



CONSUMER LAW CENTRE VICTORIA
An independent, non-profit consumer
advocacy and public interest organisation

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MEDIA RELEASE

**STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL
10.30am Monday, 2 JUNE 2003**

**ACCC SET TO FOCUS ON EXPLOITATION OF VULNERABLE AND
DISADVANTAGED CONSUMERS**

The Consumer Law Centre Victoria welcomes the launch today by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) of a campaign focussed on commercial and business practices that target or seek to exploit vulnerable and disadvantaged consumers. The campaign is a joint initiative of the ACCC and its Consumer Consultative Committee (CCC), which is comprised of several consumer and community organisations, including the Consumer Law Centre Victoria.

"The Consumer Law Centre Victoria strongly supports the campaign and is pleased to be working with the ACCC on such an important and timely initiative. We are confident that this campaign will protect and promote the interests of vulnerable and disadvantaged consumers across Australia," said Chris Field, Executive Director, Consumer Law Centre Victoria.

The Consumer Law Centre Victoria operates a large free legal service for low income and vulnerable consumers, and is therefore very familiar with the types of problems faced by 'at risk' consumers as they try to negotiate an increasingly complex, often hazardous, marketplace.

Over the past year the Consumer Law Centre Victoria has seen a particularly worrying trend of consumer rip-offs in the mobile phone market. "We are concerned that misleading advertising and unfair contract terms in the mobile phone market are having a highly detrimental impact on vulnerable and disadvantaged consumers," said Chris Field.

As part of the campaign, the Consumer Law Centre Victoria will be seeking to refer appropriate matters to the special taskforce that has been set up by the ACCC. "We hope to be in a position to provide the ACCC with the evidence it needs in order to undertake targeted enforcement action to penalise those businesses breaking the law," Chris Field said.

"This campaign sends a strong message to all businesses, small and large, that exploitation of vulnerable and disadvantaged consumers will not be tolerated in the Australian marketplace, and that compliance with the *Trade Practices Act* is simply non negotiable," said Chris Field.

The Consumer Law Centre Victoria invites consumers and community organisations to contact them if they have issues that fit within the scope of the campaign. The Centre's legal service can be contacted Monday to Friday, between 9am-5.30pm, on (03) 9629 6300.

For further information contact Chris Field at the Consumer Law Centre Victoria on (03) 9629 6901 (Direct) or 0419 598 836 or Anna Stewart on (03) 9629 6934 (Direct) or 0402 900 485.