

Thursday, 12 February 2009

### **WHEN CUPID'S ARROW HITS THE WALLET, NOT THE HEART**

Consumers looking for love this Valentine's Day are advised to think carefully before handing over large sums of money to introduction agencies in the hope of finding a perfect match.

Consumer Affairs Minister Gail Gago says that some consumers have parted with their cash only to have their dreams dashed.

"Consumer Affairs is currently dealing with a complaint from a consumer who has paid more than \$10,000 to an introduction agency but hasn't received a single introduction," says Ms Gago.

"I am deeply concerned that some consumers are signing up for expensive introduction packages, and in cases like this they are not getting what was promised to them by the introduction agency."

While the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA) has only received eight reports in the past year from consumers who are unhappy with their dealings with introduction agencies, the Minister is concerned that the dollar amounts in dispute are reasonably high.

"Of the cases reported to OCBA, consumers have typically spent amounts ranging from \$1600 to \$2800, but from time to time consumers pay out many thousands of dollars in their search for love."

Introduction agencies offer various packages, and the price increases as the level of service offered increases.

"Introduction agencies offer another way of bringing people together, but consumers need to approach this in a sensible fashion otherwise they may sign up for packages that they simply cannot afford."

The Minister offers the following advice to consumers who may be thinking of using the services of an introduction agency:

- Consider whether you can afford the services offered by the introduction agency.
- Get a written copy of your contract or agreement with the introduction agency, and keep receipts for all payments.
- Be mindful that while the introduction agency may produce some 'matches', you may not end up liking the person/s.

Consumers who feel they have not received the services as promised by an introduction agency can contact OCBA's advisory service on 8204 9777, or for country callers 131 882 (local call cost).