community members. NTCA also returned to Alice Springs shopping centres in the lead-up to the festive season, providing shoppers with practical consumer advice on online shopping, gift card laws, and refund rights; timely topics during a high-spending period.

Throughout the Territory, strong relationships were built and maintained with community organisations including Bagot Community, 15 Mile Community, Palmerston Indigenous Network, Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation – Aged Care, YouthWorx NT, STEPS Education and Training, Team Health, APM Employment Services, and the NT School of Distance Education. These connections led to repeat invitations to deliver education and information sessions, reinforcing NTCA's reputation as a responsive and knowledgeable resource.



*Fair Trading Officer, Jade, at AANT's Street Smart High event for young Territorians.*



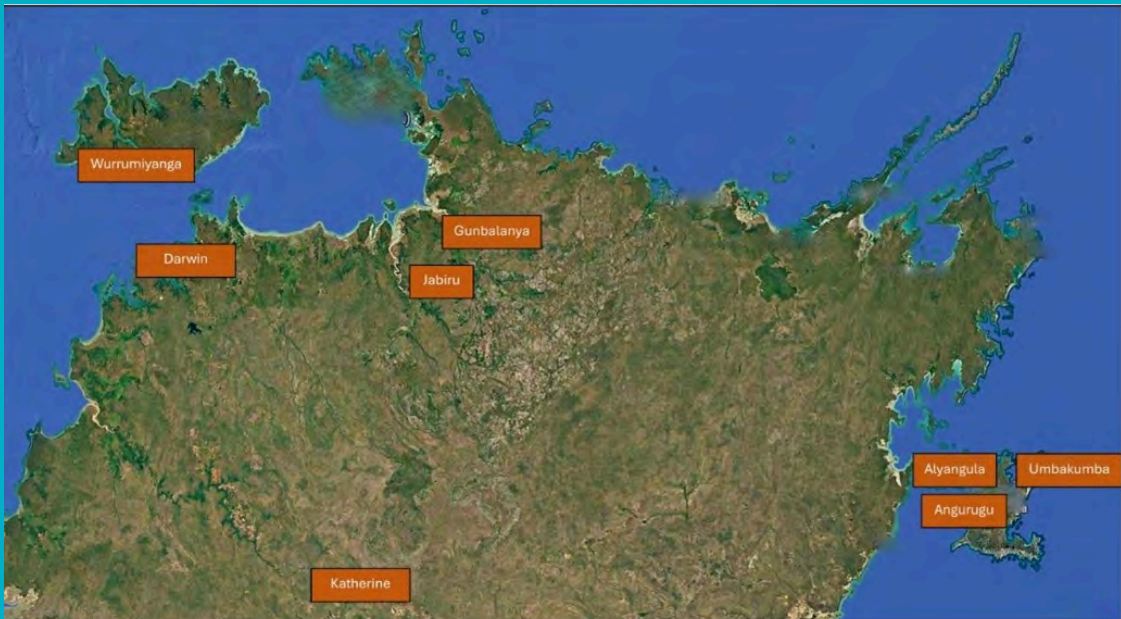
## ***Business Education***

NTCA is also here to help businesses understand their obligations under consumer protection laws, which will lead to better complaint management outcomes. In 2024-25 we conducted 759 educational visits to businesses across the Territory, including shops and service providers in several remote communities. NTCA provided businesses with information packs, outlining key aspects of the ACL and the MyFuel NT scheme for retail fuel outlets. These visits not only assisted traders in understanding their obligations but also created opportunities to build trust and maintain NTCA's presence in urban and remote economies.

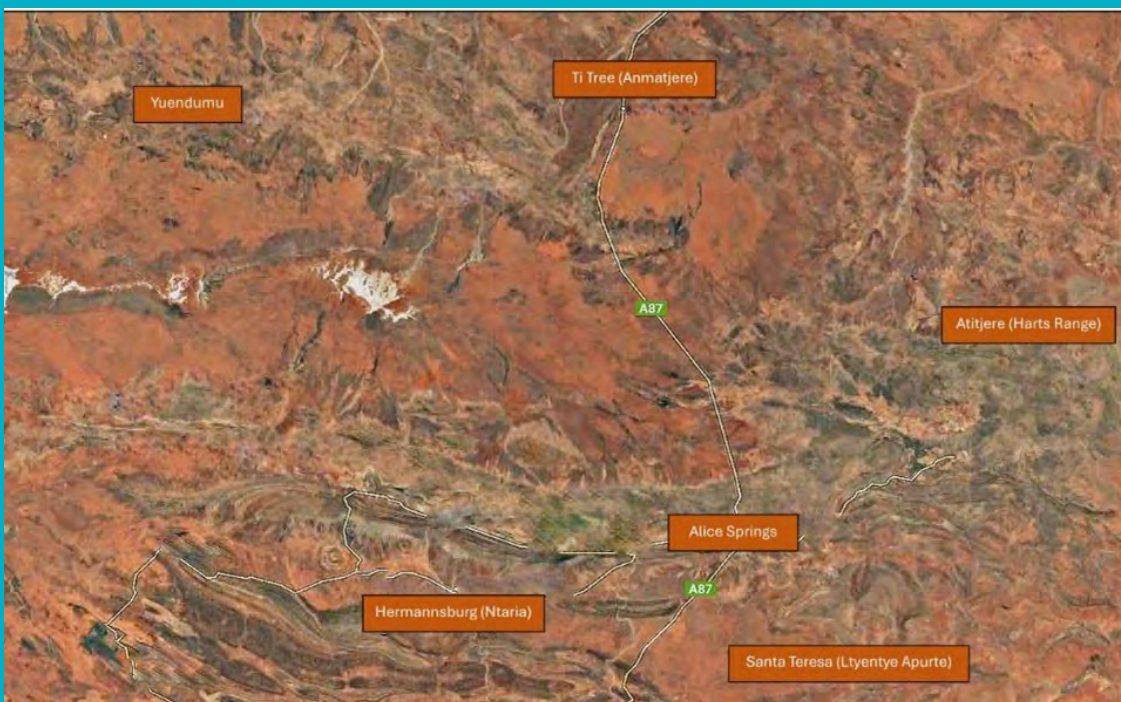
# Remote Engagement

Our Outreach Officer and Regional Officer travelled far and wide to various remote locations to conduct trader visits, community engagement, information sessions on the ACL, scams and tenancies, and to participate in events like Boosting Business in the Bush Expos. Check out the maps below to see where they visited in 2024-25.

## Remote outreach visits across the Top End during 2024-25



## Remote outreach visits across Central Australia during 2024-25



# CONNECTING WITH TERRITORIANS





## What Our Clients Have To Say...



*“By increasing awareness and understanding within our community, she has helped foster a stronger sense of confidence and self-advocacy among participants.”*

**- Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation**



*“We are very fortunate in Alice Springs to have past and present Consumer Affairs delegates that are friendly, approachable and knowledgeable. As a Property Management Business, we use the department as a source and a weapon in advising, educating not only tenants, but landlords and trades that we deal with. The training every 6 months is muchly appreciated. It clearly reminds us of the current legislation and clarifies anything we may have doubt.”*

**- Alice Property Management**



*“My team were really happy they attended. One member said he’s thinking about buying a car and now understands his rights, what to look out for, and what to do if something goes wrong.”*

**- Tiwi Islands Training & Employment Board**



*“Janine’s workshops are engaging and impactful, often using real-life examples that resonate deeply with the young people she works with. These stories spark meaningful conversations and encourage participants to share their own experiences. The activities she has developed to keep them engaged are not only educational but also foster a sense of curiosity and confidence, helping young people to connect, learn, and grow. Conversations about her topics continue long after she has left our office.”*

**- YouthWorX NT**

# DISPUTE RESOLUTION

In 2024–25, NTCA received 201 conciliation requests to facilitate mutually acceptable outcomes for disputes between consumers and traders. These conciliation efforts provided an important platform to educate both parties on their rights and obligations under the ACL.

The following conciliation examples and consumer feedback reflect the effective role of conciliation in resolving complex consumer disputes and reinforcing compliance with the ACL:

## Motor vehicle

A consumer purchased a brand-new SUV with accessories for over \$67,000. Within six months, the engine failed while driving and later would not start at all. Despite extensive repairs, the issue recurred and could not be diagnosed, rendering the vehicle unsafe. The consumer requested a refund from both the dealership and manufacturer but initially received no response. The manufacturer instead offered reimbursement for a hire vehicle during further repairs. Following a request for conciliation, the dealership agreed to a full refund, which was accepted and received by the consumer.

## Flights

A consumer booked return international flights through a third-party travel agent. When the airline cancelled the flight, the consumer arranged alternative travel at their own expense and sought a refund. The airline advised the refund had been issued to the travel agent, who denied receiving it. After repeated attempts to resolve the issue independently, the consumer lodged a conciliation request. As a result, the third-party agent issued a full refund.

## Mattress

A consumer purchased a mattress online, relying on multiple email confirmations that the item would arrive in time for their visiting parents. The freight company also confirmed timely delivery. However, the product arrived late and damaged. Following a conciliation request, the consumer received a full refund of \$1,175.

## Vacuum Cleaner

A consumer purchased a robotic vacuum cleaner which failed to function properly during the initial setup and room mapping process. Troubleshooting attempts were unsuccessful. The consumer requested either a refund or replacement, and after engaging the conciliation process, received a full refund of \$2,799 upon returning the product.

“

*I'm very grateful for the service you provide and your efforts in communicating to me my rights in what might otherwise be a confusing and stressful situation -*

**MC**

”

“

*Thank you for your advice. I appreciate your assistance, and I would like to add that you were very professional and informative -*

”

“

*Thank you so much for everything, I have got my refund back. I can't thank you enough -*

”

“

*Thank you so much for your assistance. I this week received a full refund, finally after waiting more than 12 months. I really appreciate your follow up -*

**AW**

”

“

*Thank you so much for your support and guidance through what was shaping up to be a stressful thing. Really grateful for your services -*

”





*Korran (Bitter Springs), Elsey National Park, traditional lands of the Mangarrayi and Yangman peoples.*



# TENANCY AND BUILDING DISPUTES



## RESIDENTIAL BUILDING DISPUTES

As part of their statutory responsibilities, the Commissioner of Consumer Affairs also serves as the Commissioner of Residential Building Disputes under the *Building Act 1993 (NT)*. In this role, the Commissioner is empowered to conciliate disputes and determine whether there has been a breach of consumer guarantees relating to prescribed residential building work.

Where a breach is identified, the Commissioner can issue orders for rectification or compensation, with authority to award up to \$100,000, either by mutual agreement or formal decision. If compensation exceeding \$100,000 is considered appropriate, the matter must be referred to the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal for determination.

In the 2024-25 financial year, NTCA received 46 building related enquiries and one formal Application to the Commissioner for Decision.

## RETAIL TENANCIES

The Commissioner of Business Tenancies holds dispute resolution and other functions under the *Business Tenancies (Fair Dealings) Act 2003 (NT)*.

The Commissioner received 17 business tenancy applications in 2024-25. Only a small number were able to be successfully resolved, with Certificates of Failure to Resolve Retail Tenancy Claim being issued for the majority so that the matters could proceed to a more formal decision making process through the Local Court.

# RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES

The Commissioner of Tenancies holds a number of responsibilities under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999 (NT)*. Information and advice relating to the Act is routinely provided to the public and real estate agents by our office, whether it be through our call centre, email enquiries, in person when clients visit our office, via our social media posts or at community events and information sessions.

In total, tenancy enquiries accounted for 52 per cent of the total number of contacts to our office throughout the financial year. The information provided by NTCA often means disputes can be resolved before they escalate to the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

Education and awareness sessions were delivered to real estate agencies, landlords, and non-governmental organisations, with a particular focus on updates to tenancy legislation. Over 233 individuals, including staff from the Department of Housing, attended training sessions on the Act in Darwin, Alice Springs and Katherine, helping them to understand their obligations under the law.

Further engagement in Alice Springs included participation in a “Safety in Alice” panel at the Multicultural Community Centre, along with senior representatives of NT Police, Neighbourhood Watch, and Victims of Crime NT. The Regional Officer spoke about tenant safety and landlord responsibilities to provide a safe and secure premise.

The Commissioner of Tenancies also processed six formal applications for tenancy security bonds held in trust and four requests from landlords to transfer security deposits to third parties.

## Training Sessions

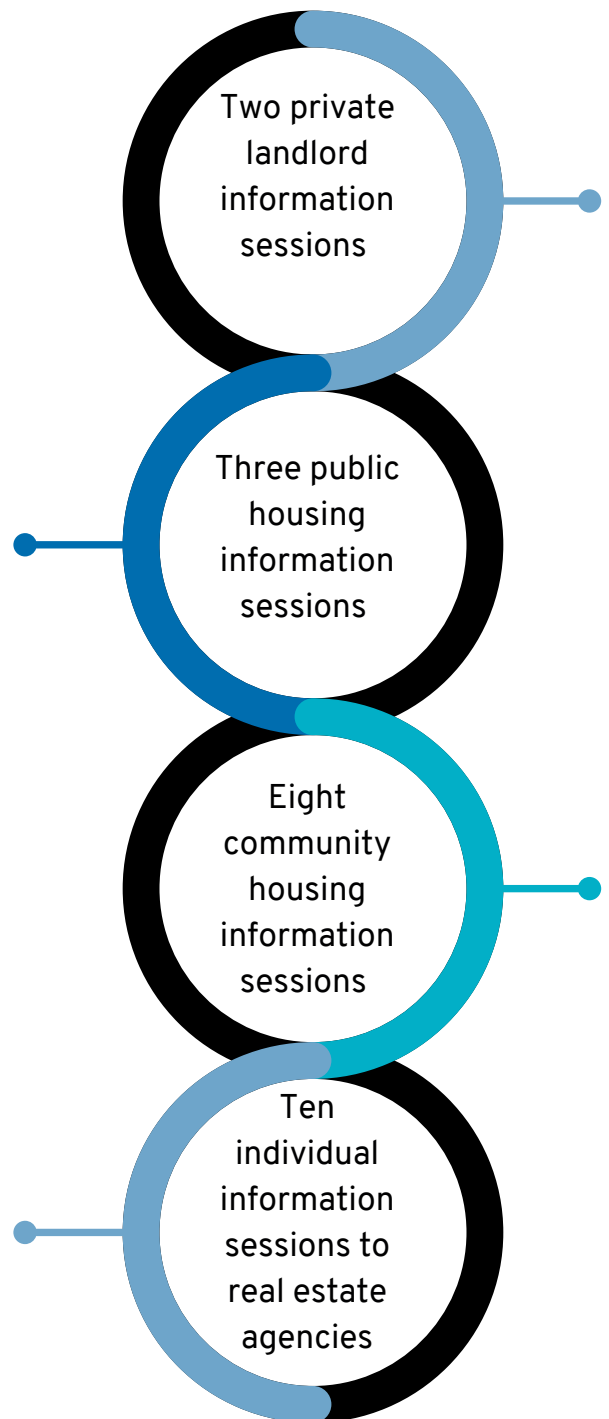




Photo by Deadly Designs Media and reproduced with the permission of NICS.

# NETWORKS AND COLLABORATION



The ACL is a law that applies nationally and in each state and territory. NTCA regulates this law in the NT. The purpose of the ACL is to protect consumers and provide for fair trading. A range of national committees and working groups exist to address needs for reform and the operation of the law.

## CONSUMER MINISTERS' NETWORK (CMN)

Ministers from around Australia meet once a year to vote on priority issues relating to the ACL. Outside this forum, Ministers can raise an issue out of session.

Priorities for the 2025-26 year include:

- Unfair trading practices
- Prohibitions and penalties relating to consumer guarantees and supplier indemnification
- Strengthen Australia's product safety regime
- Strengthen the Unit Pricing Code
- Implement Scams Prevention Framework.

## CONSUMER SENIOR OFFICIALS' NETWORK (CSON)

CSON is a network of each of the state/territory Commissioners for the ACL, as well as the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) and the Australian Securities and Insurance Commission (ASIC). They meet three times a year and progress work in preparation for the CMN meetings.

In the reporting period CSON worked to progress the priorities of CMN including:

- New Information standard on seafood labelling in a hospitality setting, to commence on 1 July 2026, with education during the next financial reporting period
- Issues regarding lithium-ion products, in particular e-bikes and e-scooters and fire risks
- Unfair Trading Practices
- Penalties and prohibitions regarding consumer guarantees and supplier indemnification.



## CONSUMER EDUCATION NETWORK (CEN)

The CEN develops education campaigns to inform consumers about current and emerging issues relevant to them. Regulators from all Australian jurisdictions, including the Commonwealth, New Zealand, ACCC and ASIC, participate. The CEN also serves to promote initiatives from individual members to gain a wider reach, such as the ACCC's 'Buying and selling second-hand products online' campaign.

## NATIONAL INDIGENOUS CONSUMER STRATEGY REFERENCE GROUP (NICS)

First Nations people in Australia often face significant challenges as consumers, stemming from language barriers, limited literacy, cultural differences, and remote locations. Australian consumer regulators introduced NICS in 2005 to address these vulnerabilities. Chaired by the ACCC, NICS includes all state and territory fair trading agencies, ASIC, and the Indigenous Consumer Assistance Network (ICAN) as a non-regulatory member. To learn more about the National Indigenous Consumer Strategy, visit [www.nics.org.au](http://www.nics.org.au).

Over the past year, NICS has been working on a soon to be released Action Plan for 2025-27 and has been developing a new project to enhance education and outreach programs targeting First Nations consumers.



*Janine Dempsey (Outreach Officer) and Rebecca Davey (Deputy Commissioner) represented NTCA at the NICS planning meeting in Adelaide, South Australia. [Photos by Deadly Designs Media and reproduced with the permission of NICS.]*



## **REGULATORY COMPLIANCE NETWORK (RCN)**

The RCN considers compliance and enforcement options for significant current or emerging issues, often referred from the Fair Trading Operations Group (FTOG). RCN met six times during 2024-25, mainly working on strategies regarding large businesses causing consumer harm in several Australian states and territories.

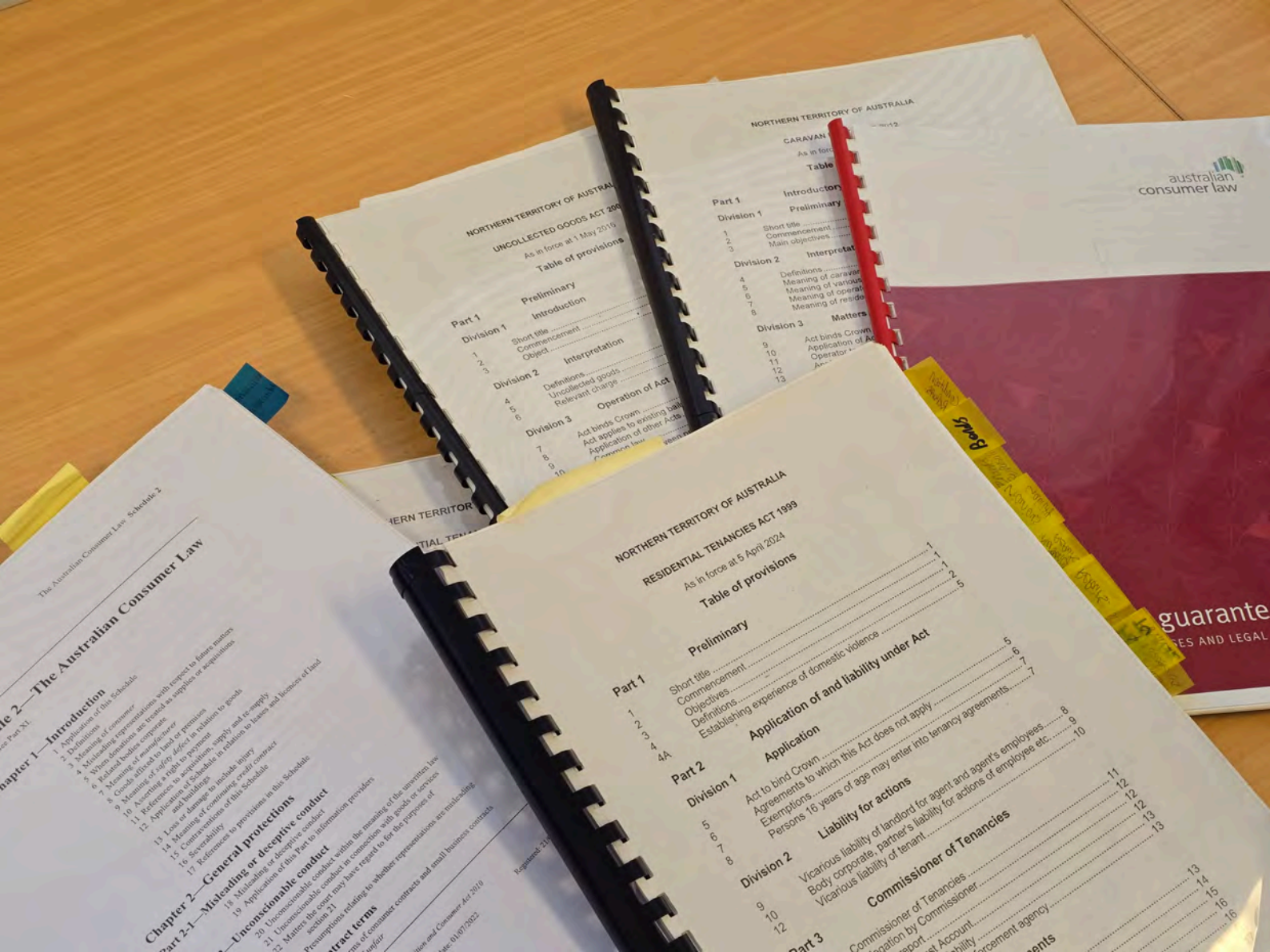
## **FAIR TRADING OPERATIONS GROUP (FTOG)**

FTOG members meet monthly to address trending issues of traders or industries affecting multiple jurisdictions. These meetings are an opportunity to discuss concerns, gather data, and talk about what actions are under consideration or being implemented. In some cases, it can be determined that an independent working group should be formed for larger, more complex matters.

The group discussed cancellation policies within the fitness and travel industries that fail to consider reasonable mitigation of losses, or that charge unfair cancellation fees. Unsolicited consumer agreements were also reviewed, with concerns raised over transparency and unfair sales practices, particularly in the solar panel industry.

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# COMPLIANCE

NTCA's compliance unit undertakes a broad range of activities, including proactive operations, case assessments, and investigations into potential breaches of consumer protection and rental laws. Using a proportionate, risk-based approach, the team works to support businesses in understanding and meeting their legal obligations through early engagement and targeted education. Where appropriate, enforcement tools and other compliance strategies are applied to address non-compliance.

During 2024-25, NTCA responded to both planned and emerging compliance priorities to address consumer and rental issues.

## CASE STUDIES

### Unsolicited Consumer Agreements

Concerns were raised with NTCA about a South Australian business that was knocking on doors in Alice Springs, offering exterior roller shutters for windows. Unsolicited sales practices are permitted under the ACL, but they automatically invoke additional consumer protections and rules on how the trader must conduct themselves. The investigation revealed that the trader needed to improve the documentation provided to consumers. In one instance, the consumer wanted to rescind their contract due to delays in delivery. With assistance from NTCA, the parties agreed to settle for completion of the job at a discounted price.

### Advertising Claims

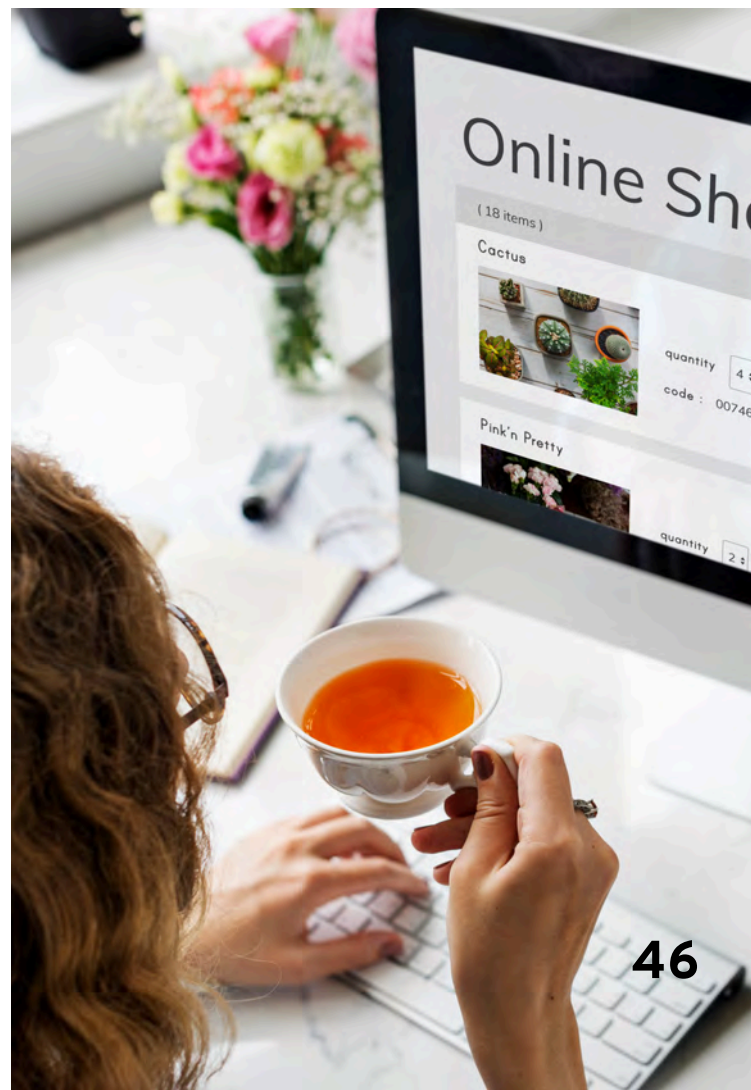
NTCA responded to a complaint that a product advertised on local television was not suitable in a tropical environment. After researching the effectiveness of the product in humid environments, NTCA found that the product was unlikely to perform to a satisfactory standard in high humidity or extreme heat environments. We also detected inconsistencies in the television and website advertisements that had the potential to mislead consumers.

NTCA worked with the supplier to improve its marketing of the product to NT consumers and ensure compliance with the ACL. The supplier now has a clear and transparent disclaimer on both television and website advertisements about the limitations of the product in humid and extreme heat environments.

### Tourism Industry

NTCA received numerous reports from consumers who advised that a tour operator cancelled their bookings, and that obtaining a refund was difficult.

NTCA commenced an investigation, finding that 135 consumers were impacted by the tour cancellations and a third party was legally responsible for providing the refunds. Using powers under the *Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading Act 1990 (NT)*, NTCA identified and contacted affected customers, including many that had not reported their experience to our office. We then worked with the parties to facilitate refunds or other satisfactory remedies for the consumers.



## RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES

NTCA continued to investigate a number of potential breaches of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999 (NT)* in 2024-25. Various regulatory tools were used to address these matters, with most being rectified through education.

Some of the more common issues addressed were:

- safe and habitable standards and notice periods for termination of employment-related tenancies
- unlawful charging of lease break fees and loss of rent without lodging claims with NTCAT
- failure to return security deposit
- unlicensed real estate agent - assisting Licensing NT with enforcement action and contact with affected landlords and tenants.

## PRICE SCANNING AUDITS

NTCA launched a price scanning audit project in 2024-25, which will continue into the new financial year. Audits are conducted at selected retail outlets, comparing the prices displayed on shelves with those charged at checkout for various randomly chosen items.

This project aims to ensure consumers are charged correctly, promotional offers are honoured and representations are accurate.



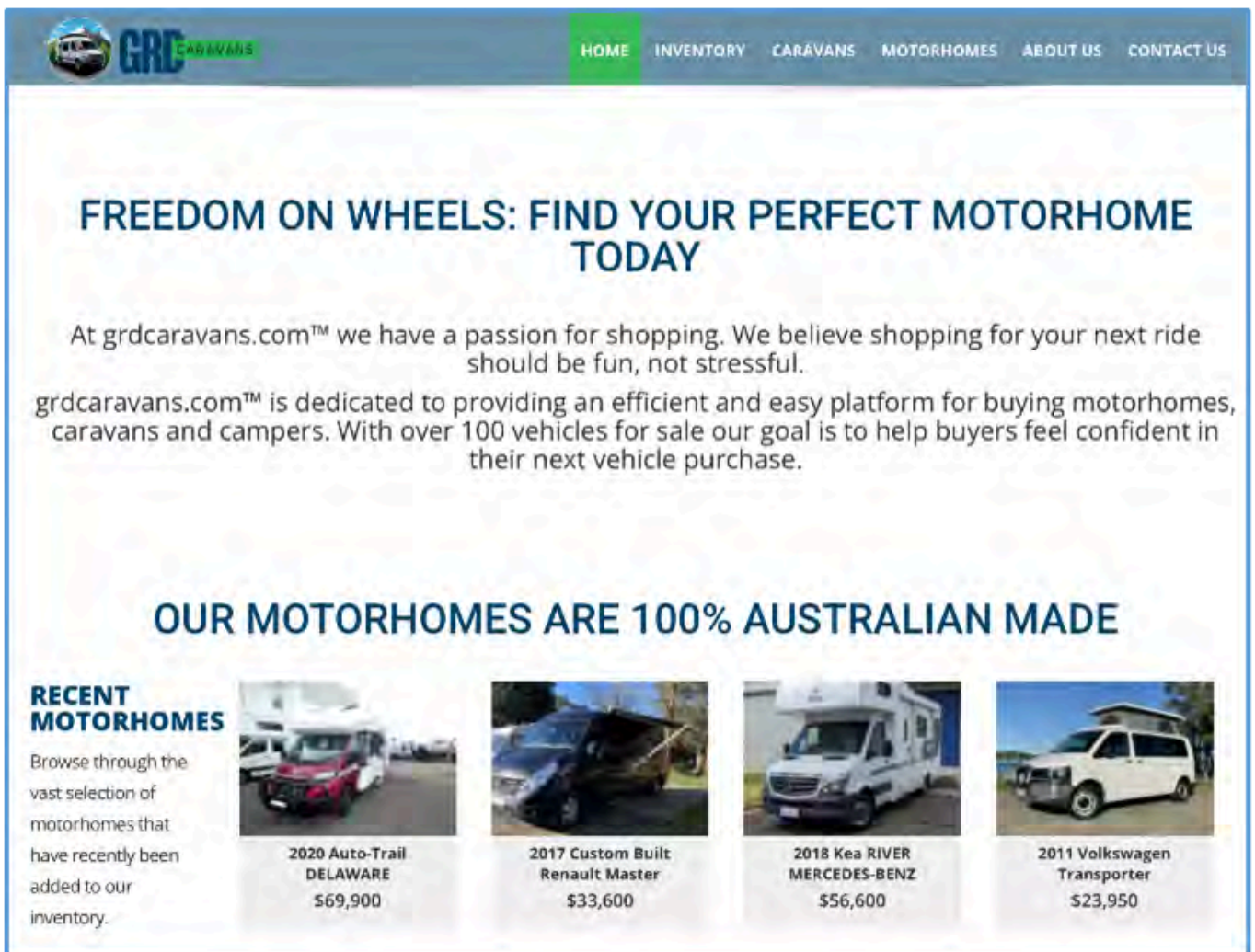
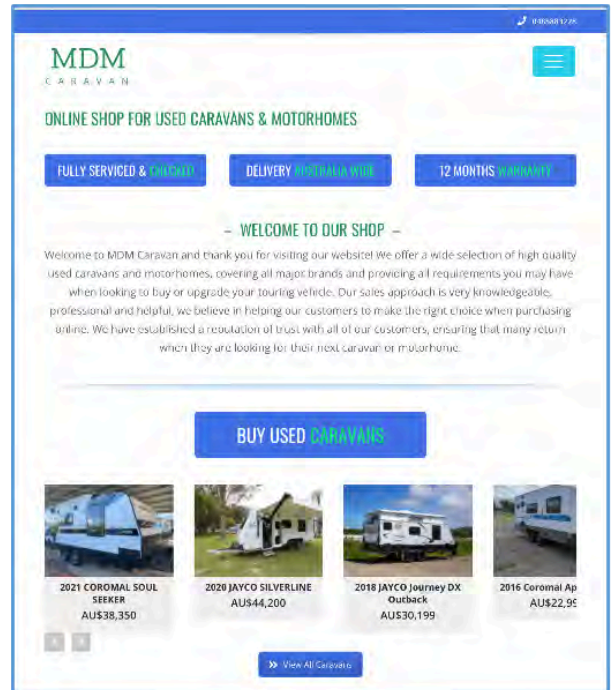
*Katu Tjuta, part of  
Uluru-Kata Tjuta  
National Park, land of  
the Anangu people*



# SCAMS

Scammers use images and information stolen from legitimate global websites, often impersonating trusted Australian businesses, to create fake websites. While NTCA proactively searches for these scams, many reports also come directly from consumers.

In 2024-25, NTCA identified and took down 37 scam websites, mainly targeting high-value items like tractors, farming equipment, caravans, and motorhomes. Reported losses reached \$166,890 for the year; however through NTCA's compliance work and education through social media, we were able to save consumers \$222,000 in 2024-25. That brings total reported savings for this project to over \$4.6 million since 2019.



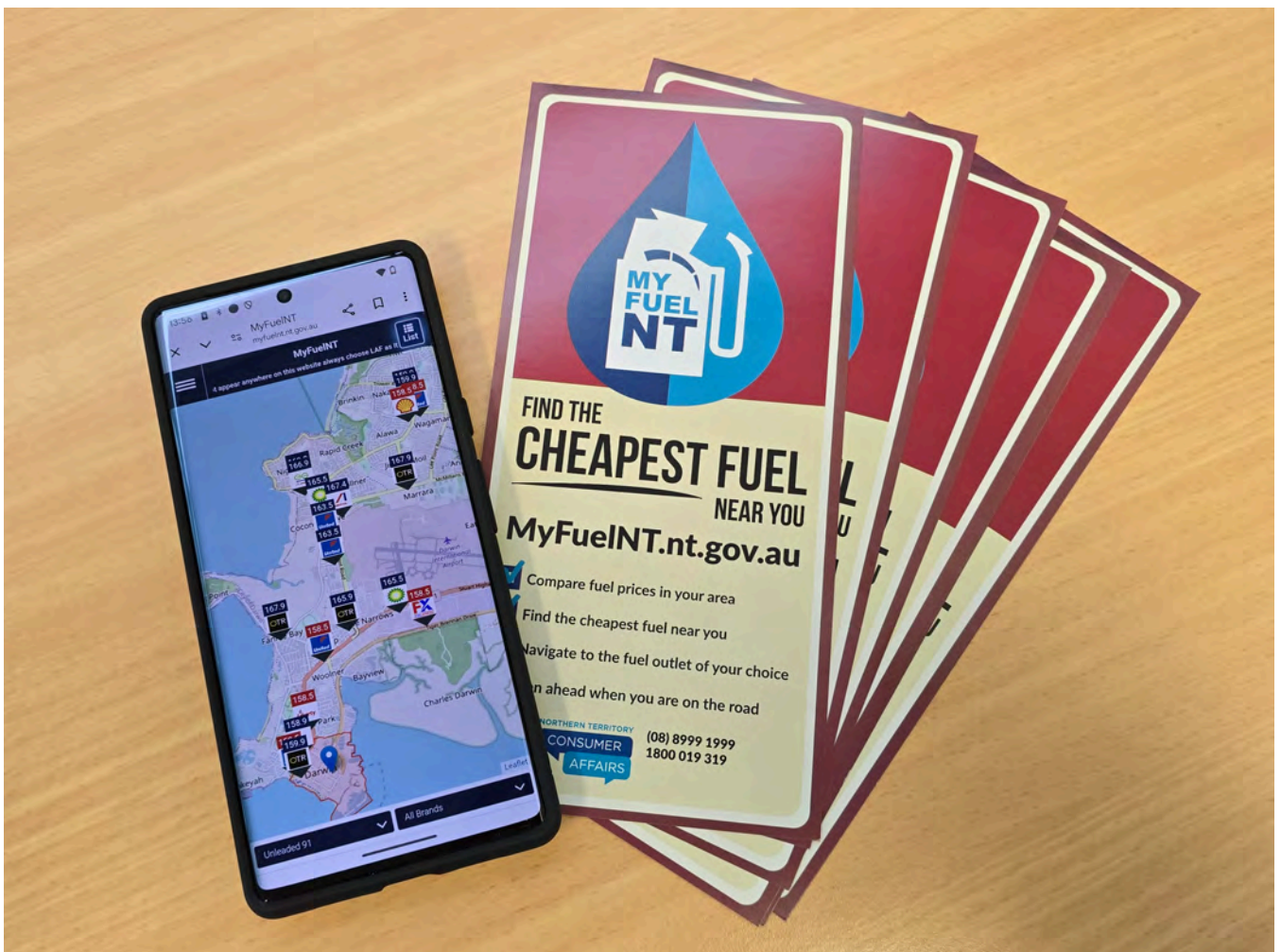
The images above are examples of scam websites removed during the year, reflecting ongoing efforts to protect consumers from online fraud.

## MYFUEL NT

NTCA manages the MyFuel NT scheme, which displays real-time fuel prices across the Territory, helping consumers find the cheapest fuel via <https://myfuelnt.nt.gov.au>.

To ensure compliance, NTCA regularly conducts in-person checks at fuel outlets, including remote areas. 215 outlets operated in the Territory in 2024-25, with 117 visited to verify accurate price reporting. The system also allows consumers to report price discrepancies directly.

Despite occasional errors, compliance remains high, and no infringement notices were issued for the second consecutive year.



*The MyFuel NT web app empowers Territory fuel consumers to get the best deal in their local area, encouraging fuel pricing competition throughout the NT.*



# OTHER STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES

## RETIREMENT VILLAGES

NTCA is responsible for the administration of the *Retirement Villages Act 1995 (NT)*. The Act regulates:

- the process of signing up to reside in a retirement village
- the operation and management of the villages; and
- provides a dispute resolution process where a conflict arises.

There are three retirement villages in the Northern Territory, all three located in the Top End. There is Southern Cross Care – Pearl Retirement Resort, a not-for-profit provider, and Greenfields Living, a private provider.

The Commissioner pays an annual visit to each village to ensure services are running smoothly. In 2024-25 there was one enquiry made to NTCA about a retirement village.

# CARAVAN PARKS

NTCA is responsible for the administration of the *Caravan Parks Act 2012 (NT)*. The Act covers caravan parks used for formal rental arrangements that exceed 12 months, rather than tourist parks. The Act clarifies the rights and obligations of the park operator and residents, providing standardised terms and conditions.

In 2024-25 ten enquiries were received mostly from Darwin, Katherine, or Alice Springs. Most enquiries related to rights under the Act, including rent increases.



*Suzie, a local long term caravan resident.*

# APPENDIX

## Northern Territory Consumer Affairs – legislation and statutory offices

LEGISLATION	STATUTORY OFFICE
<i>Accommodation Providers Act 1981 (NT)</i>	
<i>Building Act 1993 (NT)</i>	Commissioner of Residential Building Disputes
Building Regulations 1993 (NT)	
Building (Resolution of Residential Building Work Disputes) Regulations 2012 (NT)	
Building (RBI and Fidelity Fund Schemes) Regulations 2012 (NT)	
<i>Business Tenancies (Fair Dealings) Act 2003 (NT)</i>	Commissioner of Business Tenancies
Business Tenancies (Fair Dealings) Regulations 2004 (NT)	
<i>Caravan Parks Act 2012 (NT)</i>	Commissioner of Tenancies
Caravan Parks Regulations 2012 (NT)	
<i>Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading Act 1990 (NT)</i>	Commissioner of Consumer Affairs
Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading (Fuel Retailers) Regulations 2017 (NT)	
Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading (Infringement Notice Offences) Regulations 2012 (NT)	
<i>Partnership Act 1997 (NT)</i>	Commissioner of Consumer Affairs
<i>Price Exploitation Prevention Act 1949 (NT)</i>	Controller of Prices
<i>Residential Tenancies Act 1999 (NT)</i>	Commissioner of Tenancies
Residential Tenancies Regulations 2000 (NT)	
<i>Retirement Villages Act 1995 (NT)</i>	Commissioner of Consumer Affairs
Retirement Villages Regulations 1995 (NT)	
<i>Sale of Goods Act 1972 (NT)</i>	
<i>Trade Practices Amendment (Australian Consumer Law) Act (No.2) 2010</i>	
<i>Uncollected Goods Act 2004 (NT)</i>	
<i>Warehousemen's Liens Act 1969 (NT)</i>	



*The sun sets on another dry season day across Gulumerrdjin (Darwin Harbour).*