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### **FAULTY MOBILE PHONES TOP COMPLAINTS**

Mobile phone warranties have topped the list of consumer complaints collected during a recent Consumer Affairs phone-in.

In August, the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA) conducted a week-long phone-in about problems consumers experience with warranties.

Consumer Affairs Minister Gail Gago said the calls indicated that, in many cases, traders were not honouring their warranty obligations to customers.

“Consumers were invited to report cases where a product hasn’t lasted for a reasonable time and the trader has been reluctant to address the problem,” Ms Gago said.

“About 20 per cent of calls related to mobile phones, while other products that came up included motor vehicles, lounges, televisions, fridges and air-conditioners.”

Mobile phone warranty issues raised included:

- faulty screens and batteries
- consumers being asked to pay for repairs
- signing up for a “bundled” two-year contract including a handset and phone service, when the handset only came with a one year manufacturer’s warranty.

Consumers’ concerns raised during the phone-in included:

- 41 per cent had been ‘fobbed off’ by the trader and referred to the manufacturer.
- 24 per cent had been told that the manufacturer’s warranty had expired so the trader could not help them.
- 48 per cent felt that they had waited too long for an item to be repaired or replaced, with waiting times ranging from nine days to two years.
- Only 20 per cent had been offered a loan item while waiting for repairs.

“Some traders are giving customers wrong information about warranties, either through their own misunderstanding of the law or their lack of concern for their customers,” Ms Gago said.

“Many people assume that the manufacturer’s warranty is the only warranty that applies, but by law consumers are also entitled to a statutory warranty - which basically means that products or services should last for a reasonable period of time.

“The survey confirmed what we have suspected for some time - that too many traders often are not honouring their warranty obligations.”

OCBA has sought redress for consumers, and has written to the traders involved reminding them of their warranty responsibilities. A series of education messages will be conveyed to various retail sectors, including mobile phone traders, to promote fair trading practices.

“Traders will be reminded that the maximum penalty for misleading consumers about their warranty rights is \$20,000 for an individual or up to \$100,000 for a body corporate,” Ms Gago said.

To report any concerns about warranties consumers can contact Consumer Affairs on 8204 9777, or for regional callers 131 882 (local call cost).