

Friday, 28 August 2009

DANGEROUS SKY LANTERN BANNED

Consumer Affairs Minister Gail Gago announced today the Government was immediately banning “sky lanterns” – a paper lantern that is set alight to make it float through the air.

The Minister has declared the lanterns as dangerous goods and banned them from sale or supply.

The lantern is made from rice paper with a flammable heat source at the base that enables it to fly like a miniature hot air balloon. As the fire begins to die down, the lantern lowers to the ground, but the fire can still be burning when it lands.

“We’re talking about an item which is essentially a floating fire,” Minister Gago says.

“We are mindful that similar lanterns may be used in cultural festivals but I am aware that there are different styles of lanterns that don’t pose a fire risk”.

Tests conducted by Product Safety Officers from the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA) in conjunction with the Metropolitan Fire Service show that the item poses a high fire risk if the item were to land on dry grass or become trapped under the eaves of a building.

“Once the lantern has been lit and is floating it is beyond the user’s control. If it lands on dry grass or some other flammable surface then this could start a property fire or even a bush fire.”

Under Section 25 of the *Trade Standards Act 1979* the Minister has the power to ban goods that are deemed to be unsafe and cannot be rectified so as to no longer pose a hazard.

This type of lantern was also recently banned in Queensland where there were concerns that some were being targeted as a gimmick/toy to children. The lanterns are reported to have caused fires in other countries.

“Traders known to be selling the lanterns have been advised of the ban but if anyone finds them on sale anywhere in South Australia they should report the trader’s details to OCBA immediately. Breaches of the ban could cost a trader a fine of up to \$10,000,” Minister Gago says.

A list of banned and dangerous goods can be found on the OCBA website (www.ocba.sa.gov.au). People are encouraged to visit the website to check that particular products are safe, or telephone 8152 0732 if they have any concerns.