
Wednesday, 17 December 2008

TRADERS CAUGHT DUDDING CHRISTMAS SHOPPERS

Twenty-three traders have been caught selling Christmas foods and products that don't measure up.

Consumer Affairs Minister Gail Gago said annual pre-Christmas inspections of products sold by weight or measure had uncovered 143 underweight items.

"Consumers are getting a raw deal if they pay for a certain amount but actually receive less," Ms Gago said.

"Inspections have been conducted at 165 premises including retailers, supermarkets, variety stores, wholesalers and manufacturers.

"More than 7300 packs were checked, with an emphasis on Christmas products such as hams, turkeys, puddings, cakes, confectionery and Christmas decorations that are sold by length.

"Office of Consumer and Business Affairs inspectors found 143 underweight items during this year's monitoring, including Christmas puddings, biscuits, and confectionery."

The greatest discrepancy was a packet of biscuits that was more than five per cent underweight.

Ms Gago said that nine sets of scales used to weigh food were found to be inaccurate or did not meet standards.

"If scales are not spot-on consumers may be charged for an inaccurate quantity of meat, fruit, vegetables or other produce," she said.

"Consumers should get what they've actually paid for.

"If they are paying for five kilograms of ham then that is what they should get. If they are getting anything different then that is against the law.

"Discrepancies in the consumer's favour also are of concern because they indicate shops do not have the appropriate checks and balances in place to meet their trade measurement obligations."

Inspectors also found 327 packs that did not comply with labelling requirements by failing to provide packer details or appropriately prominent measurement details.

Traders caught breaching trade measurement legislation have been issued with warning notices. Items that display incorrect weight or volume statements have been removed from sale and incorrect scales shut down until they have been repaired and certified as correct.

Follow up visits will be conducted and any trader found to be a repeat offender will risk prosecution and a maximum fine of \$10,000 for selling short measure or \$5,000 for inaccurate measuring instruments.

To report any concerns about inaccurate weight or measure of products contact OCBA's Trade Measurement section on (08) 8234 2036 or 131 882 for country callers.