

# News Release

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Minister Ast Minister for Transport, Infrastructure & Energy

**Hon Gail Gago**

Minister for State/Local Government

Relations

Minister for the Status of Women

Minister for Consumer Affairs

Minister Government Enterprises

Wednesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2009

## CHECKING UP ON MID-YEAR SALES

Consumers looking for a bargain at the mid-year sales can be assured that the State's consumer watchdog is closely monitoring retailers' activities.

The Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA) is stepping up its focus on advertising claims, refund policies and price scanning accuracy during this busy retail period.

Consumer Affairs Minister Gail Gago says "Stores can be so busy promoting their mid-year sales that sometimes errors creep into their dealings with customers. We want to make sure that stores are trading fairly and that consumers are not being misled about the bargains on offer."

OCBA is monitoring advertising and in-store promotions, particularly where traders are claiming significant price savings and they may ask the trader for proof.

"Retailers know that many consumers are more concerned with the amount saved rather than the actual amount spent, but any claims about price reductions must be genuine," says Minister Gago.

OCBA will also be scrutinising stores that use electronic price scanners, to make sure that consumers are being charged the correct price at the checkout.

"Price scanning errors tend to increase during sale periods because stores may not readily update their shelf tags or computer programs. But errors are avoidable as long as stores have good processes in place to deal with price reductions during the sales," says the Minister.

"OCBA will also be reminding traders that the consumer's right to a refund does not change just because an item may be on sale."

Consumers are entitled to a refund if an item is faulty, does not match the description, or does not do what it is supposed to. Alternatively, consumers may prefer to have the item repaired or replaced, as long as there is appropriate redress. In cases where shoppers have simply changed their mind about a purchase they are not legally entitled to a refund.

Stores caught breaching fair trading laws can face a formal warning and repeat offenders may be prosecuted.

The maximum penalty for making misrepresentations to consumers is \$100,000 under the *Fair Trading Act 1987*.

Consumers can report any fair-trading concerns to OCBA on 8204 9777, or country callers 131 882.