

Thursday 13th September 2007

GOVERNMENT ISSUES WARNING ABOUT PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDIO

Minister for Consumer Affairs, Jennifer Rankine, has issued a public warning in relation to photographic company, Studio 2000, located at 88 Waymouth St, Adelaide.

A string of complaints have flooded into the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA), following media reports this week about people who feel they've been pressured into signing up for photos they simply cannot afford.

"Studio 2000 appears to be targeting young people and parents of young children with offers of 'free' sittings. Once the photos have been taken, people feel like the company has used high pressure sales tactics and unnecessarily long sale spiels to get them to sign up for expensive photo packages.

Keeping people in negotiations for up to 5 hours is outrageous and the company needs to seriously reconsider its sales strategy as it is clearly putting people at risk."

While attending the Royal Adelaide Show this week, the Minister was offered the chance herself, to go in a free draw for a photo session by Studio 2000.

"I was concerned when asking 2 questions, 1 – did every entry win a prize? It seems the answer is yes. Once they've got your details you are most likely to be contacted. And 2, was there any cost involved? It seems the photo shoot is free, but to see the photos you have to pay a booking fee. I've asked Consumer Affairs to contact studio 2000 and request that these practices cease immediately," Ms Rankine said.

People have contacted Consumer Affairs about a range of allegations including:

- Incorrectly informing people that they'd won a competition;
- Discounts offered enticing clients to sign up were never honoured
- Not divulging prices to the customer until after he/she had signed a contract for a photo sitting.
- Being offered a \$100 voucher to put toward photos, but following the shoot were told that the voucher was conditional upon a minimum amount being spent.

The majority of complaints have related to being pressured into signing contracts.

"Before agreeing to a glamour photographic shoot, people need to understand what they are getting themselves into. Be on the lookout for any catches, like hefty charges for a supposedly free photo session, even if you choose not to buy any prints.

It's also advisable to ask for a price list, so that you know how much the photos will cost. If they're beyond your price range then it is better to look at alternatives than to go ahead with the shoot.

It is also a good idea to take a friend or parent with you when viewing the photos, so that you can talk about a sensible purchase option, should you decide to buy,” Ms Rankine said.

Section 91A of the *Fair Trading Act 1987*, contains a provision for a public statement warning people about matters that may adversely affect their interests if they purchase a particular good or service.

People who've experienced problems with studio 2000 are urged to contact Consumer Affairs on 8204 9777.