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Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2005

## NATIONAL INDIGENOUS CONSUMER STRATEGY

Consumer Affairs Minister Karlene Maywald and Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Minister Terry Roberts have welcomed the launch of the *National Indigenous Consumer Strategy* (NICS).

South Australia's Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA) has worked with other similar Australian agencies - represented on the Standing Committee of Officials of Consumer Affairs - to develop the strategy.

The NICS aims to promote basic consumer rights for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers.

It draws together a number of initiatives that have been operating independently in the past at Federal and State level, and renews the commitment of agencies to pursue issues regarding indigenous consumer rights.

Minister Maywald says it's important for Government and business to work together to create an environment of ethical trading.

"The whole community stands to benefit," said Minister Maywald.

"This initiative is important as it ensures that Indigenous consumers can fully understand and benefit from their consumer rights."

Key objectives of the strategy are to improve Indigenous consumers' understanding of their rights as consumers, and to improve the behaviour of traders in their dealings with Indigenous consumers through compliance and education initiatives.

Minister Roberts says indigenous people are among the most vulnerable in the community, so any move to protect and enhance their consumer rights is to be commended.

"Aboriginal people, especially in remote communities, can often be vulnerable to unscrupulous individuals. The introduction of the Consumer Strategy will provide welcome support and guidance for our Indigenous communities," said Minister Roberts.

South Australia has particular interest regarding the implementing of the strategy in relation to the sale of motor vehicles and boats.

OCBA already has under way a significant investigation into a financier and three car dealers who regularly deal with Indigenous consumers. Evidence obtained to date shows price jacking, the selling of inappropriate and unnecessary extended warranties and insurance, and the use of scrapbook catalogues.

Through the implementation of the strategy, and its own local action, OCBA looks forward to developing further specialised initiatives and education campaigns, as well as taking a key role in improving motor vehicle trading with remote communities.

OCBA has also implemented an education program for consumers, which visits remote areas and utilises local networks to distribute its messages.

This is aimed at ensuring that Indigenous consumers are more aware of their rights and wary of unscrupulous trading practices.

The program refers extensively to the youth website “Spendwell” ([www.b4usplashcash.ocba.sa.gov.au](http://www.b4usplashcash.ocba.sa.gov.au)) which has been a key educational tool for OCBA.

To obtain a hard copy of the National Indigenous Consumer Strategy, contact OCBA on 8204 9507

