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## **TELEMARKETING IN THE SPOTLIGHT**

Consumer protection laws may be expanded over the next few years to include telemarketing - the increasingly common marketing tool now reaching thousands of households.

Minister for Consumer Affairs, Karlene Maywald, is inviting members of the public to have their say about whether telemarketing should be regulated and what specific protections should be afforded to consumers.

“Some consumers find these calls annoying, particularly when they happen late at night or during private family time,” she said.

“We have legislation in place to deal with misleading and deceptive conduct, as well as door-to-door trading.

“But there is no legislation to protect consumers who decide to purchase on the spot during a phone call and then later regret that decision.”

The State Government has released a discussion paper to canvass views about regulation of telemarketing. The discussion paper highlights a number of concerns:

- There is currently no restriction on the hours when telemarketers can call;
- Once a consumer agrees over the phone to purchase they can be locked in to a contract; and
- The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman reports that telemarketing is their number one area of complaint.

Minister Maywald said she was concerned South Australians may be pushed for an immediate decision by telemarketers.

“The Office of Consumer and Business Affairs advises consumers to be smart shoppers by shopping around and comparing products and prices, but telemarketing does not necessarily allow consumers to do that,” she said.

“The Government wants to protect consumers from unwanted intrusions into their private time and from unfair sales tactics, but is also mindful that telephone sales are a legitimate form of business.”

Opinions are sought about possible regulation of the industry, and in particular the merits of a cooling off period and whether the hours when telemarketers can call should be restricted.

For a copy of the discussion paper visit [www.ocba.sa.gov.au/policy/papers/index.html](http://www.ocba.sa.gov.au/policy/papers/index.html) or phone 8204 9514. Submissions are due by Monday 3 April 2006.