

FITNESS AUSTRALIA SUBMISSION TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF OFFICIALS OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

Introduction

Fitness Australia welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the information and consultation paper, *“An Australian Consumer Law: Fair Markets – Confident Consumers”*, prepared by the Standing Committee of Officials of Consumer Affairs.

This submission has been prepared to support the work of the Standing Committee and inform it about how the consumer law reforms may affect the Australian fitness industry and its customers.

Fitness Australia would welcome the opportunity to expand on this submission, as required, and relevant contact details are provided at the conclusion of the submission.

Consumer Law Reform

Fitness Australia is supportive of the introduction of a new national consumer law and the national consumer policy framework.

According to research recently undertaken by Fitness Australia, around 55% of businesses providing fitness services offer some type of minimum term membership contract to consumers and so the industry has a strong interest in the progress of these reforms. As many industry businesses operate across numerous locations in Australia, the fitness industry welcomes the reforms as they will ultimately reduce regulatory complexity and divergence across the nation.

Business Members of Fitness Australia are currently required to comply with the relevant State and Territory based Codes of Practice for the fitness industry. These Codes of Practice, that have been developed in consultation with the various State and Territory Departments of Fair Trading, contain provisions to ensure that Members meet rigorous consumer protection standards that engender consumer confidence.

The consumer law reform process will provide an opportunity for Fitness Australia to align the State and Territory based Codes with the new national consumer law provisions and to establish an over-arching National Code of Practice for the Australian fitness industry. This proposed National Code will embody the key principles of consumer protection, professionalism, quality and safety.

Fitness Australia would appreciate the opportunity to be advised and consulted on the reform process as it progresses.

About Fitness Australia

Fitness Australia Limited is the national fitness industry association working for a fitter, healthier Australia. It is a not-for-profit, member-based association. Our mission is to raise standards within the industry and support, promote and represent the interests of the fitness industry.

Our membership comprises approximately 900 business members and 20,000 registered exercise professionals across Australia.

Business members include fitness centre owners and managers from small to medium sized business and personal training studios through to large, multi-national businesses and franchises. Supplier Members are businesses that are closely aligned with the fitness industry, such as equipment and apparel suppliers, training service providers, software suppliers, and providers of business support services.

Registered Exercise Professionals are those that have successfully attained the recognised qualifications, have registered with Fitness Australia and are generally employed or contracted by fitness businesses or are self-employed within the fitness industry.

About the Australian Fitness Industry

The Australian fitness industry is growing rapidly and diversifying to meet the changing needs of the community. The culture of the fitness industry has also changed. The past emphasis on providing services to improve body image or muscle tone, aimed at fit and healthy 18-35 year old people, has made way for an emphasis on the health and wellbeing of all members of the community. Appropriate services are now offered to people of all levels of fitness and across all age groups, from children through to senior citizens.

The fitness industry has a clear role in helping to create a fitter, healthier Australia that will ultimately deliver a range of longer-term social and economic benefits across the nation.

In order to continue our important work of maintaining and enhancing standards in relation to customer care and consumer protection within the fitness industry, Fitness Australia members are committed to achieving compliance with relevant regulations and we look forward to being involved in the consumer law reform process.

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For further information:

Lauretta Stace

Chief Executive Officer

Fitness Australia

Tel: 02 8338 3001

Email: lauretta.stace@fitness.org.au

www.fitness.org.au