

Media Release

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Telephone competition - \$10 to get to question 1.

Look out for the high costs of calls when you respond to premium call rate competitions. The Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA) is concerned that South Australians may be throwing away a lot of money on a telephone competition that encourages a response on a 1902 number.

Telephones around the state started ringing this week with a recorded message informing consumers they could win a Lotus car. Consumers responding to the offer are asked to phone a 1902 number and answer some questions. The only certain answer is that they will be left with a hefty phone bill. Just getting to question one can cost you up to \$10.

The Commissioner for Consumer Affairs, Mark Bodycoat, said that OCBA's consumer information line had taken a number of calls from concerned consumers who had been contacted in the promotion.

"The competition is enticing because everyone would love to have a sports car. OCBA has received many enquiries, and it is alarming that these are from people respond to these premium call rate promotions without knowing what they are in for."

Initially consumers are contacted by an unsolicited recorded message that encourages them to phone and enter a competition to win a Lotus Esprit. When they call the 1902 number, callers are then told that they are required to answer 10 Lotus related questions - 7 multiple choice, 3 tiebreaker questions. The cost per minute for the call is \$3.46. These costs are stated in the voice recorded message but consumers do not know how long the call may last.

"The trap for consumers is that they are told of the call rate per minute but are not told of the maximum call rate (\$27.50) or how long the questions may take. In this case, even if they get a question wrong the caller is sometimes given another chance to answer, prolonging the call and the expense of entering the competition."

The Telephone Information Services Standards Council (TISSC) is investigating the competition. The Council has requested the competition promoters provide details of the cost per minute in the initial unsolicited telephone call.

"TISSC have the authority to handle complaints against 190 service providers and have acted on our concerns. They are also investigating the need to include the maximum call costs in the initial recorded message."

190-premium rate telephone services must disclose the cost of the call per minute, the name of the service, the action required to proceed such as dial "0" and state that calls from mobile or public phones will cost extra.

To complain about 190 numbers, contact the Telephone Information Services Standards Council, on 1300 139 955 (local call cost in Australia) or www.tissc.com.au.

For more information about consumer protection issues contact the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs on (08) 8204 9777, country areas 131 882 or visit www.ocba.sa.gov.au



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