



Consumers silenced

24 October 2006

The voice of consumers has been silenced in Labor's State Budget, Shadow Consumer Affairs Minister Liz Penfold said today.

"Funding for the independent body, Consumers SA, has been dropped completely," she said.

"The immediate past president of Consumers SA in a letter to Consumer Affairs Minister Jennifer Rankine said,

'Without staff and an office, the consumer voice has, in effect, been negated and we are therefore unable to provide comment on topics and legislation that affects consumers, which is the whole of the South Australian population.'

"Even the photocopying service previously supplied to the organisation by the government's Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA) has stopped because of cuts to OCBA.

"In stopping funding to the state's volunteer consumer watchdog Minister Rankine has demonstrated her government's lack of concern for ordinary South Australians."

Mrs Penfold said an extension of the service to provide *'how to complain'* information in other languages for migrants and visitors had been unable to gain funding despite the push for new migrants to fill the state's skills shortages.

She said the needs of indigenous consumers for advice was acute but could also be addressed with assistance from Consumers SA.

"A recommendation from consultants working with indigenous Australians states that sufficient resources are needed for consumer agencies to support indigenous consumers and to work with advocacy organisations to improve their capacity for advocacy work," she said.

"The contempt that this government has for ordinary people is clearly demonstrated when it refuses a mere \$38,000 annually to fund Consumers SA," she said.

Consumers SA struggling on shoestring budget

2 June 2006

The state's volunteer consumer watchdog, Consumers SA, is being starved of funding, according to Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs Liz Penfold.

"The fantastic work on behalf of all South Australian consumers undertaken by a group of extraordinary volunteers is being run down by cost increases, static budgets and funding delays," Mrs Penfold said.

"I was stunned to hear that only enough funding was provided for a part time staff person to be employed and even the photocopying of the Consumer's Voice newsletter is no longer being provided by the Office of Business and Consumer Affairs which is also suffering from budget constraints.

"So photocopying has become yet another cost on an already overstretched Consumers SA budget."

An extension of the service to provide *'How to Complain'* information in other languages for immigrants and visitors has not been able to gain funding despite the push for new migrants to fill state skills shortages.

The acute needs of aboriginal consumers for advice could also be addressed with Consumers SA assistance. A recommendation from consultations with indigenous Australians states that sufficient resources are needed for consumer agencies to support indigenous consumers and to work with advocacy organisations to improve their capacity for advocacy work.

"I have been advised that Consumers SA will run out of funds by June 30 – just four weeks away – and will be unable to provide a service to South Australians," Mrs Penfold said.

"Despite contacting the Minister for Consumer Affairs with a request for a mere \$38,000, Consumers SA is still awaiting a response and cannot plan beyond the end of this month."