

## Welcoming the new Chairman



### Welcome to the summer edition of *Update*, and my first as Chairman.

This year has been a significant one for the ACCC, with the implementation of the Australian Consumer Law, our growth in staff numbers, budget and responsibilities, and preparing the ground for a fair and competitive market in the communications sector, particularly around the National Broadband Network.

It also saw the departure, after eight years as Chairman, of Graeme Samuel. During his tenure the ACCC grew substantially in size and stature, and realised many achievements.

Graeme has left behind a strong and well-respected organisation. I intend building on and enhancing that position and reputation, while increasing our engagement with the community so people better understand who we are, what we do and how our work benefits them.

As I mentioned, on 1 January the new national consumer-protection regime called the Australian Consumer Law came into effect.

With it came a raft of new or consolidated laws to protect consumers—including *businesses* as consumers—in their dealings with retailers and suppliers.

The laws provide the ACCC with new enforcement tools and remedies and, for the first time, a national product safety regime.

Our cover story is a timely reminder that these new laws are now well and truly in place and that you should be aware of your rights when engaging services or buying goods. Read about your rights on pages 6 and 7.

On 1 July 2012 the government will introduce a carbon price, which will apply to certain greenhouse emissions.

The ACCC will play a compliance and enforcement role regarding claims made by businesses about the impact of the new law on the price of their goods and services.

Consumers *and* businesses will be looking to us for guidance and protection as the legislation is implemented. To help inform businesses, the ACCC has developed a guide that outlines the information business operators need to ensure they understand their rights and obligations. Read more on page 5.

Finally, two things you should always be alert to at Christmas time—scammers and staying safe.

Combating the growing incidence of scams and online fraud is a challenge for the ACCC and the other government agencies involved—and it will continue to be a challenge into the future.

The ACCC is working closely with other agencies here and abroad to try to disrupt this sinister practice. On page 14 we highlight some of the most common scams and how you can avoid being trapped.

And we hear it everywhere at this time of year, but I'm still going to offer some words of advice. Christmas is a time when we all tend to, quite appropriately, relax and let our guard down. Just make sure you don't let it down completely.

Wherever you are going, travel safely and be careful in and around the water (see *the summer safety tips* on page 8).

All the best for Christmas and the New Year.

**Rod Sims, Chairman**