

Media Release

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SMS trend driving mobile telephone madness

Entries to competitions and ring tone downloads could get you more than you realise, like a big mobile phone bill.

The Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA) is concerned that many South Australians, particularly younger South Australians, are throwing away lots of money on SMS downloads and competitions that are promoted through television advertising.

The Commissioner for Consumer Affairs, Mark Bodycoat says that these competitions are being promoted during television programs that target the youth market, the largest users of mobile telephones.

“I am concerned that some consumers do not know what they are getting into when they enter competitions or download ring tones.”

“Entering a competition or downloading ring tones from a 190 SMS number seems harmless enough, but sometimes what is actually going on is that you are subscribing to an ongoing SMS service in which you will continue to get downloads, at a cost of several dollars each time.”

A common problem seems to be that callers do not check or know how to stop the service. During the school holidays, an influx of enquiries has come to OCBA from concerned parents who have received an unexpectedly high mobile phone bill. All have been trying to find information on how to unsubscribe or ‘stop’, and the rules associated with the competitions being promoted. Some consumers have found it extremely difficult to get these instructions and are also reporting rules of competitions not being displayed on television promotions.

Consumers should think twice about responding to these SMS promotions unless they have some vital necessary information including:

- The rules of the competition,
- How to unsubscribe and/or the number to send the ‘stop’ code to,
- The charges that apply to the downloads, including the ongoing SMS messages that could follow, and
- What additional charges might apply.

“Ideally, consumers should not respond to these promotions without taking note of all of the rules and conditions. The very least they need is the “stop” code or number. They really need to be sure of what they are getting into.”

To complain about 190 numbers consumers should 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 OCBA on 8204 9777, country areas 131 882 or visit www.ocba.sa.gov.au.