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FAIR TRADING AND BUILDING LAWS TARGETED IN MAJOR REVIEW

Wide-ranging reforms to the State's Fair Trading Act are being proposed as part of a comprehensive review, with South Australian consumers, businesses and industry representatives being urged to take part.

Minister for Consumer Affairs, Jennifer Rankine, has released two discussion papers today - one on fair-trading legislation and the other on the Building Work Contractors Act.

"The review of the *Fair Trading Act 1987* is aimed at modernising the act and improving its effectiveness."

"Over time new technologies emerge along with changes in the marketplace, so it's vital that legislation governing the marketplace and consumer protection is up to speed with our busy trading environment," Ms Rankine said.

The discussion paper explores:

- Generally boosting enforcement powers of the Commissioner for Consumer Affairs
- The Commissioner having the authority to temporarily suspend a licence where there's an urgent need to protect people from a trader who is acting unlawfully, improperly, negligently or unfairly
- Increasing penalties, so they reflect those that apply under the Trade Practices Act. Expiation fees may also be introduced for certain offences
- Empowering the Commissioner to require a trader to take part in conciliation of a consumer dispute
- Allowing a court to order compensation on behalf of all consumers who've suffered loss as a result of a particular contravention of the Fair Trading Act

The discussion paper on the *Building Work Contractors Act 1995* is the final paper of three in relation to this Act and explores matters relating to discipline, compliance and complaint resolution.

"Disputes about building matters are often complex and can take some time to be resolved. This review considers options for resolving complaints more swiftly and fairly."

"South Australian Consumers, businesses and industry are enthusiastically encouraged to participate in the consultation process as these important pieces of legislation are thoroughly reviewed and revamped," Ms Rankine said.

Both discussion papers are available for download on the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs website (www.ocba.sa.gov.au) or by telephoning 8204 9516.

The closing date for submissions on both discussion papers is Monday 9 June 2008.