

Senate Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Budget Estimates, 31 May to 2 June 2005

Question: Bud 69

Topic: ACCC – ACCC Infocentre

Hansard Page: E106

Senator Lundy asked:

Senator LUNDY—Thank you, Mr Ridgway. How many of the 43,500—that was the number in the 2003-04 annual report—calls on the info database are passed on to the states?

Mr Ridgway—We may have to take that particular question on notice.

Senator LUNDY—If you could take it on notice for the calls for the current financial year to date as well as financial year 2003-04.

Mr Ridgway—Yes.

Answer:

In the period 1 July 2003-30 June 2004 there were 11,502 matters recorded in the ACCC database (MARS) where the contact was also advised to contact a State/Territory Office of Fair Trading (OFT). There were a further 1,775 contacts that were recorded by use of telephone transaction codes where the contact was referred directly to the OFT as the issue was not directly relevant to the ACCC.

In the period 1 July 2004 – 31 May 2005 there were 12,391 matters recorded in MARS where the contact was also advised to contact the OFT. There were a further 2,604 contacts that were recorded by use of telephone transaction codes where the contact was referred directly to the OFT as the issue was not directly relevant to the ACCC.

Matters referred directly to the OFT are generally where the ACCC has no jurisdiction and is unable to specifically assist the caller on the matter. The calls are generally questions relating to business registration, inquiries regarding weights and measures and other State/Territory specific legislation administered by the OFT.

Matters are recorded in the ACCC database for intelligence purposes. However, when considered appropriate, we also refer contacts to their local OFT. Whether the referral results in a contact with an OFT we are unable to determine. The OFT may provide specific assistance due to the local nature of the complaint/inquiry or have taken action against a local trader and requested the ACCC to refer complainants to them.

A large volume of complaints/inquiries the ACCC receives relate to warranty and refund issues. After advising contacts of their rights under the Trade Practices Act, it is common to refer contacts to their local OFT for information if they wish to pursue their matter through a Small Claims Tribunal.