

Consumers' Federation of Australia

Policy on advocacy

Approved by CFA Executive December 2012

Background

CFA is the peak body for consumer organisations in Australia. CFA advocates for consumer interests in concert with or on behalf of our members.

CFA is frequently approached by government, industry, CFA members and others to provide input into policy processes or undertake advocacy. However, due to a lack of resources, flowing from the lack of any significant government funding, CFA is generally unable to respond to opportunities for consumer advocacy such as these.

When CFA will respond

CFA will respond to requests for advocacy consistent with its resources in the following circumstances.

CFA supports its members and consumer representatives to act in the interests of consumers by undertaking limited advocacy to:

- defend an existing consumer protection,
- endorse an existing consumer campaign, normally by a member,
- support enforcement of an existing law, or
- support a member's advocacy for its own funding.

Issue specific responses

CFA may make undertake *advocacy specific to an issue* where that advocacy

1. Where that advocacy is in response to:
 - a. an advocacy request directed to CFA,
 - b. an opportunity or need identified by the CFA executive, or
 - c. a request from a CFA Standards Representative or other CFA nominated consumer representatives.

AND

2. Where that advocacy:

- defends an existing consumer protection,
- endorses an existing consumer campaign, normally by a member,
- supports enforcement of an existing law, or
- supports a member's advocacy for its own funding.

AND

3. And where that advocacy is in the interests of consumers and a priority use of CFA's resources

AND

4. Where the following conditions are met:

- (a) there is an existing CFA policy position, or there is broad consumer support for a particular position and no cogent alternative;
- (b) expertise is available within the CFA Executive Committee to review and make a decision about (a);
- (c) the work required to implement the decision will be performed by
 - a. a member of the CFA Executive Committee willing to implement the agreed advocacy (eg write a letter etc) OR
 - b. the requesting CFA representative willing draft the letter or documentation for CFA Executive Committee's approval; AND
- (d) the request for action has the Executive Committee's endorsement.

Generic responses

CFA has for some time provided a generic response to requests for input from governments, regulators, bureaucrats and others that highlights the resource constraints that mean we are unable to respond more fully. Our standard generic responses sets out the following broad policy principles to be applied in the interests of consumers.

Where CFA is unable to undertake issue specific advocacy, the following principles will be communicated to the agency, member or consumer representative, including standards representative, that has requested our input to assist them determine a policy position that meets consumers' needs.

Consumers in Australia are entitled to:

- *affordable and equitable access to essential services*
- *protection from unsafe or unfit products and services*
- *products and services that are sustainable in terms of their environmental effects*

- *fairness*
- *information and education to assist them in making choices in an increasingly complex marketplace*
- *accessible and effective remedies for failures and breaches of the law*
- *active monitoring and enforcement of consumer protection laws*
- *input through representative bodies to policy-making that affects their interests*
- *low income and disadvantaged consumers deserve special protection.*

In some appropriate cases (especially requests from members) we may also offer to highlight the member's activity or issue on the CFA website.