

**Senate Economics Legislation Committee****ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE****Treasury Portfolio**

Budget Estimates, 1 to 4 June 2004

**Question: Bud 27****Topic: Consumer Safety - Activities****Hansard Page: E100**

Senator Kirk asked:

Are you able to provide the committee with a list of those policy papers that you have prepared?

**Ms Vroombout**—I am not sure that we would call them policy papers.

**Senator KIRK**—What would you describe them as?

**Ms Vroombout**—A lot of them have ended up in regulations—that is, in the revised safety standards under the Trade Practices Act. What we could provide you with is a list of the various activities that the unit has been involved with.

**Senator KIRK**—That would be good.

**Ms Vroombout**—What time period were you interested in?

**Senator KIRK**—Just recently—the last 12-month period would be okay.

Answer:

The following is a list of activities of the Consumer Safety Unit during the period May 2003 to May 2004.

**Recall Management**

- Recorded, monitored and assessed recalls of consumer products. Our recall statistics are recorded in financial years, and in 2002-03 there were 179 recalls of consumer products, and 153 to date this year. We also recorded and monitored recalls of medical goods, vehicles, food and agricultural and veterinary chemicals. Total recalls in 2002-03 were 814 and to date this year there have been 769.
- Maintained and further developed the Product Recalls Australia website which provides public information on product recalls.

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- Maintained and enhanced a secure web site designed to share recall and product safety information with a wide range of Commonwealth, State, Territory and New Zealand authorities.
- Advised suppliers of reported safety defects and negotiated recalls where necessary.
- Advised suppliers on recall procedures.
- Audited selected recalls to ensure satisfactory action was taken.
- Investigated, in cooperation with States/Territories, reports of unsafe products.

#### **Trade Practices Act Safety and Information Standards**

- Progressed reviews of mandatory standards for flotation toys, bean bags, child restraints in motor vehicles, exercise cycles, children's household cots, fire extinguishers and disposable cigarette lighters.
- Finalised review of the tobacco labelling regulations in cooperation with the Department of Health and Ageing and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission. Currently developing new regulations in consultation with the Office of Legislative Drafting.
- Development and introduction of an updated and enhanced safety standard for sunglasses.
- Development and introduction of an updated and enhanced standard for toys for children up to and including 36 months of age.
- Development and introduction of an updated and enhanced standard for vehicle jacks.
- Reviewed the standard for care labelling of clothing for content and market relevance and re-gazetted the mandatory standard.

#### **Product Bans**

- Introduced a permanent ban on tinted headlight covers which allow less than 85 per cent luminous transmittance.
- Introduced a permanent ban on mini-cup jelly confectionery products containing konjac, a product that has been associated with 15 deaths and numerous choking incidents around the world.
- Banned for a period of 18 months yo yo water balls and similar products comprising a squeezable, soft synthetic liquid filled ball or other shape attached to a stretchable cord that is capable of extending to at least 50mm in length. These products presented a strangulation hazard and toxicity hazard.