

National Council of Women Australia Inc
Mid-Term Conference Report and Adviser Report for NCWQ
CONSUMER AFFAIRS
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Financial institutions and telcos do not send emails requesting passwords account verification, credit details or other personal information by asking you to click on to a link.

‘Protecting Your Identity’ is a new booklet from the Australian Government that aims to help you protect yourself from identity theft. It can be downloaded from www.ag.gov.au/identitytheft. It details how to avoid scams and viruses that can compromise your personal information, as well as offering tips to protect yourself.

The Australian Bankers Association (ABA) has assured customers that all bankers and other deposit taking institutions are required to reimburse money liberated from accounts via card skimming or other unauthorised means. Banks computer systems monitor transactions and will investigate any suspicious activity. Customers are urged to be vigilant in checking their statements.

Unclaimed consumer money will find a safe haven under recent Federal legislation changes. The amendments reduces the time from 7 years to 3 years in which money left untouched in banks, superannuation and other accounts is transferred to the government at which point it is protected from fees and market fluctuations. “Choice” called for an obligation that all institutions inform customers of any unclaimed accounts in their name. Also recommended was an on-going bi-annual reporting by government on all categories of unclaimed money with details how to reclaim the lost funds and disclosure of any deducted fees.

In Australia, the independent supermarket group (MGA) has called on the ACCC to investigate whether Coles and Woolworths are misusing their market power. MGA has accused the duopoly of subsidising loss making supermarkets in order to stamp out local competition. The ACCC is looking into the impact of supermarket fuel discount dockets and the sharing of price information between petrol retailers which may be lessening competition.

In the aftermath of the 24th April Bangladesh clothing factory collapse which killed more than 1100 people; most clothing retailers have signed a binding agreement called “The Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh” which includes safety regulations which includes safety regulations. The Accord requires retailers to pay for factory repairs. Signatories include Hand M, Zara, Benetton, Aldi, Kmart and Calvin Klein. US retailers Walmart and Gap are negotiating their own non-binding safety standards.

Choice is campaigning for energy companies to make it easier to compare plans and to make bills clearer. Visit www.choice.com.au/campaignsupporter for more details.

Commercial sunbeds will be banned in Queensland from late next year – a move Cancer specialists say will save lives. Salons will be paid \$1000 for their machines. They can choose to sell them to private buyers in pursuit of higher returns with backyard operators already snapping up these machines.

Costs will soon be reduced for Queenslanders building or renovating a home with the establishment of the new independent Queensland building and Construction Commission by the end of the year. This, the biggest change in 22 years will replace the Queensland Building Services Authority. The ten point action plan is to reform the state’s building regulations and focus on the right balance

between consumers and contractors. Included is a Rapid Dispute Resolution during construction and enhances education for consumers entering a building or renovation contract.

A ground breaking experiment that uses algae to absorb carbon dioxide emissions is set for a large scale trial. Government owned Stanwell will test the Clean Energy technology developed by James Cook University. The trial includes trapping carbon emissions from the power station and pumping them into water used to grow algae which doubles in mass every one to two days and in vast quantities can be used to produce either bio-diesel or cattle feed.

Former Qld. Treasurer, Keith DeLacey is behind a project Integrated Food Energy and Development in the Etheridge Shire, which will build water storage facilities and grow 75,000 hectares of sugar cane in the Gilbert River farming district.

A second North Queensland bio-energy (NQBE) project has won support from Chinese investors – the potential \$500 million project at Ingham. China's Nanning Good Fortune Heavy Industry Co Ltd (GFHI) signed a memorandum of understanding for the provision of equity and supply of plant. The Chinese Company has built more than 100 major sugar facilities and more than 200 power projects. NCBE, predominantly owned by 220 Herbert River sugarcane farmers, requires 23 million tonnes of cane annually for the mill, which will produce sugar crystals, power, ethanol, paper and bio-plastics.

Foreign investment is growing in Queensland with Chinese acquiring Cubbie Station, Tully Sugar Mill, Palazzo Versace on the Gold Coast plus development property in Queensland and W.A. Foreign land holders and developers include UK, Canada, USA, NZ, Switzerland, Singapore, South Korea, Middle East and Brazil.

Food security can be a real issue with foreign countries growing food in Australia but under no obligation to sell to us.

People are concerned over the potential impacts from the looming mining and coal seam gas industries on Queensland's agriculture and the impact on aquifers, the process of 'fracking', salt deposits, water issues and vast areas of prime grazing and crop areas becoming surrounded by wells.

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