



15 August 2002

Secretary,  
Trade Practices Act Review,  
C/- Department of Treasury  
Langton Crescent  
PARKES ACT 2600

*By email: TPAreview@treasury.gov.au*

Dear Secretary,

The Council of the Ageing (COTA) joins with other consumer organisations to support the value of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission in protecting the interests of consumers who are usually without formal bargaining power and are often severely limited in their ability to exercise effective choice and consumer rights in their day to day activities.

While we do not have the capacity at present, under pressure of other demands on our limited resources, to present a submission as such, COTA urges the Review to understand, respect, preserve and promote the valuable and ongoing role of the ACCC in promoting competitive trading which benefits consumers in terms of services and price.

In a world in which many essential goods and services are provided by a limited number of large and powerful companies or organisations to whom an individual's concerns and well being are of little impact, if even noticed, consumers need a means of action on their behalf which can go well beyond their own sphere of action. That is what the Trade Practices Act and the ACCC provide. In our experience many consumer would wish to see the Act and the powers of the ACCC strengthened, and certainly not diminished in any way.

For the information of the Review Committee I describe below the role and function of COTA, to provide an understanding of our interests and advocacy on behalf of older Australians on this and other issues of concern to them.

COTA is the peak consumer organisation dedicated to protecting and promoting the well-being of older people. It has the members, skills, knowledge base, and resources to support this role. COTA (Australia) has a number of functions including:

- policy analysis and policy development
- provision of information and advice to older people on Commonwealth policies and programs
- provision of information and advice to the Commonwealth Government about issues of importance to older people based on consultation with older people and research.

COTA's policy, consultation, representation and information dissemination roles are formally recognized by the Federal, State and Territory Governments, which regularly and widely benefit from COTA representatives on advisory, consultative and review bodies.

At the State and Territory level, COTAs are involved in both service delivery to older people and policy work primarily focused on State issues. Individual members play an important role in maintaining the State-based organisations. Through their consumer base, State and Territory COTAs provide the management structure for COTA (Australia) and thereby inform policy and priorities.

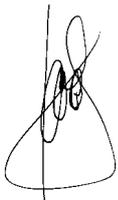
COTA (Australia)'s membership includes key national organisations which represent consumers and service providers. These organisations make a substantial contribution to the Council's policy development process.

COTA's membership is open to people over 50 years of age. Our policy work covers a wide range of issues of concern to this group: health services including private health insurance, employment, financial services, retirement and pre-retirement incomes, aged and community care services, housing, and information and communications technology.

COTA has both individual members, and organisational members which indirectly provide a very large membership base. Whether members or not, many older people, their carers and relatives as well as organisations come to COTA for information and advice and to alert us to issues in relation to Government policies and programs. The Seniors Information Services which COTA runs or auspices in most of the States and Territories field around 100,000 calls per annum.

Further information about COTA is available on our website: <http://www.cota.org.au>. You may also contact Helen Scott, Information Manager [hscott@cota.org.au](mailto:hscott@cota.org.au) at Council on the Ageing (Australia) Level 2, 3 Bowen Crescent, Melbourne 3004 Ph. (03) 9820 2655.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ian Yates', written over a vertical line.

Ian Yates  
**Acting National Executive Director**