

CHOICE

On a roll

The best supermarket burger patties



MISSING MILLIONS

The interest on rental bonds

294 products TESTED

- Induction cooktops
- Solar panels
- Wireless routers
- Washing machines
- Garment steamers
- Induction cookware
- Steam stations
- Pillows
- Irons
- TVs

Plus Superannuation scams, timeshare traps & more

Revenge of the nerds

A shout out to our subject matter experts

My second favourite thing about working at CHOICE is the TVs. I love it when we test TVs. I wander down to the lab, I stroll around. I ask a bunch of silly questions to the brainiacs running the test. I stand in front of the brand new OLEDs, stroke my chin and say, "Damn, look at those blacks. That's a helluva contrast ratio". Unfortunately, I'm a TV nerd. That's one of my things. I'm also a video game nerd, a rock climbing nerd and a manga nerd.

Our nerds don't just belong in the labs. We have all kinds of nerds at CHOICE HQ

Which takes me to my first favourite thing about working at CHOICE: The nerds.

CHOICE is full of nerds. So many nerds. To be clear, nerds are a very good thing. We have air fryer nerds (hi Fiona and Chantelle), we have laptop nerds (how's it going Denis and Elias), we have router nerds ('sup Pete). We even have an ironing nerd (hello James!)

But our nerds don't just belong in the labs. We have all kinds of nerds at CHOICE HQ. We have policy nerds in our campaigns team

(hey Morgan and Jordan). We have SEO nerds in our marketing team (hey Tom, sorry Arsenal are bottling the league). We have strategy nerds (hi Sarah, sorry I keep forgetting to fill in your spreadsheets). We have a technical delivery nerd who is ALSO a huge heavy metal nerd (Simon, I love you and your intense vinyl collection!)

And I can't forget the nerds in my own team who make this magazine possible. Rachel the Trello nerd, Ren and Danny the design nerds, our editors Tracy and Grace who

are potentially the biggest word nerds I've ever met in 20 years of journalism. And big shout out to our verifier nerds Mel, Sam and Wendy, who are incredibly passionate about pointing out when we get things wrong.

Basically, you can turn to our staff list on page 74 and you're looking at some of the cleverest nerds you're ever likely to meet.

And now we have a new nerd at CHOICE: our brand new CEO Monique Perry. She might be the biggest nerd of all.



In addition to her CEO skills, Monique is a competitive sprinter. She's a super nerd about... running extremely fast for 100 metres. At the age of 51 she ran the 100 metres in 12.4 seconds. For context, that puts Monique among the best in the world at that age bracket. She told me she wakes up at 4.30 every morning to train. So, yes, a super nerd at the highest level. (I reckon I could still take her.)

So, a huge welcome to Monique. And a huge thanks to all the nerds who make CHOICE possible. We couldn't do it without you.

Enjoy the issue, fellow nerds.

Mark Serrels
CHOICE Editorial Director
Email: mserrels@choice.com.au

CHOICE

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Solar panel review



CHOICE magazine provides a selection of our top product reviews. We can't always include all the models we've tested, but you'll always find the products that scored the best. To view complete results for all our tests, go to choice.com.au, or call Customer Service on 1800 069 552 to add digital access to your subscription package.

The latest consumer news in brief
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 **Australia Post**



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End to card surcharges

After a long campaign from CHOICE and other consumer advocates, the Reserve Bank has announced credit and debit card surcharging will end on 1 October this year.

Card surcharges have become more and more frequent, and more and more costly. In fact, it's estimated their removal will save consumers and businesses around \$1.8 billion per year.

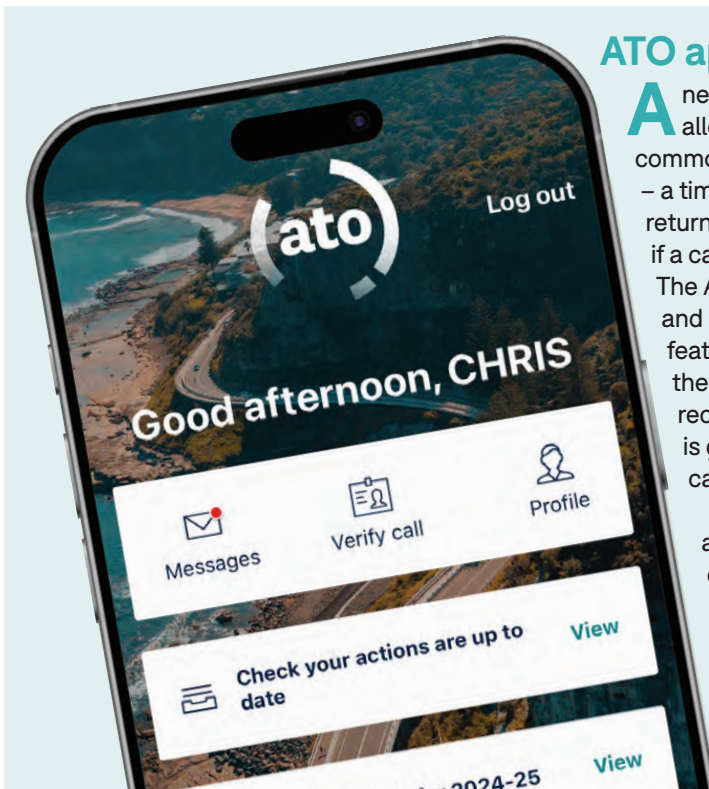
We commend the Reserve Bank for listening to the views of consumer groups like CHOICE, who have been highlighting the creeping cost of surcharges for more than a decade. More than 24,000 CHOICE supporters signed our petition calling for a surcharge ban – yet more proof of the power of active, mobilised consumers.

We're also glad to see further changes to reduce the costs in the system for small businesses.

The Reserve Bank's announcement means that from October, card payments will be simpler, more transparent, and, most importantly, more affordable for consumers. In a cost-of-living crisis, a fair, free way to pay is more important than ever.

MORGAN CAMPBELL





ATO app to help fight tax-time scams

A new feature of the Australian Tax Office (ATO) app allows Australians to spot criminals attempting a common tax-time scam. Ahead of the new financial year – a time when many taxpayers are preparing and filing returns – Australians can now use the app to confirm if a call claiming to come from the tax office is genuine. The ATO says people who have downloaded its app and registered their device can use the new “verify call” feature while they’re on the phone to run a check on the call. Once you select this option, you should receive a notification within 30 seconds if the call is genuine. If the notification doesn’t appear, the call is likely a scam.

Schemes where criminals impersonate the ATO and attempt to steal money or sensitive information often peak around tax time. The ATO says it received almost 7500 reports of impersonation scams during July last year. With scammers able to make it look like their calls are coming from official numbers, several organisations now allow consumers to use an app to make sure a call is legitimate.

LIAM KENNEDY

CHOICE supporters demand stronger scam protections

Scammers are constantly adapting and moving across platforms to find new ways to reach people. But although scams operate across multiple channels, protections don’t always follow. Romance scams in particular often use dating apps and email and rely on building trust over time, before causing serious financial and emotional harm. But these platforms are not included in the current Scams Prevention Framework.

This omission of certain platforms creates gaps that scammers can easily exploit by shifting their activity to other platforms with fewer obligations and less oversight.

CHOICE has delivered an open letter to Minister for Financial Services Daniel Mulino, backed by 15,605 supporters, calling for stronger and more consistent protections. The proposal is simple: if scams are happening on any platform, that platform should be part of the solution.

Expanding the framework to include platforms like email and dating apps would help close these gaps and reduce the risk of scammers simply moving elsewhere.

Thank you to everyone who signed the petition and supported the campaign. Your voices are helping to push for a more effective framework that will better reflect the reality of how scams work and how they can be stopped.

HARSHINI SHANMUGAKANI



CHOICE head of policy and government relations Morgan Campbell hands over our scams open letter to Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services Daniel Mulino.

Electric vehicle interest surges amidst fuel crisis

Interest in electric and hybrid vehicles has surged in Australia after the outbreak of war in the Middle East pushed up fuel prices. Car dealers, reviewers (including CHOICE) and banks offering car loans saw appetite for vehicles that can run without petrol or diesel increase significantly in the first month of the conflict.

The outbreak of hostilities between the US and Iran in late February pushed up wholesale oil prices and spurred panic buying of petrol and diesel, causing bowser rates in Australia to blow out by as much as 50 cents a litre in some parts of the country.

With the cost of fuel now a leading concern for consumers, many are interested in switching to vehicles that can run on electricity. Five times more people visited the CHOICE online electric vehicle review page in March – the month after the war broke out – than in February. Meanwhile, used car website Carma says searches for EVs and hybrids on its platform grew 67% during March, while NAB says the number of loans for EVs on its books doubled over the same period.

LIAM KENNEDY



State governments step up petrol price checks

Governments across Australia are upgrading their petrol and diesel price comparison apps in response to the fuel crisis, amid concerns of inaccurate pricing.

The Western Australian Government is requiring all WA service stations to report their prices daily to FuelWatch from 1 May, with stations that don't comply to be fined \$4000. Energy and Decarbonisation Minister Amber Jade Sanderson says "FuelWatch has already proved its worth with more than five million visits over the month of March".

The Victorian Government has also introduced reforms to mandatory fuel pricing. As of 10 March, motorists accessing the Servo Saver platform can view the next day's price cap and station opening hours, and access the next day's price information from 4pm the day before – earlier than previously.

Over in NSW, the state government has announced a \$2.2 million upgrade to its fuel app to allow for better data collection from retailers. Its FuelCheck platform has seen daily user numbers surge from at least 8000 in January to 500,000 by the end of March. State Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading Anoulack Chanthivong says the upgrades are to ensure the "utmost confidence" in information provided by FuelCheck. This announcement follows a statewide compliance blitz where, by April, around 75% of NSW service stations had been inspected for misleading pricing.

JAMES WORSFOLD



Solar panel waste a growing problem

Australia faces a “growing challenge” of what to do with second-hand solar panels, with households discarding their systems sooner than expected and few recycling or reuse options available. The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water shared the warning with a parliamentary inquiry into solar panel reuse and recycling, noting that old panels put into landfill were leaking toxic chemicals into the environment. The department says Australia is the largest per capita adopter of solar energy in the world, but is “now entering its first significant wave of end-of-life solar systems”.

It says three million panels reached the end of their life in 2025, and without government intervention there will be

50 million discarded panels by 2035.

Households tempted by new systems that are cheaper and more efficient are contributing to the waste pile by replacing their existing panels before they’ve reached the end of their lifespan. The department says there’s little data on what’s being done with these old panels, but says only a “small portion” are being recycled. Some of the remainder are being put into landfill or dumped illegally, where toxic components are damaging the environment.

LIAM KENNEDY



“Retailers appear to be increasingly relying on tactics that manipulate consumers”

Putting the brakes on Black Friday

You know things have gotten out of hand when there’s a Black Friday Sale on and it’s nowhere near Friday. Any connection to these ever-present promotions and the original definition of Black Friday – the day after the US Thanksgiving holiday – is now long gone. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has taken note of this. In April, the regulator announced the findings of a sweep of 50 retailers, around half of which were making questionable Black Friday claims.

One promotional tactic involved the use of a countdown timer indicating that the end of a sale was imminent. But when the timer ticked down, the sale kept on going. The ACCC also found claims of store-wide or site-wide sales when in fact the sales were limited, as well as misleading “was/now” or “strikethrough” pricing. It seems Black Friday can now be defined as a random sale with misleading promotions that can go on for as long as the retailer decides.

“We are concerned that retailers appear to be increasingly relying on tactics that manipulate consumers by creating a false sense of urgency that they will miss out on a discount if they don’t buy the product now,” says ACCC deputy chair Catriona Lowe.

ANDY KOLLMORGEN



Beware mobile number scams

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) and National Anti-Scam Centre are sounding the alarm on scammers taking control of telco customer phone numbers and accessing other accounts. Scammers can do this through swapping your number to a new SIM or switching your number between telcos, known as porting. With many online accounts now linked to phone numbers, a stolen number can allow someone to access your bank, myGov, subscription services and rewards programs. Warning signs your number has been stolen include unexpected alerts to your mobile accounts, verification codes you didn't ask for, password resets you didn't initiate, or your phone suddenly losing signal.

If you think your number is stolen, ACMA recommends contacting your telco immediately to reverse the process. Telcos are obliged under law to properly verify your identity when porting or swapping customer SIMs, though some companies have been caught not complying. Last year, Southern Phone was fined \$2.5 million for breaching anti-scam laws, where the telco left customers exposed to scammers.

ACMA Member Samantha Yorke says "the vulnerabilities in Southern Phone's systems went undetected for over a year and should have been identified and addressed much earlier to prevent consumers experiencing this harm."

JAMES WORSFOLD

Telco sector set for a new regulatory regime

Recent research from the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) reveals that one in five Australians have felt pressured to purchase a more expensive telco plan than they wanted, and over one in three have experienced unexpected changes to the terms and conditions of their contracts.

For ACCAN, the results were further evidence that the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) should scrap the industry-written Telecommunications Consumer Protections Code, and instead directly regulate the sector, especially in problem areas such as sales practices, credit assessments, disconnections and coverage information.

On 27 March, ACMA acceded to this longstanding demand and announced that it would replace the code with enforceable industry standards.

"Consumer reliance on telecommunications is far greater today than when the current code was made in 2019. The harms to consumers are also greater when services are unavailable or protections are lacking," says ACMA chair Nerida O'Loughlin.

"Recent issues caused by network outages, Triple Zero unavailability,

shortcomings from the 3G shutdown process and significant issues with responsible selling have further undermined confidence in the telco sector's commitment to its customers," she says.

The date for the start of direct ACMA regulation had yet to be determined at the time of publication.

ANDY KOLLMORGEN



Creases deceases

The Kogan Hands-Free Automatic Ironing Machine blows hot air through inflatable casings that are placed inside clothing to dry and remove creases – no elbow grease required (after initial set up). The nylon casings have perforations that let the hot air flow through, and can be used inside trousers, shirts and even wet sneakers.

This device does not produce steam. So if you're wanting to "iron" dry garments, you'll need to spray water directly onto them for the machine to work properly and create steam. For already damp clothes, you can put them straight on the casing, and the machine will dry and remove creases at the same time.

CHOICE expert ironing tester James Thomson found the machine worked well at taking the wrinkles out of a shirt or pair of trousers. There is even a casing specifically for drying mesh material sneakers, which James found also did a good job.

The appliance comes with good instructions and the unit can be pulled apart and put back in the box for easy storage.

How it works

A central bracket attaches to the base unit in various configurations, depending on the garment you're ironing. The appropriate casings are then attached to the bracket, and the garment goes over the top before switching on the unit.

A cotton/polyester shirt will take around 20 minutes to be crease-free. Clip-on weights are supplied to put onto the bottom of shirts to keep movement to a minimum.

Jeans may take an hour or more to be dried and ironed depending

on the level of creasing or dampness. The set-up process for trousers and jeans is quite fiddly, as the wet pants legs need to be individually and carefully slid over the rods to ensure the casing isn't damaged.

CHOICE verdict

Whether you should buy the Kogan Hands-Free Automatic Ironing Machine really depends on the sort of ironer you are.

If you like ironing and enjoy working through a basket of laundry relatively quickly, then this is not for you. The set-up isn't too onerous if you're just dealing with a single item, but doing multiple shirts and trousers quickly becomes finicky compared to using an iron, steam station or garment steamer (see our review, p45, if these appliances are more what you're after). It's also a lot slower than manual ironing. If you have a basket full of shirts to iron, for example, at 20 minutes per shirt you're looking at hours of attending to this machine.

However, for single items this machine has the benefit of being hands-free and relatively foolproof once you've set it up. Get the machine going, then you can walk away – get ready for work, have breakfast, or do anything other than ironing a shirt.

And a word of warning: despite claiming to be quiet, this device is as loud as a stick vac.

DENIS GALLAGHER



Doing multiple shirts and trousers quickly becomes finicky compared to using an iron



KOGAN HANDS-FREE AUTOMATIC IRONING MACHINE

PRICE \$129

CONTACT kogan.com/au



2 Stars if you do a lot of ironing



3.5 stars if you're just an occasional ironer



Reviewing the low-cost essentials subsidy scheme for remote areas

In March, CHOICE, along with other consumer advocates Financial Counselling Australia, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, the Indigenous Consumer Assistance Network and Mob Strong Debt Help, made a joint submission to the review of the low-cost essentials subsidy scheme.

The scheme, which was introduced last year, is a significant initiative that subsidises 30 essential food and grocery items in remote communities to help reduce prices at the checkout.

People in remote areas face some of the highest prices for food, household goods, transport and essential services. These challenges are compounded by the effect of the seasons, supply chain disruptions and limited competition. The scheme has the potential to make a huge difference in improving food security, supporting better health outcomes and easing pressure on household budgets.

Our submission, informed by financial counsellors, consumer advocates and frontline workers, recommends improving awareness of the scheme in stores and online, ensuring healthy options are included, expanding the range of subsidised items, strengthening monitoring and compliance, and encouraging uptake of the scheme evenly and equitably across communities. While early feedback on the scheme is positive, gaps in implementation and enforcement risk limiting its long-term effectiveness if they aren't addressed.

BEA SHERWOOD

Australia Post warns of Facebook Marketplace scams

Australia Post is warning customers to be on the lookout for scams while buying and selling items on Facebook Marketplace. The postal service says the popularity of online marketplaces has driven a rise in fraud involving fake listings, counterfeit items and payment scams.

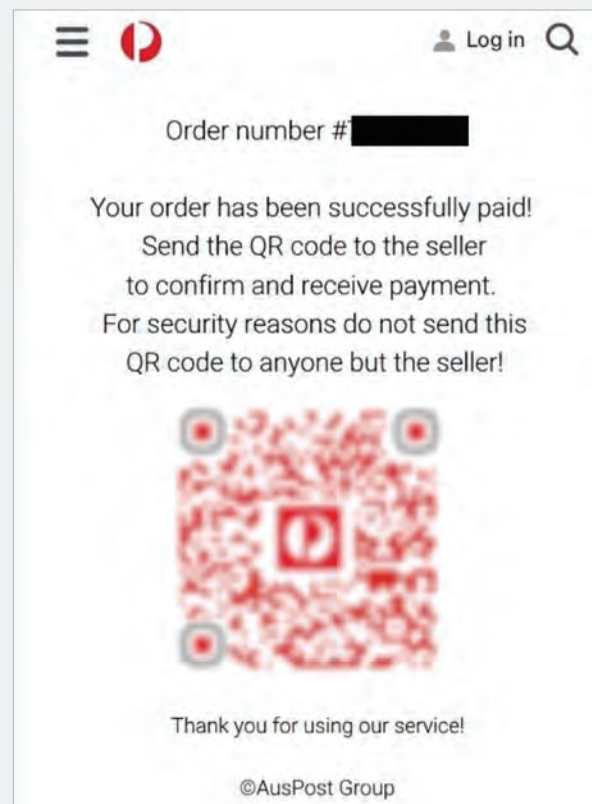
A common scheme sees scammers, posing as buyers, directing sellers via a link or QR code to fake "Australia Post courier service" websites for payment and delivery. These sites are designed to steal identification and financial information.

"Be aware Australia Post does not handle payments for buyers and does not have a courier service associated with Facebook Marketplace," says Australia Post Chief Information Officer Adam Cartwright.

Australia Post will also never ask for personal or financial details via phone, text or email.

"More than 2500 Australians have already reported being targeted by Facebook Marketplace scams to Australia Post this year," Cartwright says.

JAMES WORSFOLD



Australia Post released this sample scam message.



Smart home appliances lock out blind and low-vision people

Across all our homes, appliances are getting smarter. Connected to apps, digital control panels and sleek touchscreens, these devices may seem like a convenience to many, but for people who are blind or have low vision, they are creating serious hurdles to access.

A Vision Australia survey of 627 people across Australia and New Zealand found modern appliances are often harder to use than the models they replace. More than half of respondents (52%) say newer appliances are less accessible than older ones, while only 19% say accessibility has improved.

Common features on new devices include flat buttons or dials, touchscreen interfaces without voice or tactile alternatives, and a lack of audible indicators.

In response to this, Vision Australia is developing an appliance accessibility report card to evaluate how well manufacturers incorporate accessibility into their designs.

JARNI BLAKKARLY

Latitude Finance slapped with \$4 million fine

Latitude Finance Australia has paid a \$3.96 million penalty after the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) found the company breached spam laws more than 2.7 million times.

Between March 2024 and April 2025, Latitude sent more than 2.3 million marketing messages without accurate contact information. Around 350,000 of those messages lacked a working unsubscribe function. This is the second time the company has been whacked by the regulator, after paying a \$1.5 million penalty for similar contraventions in 2022.

“Latitude is now a two-time offender and it is disappointing that it let consumers down again,” ACMA member Samantha Yorke says. “The spam laws have been in place for more than 20 years, and there is simply no excuse for ongoing non-compliance, particularly after a prior enforcement action.”

The ACMA has accepted new court-enforceable undertakings from Latitude requiring it to appoint an independent consultant to further review its compliance with the spam laws.

“Given Latitude’s history of non-compliance, we will be very closely monitoring how it meets its obligations,” Yorke adds.

JARNI BLAKKARLY



Preventing abusers from claiming victims' super death benefits

The superannuation system is set up so that when you die, your superannuation balance doesn't automatically become part of your estate. Instead, your remaining super is passed on to your eligible beneficiaries, such as a spouse or child. However, under the current

rules, super funds don't have to consider domestic and family violence (DFV) when deciding who receives this benefit. This means a perpetrator can collect their victim's death benefit after they die.

Super Consumers Australia welcomes recent moves by the government to stop this from happening, but says the proposed reforms don't go far enough. Sarah's* daughter died last year and she has been fighting ever since, and spending thousands in legal fees, to stop her daughter's abuser from receiving her death benefits. Sarah's daughter had two super funds: one will consider DFV in its death benefit decisions, but the other fund will not. Super Consumers Australia, alongside other advocacy organisations, is calling for reforms to require all super fund trustees to consider DFV and abuse in deciding death benefit claims.

"Super is meant to be a safety net. With the right reforms, it can be part of the solution, not used to cause harm," says Super Consumers Australia Director of Advocacy Lily Jiang. **Not her real name.*

ANTOINETTE DYCE



Under the current rules, super funds don't have to consider domestic and family violence (DFV) when deciding who receives this benefit

Hospital insurance shenanigans

CHOICE member Gary Miller had a very helpful tip about our hospital recommendations in our March magazine.

Gary pointed out that one of our recommended policies for seniors, Australian Unity Value Hospital (Silver Plus), comes with a co-payment trick (co-payments are out-of-pocket contributions you make for your hospital stay, in addition to your excess).

This policy has a daily co-payment of \$100 that is capped at \$500 for each admission, but there is no limit on the number of co-payments in a calendar year. If you're admitted to hospital more than once in a calendar year, the savings you made buying this policy may be wiped out by co-payments.

Gary dug out the data on hospital stays. The median length of stay across Australia is around six days and the rate of readmission within 28 days is around 25%.

This is worth keeping in mind if you're looking for value in a hospital policy, and we'll adjust our methodology to take this into account next time. Thanks to Gary and all the CHOICE members for putting our work under the spotlight.

JODI BIRD





RANTS AND RAVES

The watchdogs that bark, but never bite



I invite you to envision a world in which laws are mere recommendations and unethical behaviour is routinely

overlooked. I'm talking here about sectors of the consumer marketplace governed by self-written industry codes of practice, of which there are many – mostly strictly voluntary.

Enter what just might be the granddaddy of them all, the Banking Code of Practice. The thing about this ironclad rule book is that it's etched in sandstone, set to be erased with the incoming tide. The code is written by the Australian Banking Association (ABA), which represents the banking industry, and members of the ABA (which includes all of the major and most of the smaller banks) are really supposed to follow it. But nothing much happens if they don't.

It's a crazy set-up when you think about it. The Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) regulates the financial services sector (including banks) and approves the code, but it has nothing to do with enforcing it. And it never checks to make sure banks are following it.

This job goes to the Banking Code Compliance Committee (BCCC). It's fair to say that this committee does not sow fear among the monoliths of finance. For example, the BCCC recently reported that only 23 of 88 banks it reviewed have adequate information about financial elder abuse on their websites, even though the code is clear that banks are critical in helping to stop this problem.

But the BCCC did not recommend that the 65 non-compliant banks be held accountable for their failings.



The thing about this ironclad rule book is that it's etched in sandstone, set to be erased with the incoming tide

It merely "encouraged all banks to reflect on their current practices".

This was the punishment. The harshest retribution meted out by the BCCC is a sanction, where it names and (theoretically) shames a bank for gross misconduct, such as the not unusual practice of continuing to charge fees to dead people. But this public flogging only happens within the world of obscure BCCC communications, which, it would seem, are read by very few.

This discussion wouldn't be complete without also touching on the General Insurance Code of Practice. Observance here is also completely voluntary. CHOICE knows this because we did a national survey of home insurance customers a few years ago to find out whether insurers were explaining the reasons behind whopping premiums increases. Clear explanations are a requirement of this industry code. But two out of five survey respondents said they were given no reason at all, and one in three

policyholders were given generic reasons, such as 'market forces'. This, too, runs counter to the code.

But we may be making progress. Consumer advocates have long called for the Telecommunications Consumer Protections (TCP) Code to be scrapped on the grounds that the industry-authored document left the door wide open for the upselling and mis-selling of telco services, especially to vulnerable customers. The TCP has to be approved by an actual regulator, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), but it rarely punishes code violations.

Thanks to these unsung heroes, the TCP code is now headed for the ash heap of history, and ACMA will regulate the sector directly. Whether it will enforce mandatory protections of its own devising remains to be seen.

ANDY KOLLMORGEN

ASK THE EXPERTS

Got a niggling question our team can help with?



Q I booked an Antarctic cruise for my wife and I through a travel agent in Sydney. We paid many thousands of dollars for the option to fly to and from the departure point in Antarctica but the departing flight was cancelled due to weather. At the time they advised it was cancelled due to poor visibility, but later it was advised that it was due to thick snow on the runway. We've been refunded for the cruise that we weren't able to

attend due to this, but the travel agent is not offering any kind of compensation for the flight to the destination being cancelled.

What are our rights?

A CHOICE insurance expert Jodi Bird: It will come down to the specific terms and conditions of both the airline and the travel agent. So you will want to familiarise yourself with both



ASK US

Email your question to asktheexperts@choice.com.au or write to Ask the Experts, CHOICE, 57 Carrington Rd, Marrickville, NSW 2204. You can also tap into the 'brains trust' at www.choice.community.

of those. If the airline offers a refund or credit for the cancelled flight, the travel agent should pass this on to you. However, the airline terms and conditions will usually preclude providing compensation for additional accommodation and meals incurred as a result of flights cancelled due to bad weather. Therefore the travel agent wouldn't be in a position to

pass any compensation for these extras on to you. In the latter case, however, comprehensive travel insurance will often cover additional accommodation and meal expenses due to interrupted travel.

Q I recently noticed that my pillow has an expiry date stamped on it (which has passed). I'm still perfectly happy with my pillow – is the expiry date legitimate and based on health reasons, or is it just a way to get us to buy more pillows when our existing one is perfectly fine?

A CHOICE pillow expert Matthew Steen:

You're right to be a little skeptical of this concept – we are too. Pillow manufacturer



Tontine started this trend in 2010 by stamping its pillows with a two-year replacement date. We had a little dig around and were unable to come up

with any scientific evidence to say why a use-by date should be applied, and neither Tontine nor any other source we could find had any evidence as to why there should be a use-by date. If you're still perfectly happy with your pillow, there's no need to replace it. If you're looking for a rough idea of when we advise replacing your pillow, it depends on the filling material. Memory foam, latex and feather and down pillows should last 5–10+ years, cotton and wool pillows should last around 3–5 years and polyester pillows will need to be replaced the most frequently at around 6 months to 2 years. If you're in the market for a new pillow, head to page 50 for our latest review.





Q I purchased a skirt for my great niece yesterday from a Ghanda store. I paid with cash and was asked for my email address to send the receipt. I told them I didn't want to give my email address and asked for a paper receipt instead. I was told there would be a cost for a paper receipt. I refused to pay and the store assistant told me he would not give me a receipt unless I paid for it. Is this legal?



A CHOICE investigative journalist

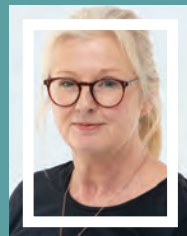
Andy Kollmorgen: This is not the first time we've heard about this particular store refusing to provide receipts without an email address, although it's the first time I've heard of a store asking for payment for a receipt. Under Australian Consumer Law,

businesses must provide a receipt or proof of purchase for any transaction over \$75. You have the right to ask for one if it's not provided. Considering you purchased a single skirt, I'm guessing the value may have been under \$75, in which case you are also entitled to request a receipt and it must be provided within seven days. In general, receipts should be provided as soon as practical after the goods are supplied and there is no requirement to provide personal details or money in exchange for one.



IMAGES: GETTY

Q My partner recently watched a documentary about the risks of cooking with non-stick cookware and made the decision to replace all our Teflon pans with stainless steel. While I agree they seem better quality, the issue is that we're finding it impossible to cook certain things such as eggs and fish without them completely adhering to the pan and becoming a mess. How do people manage to cook with stainless steel without this issue?



A CHOICE kitchen expert

Fiona Mair: There's definitely a learning curve when switching from Teflon to stainless steel, but once you get the hang of it, stainless steel really is quite a handy material – you don't have to worry about scratching it, you can cook at high temperatures and they're really hard wearing compared to Teflon-coated pans. There is actually a trick to getting stainless steel pans to become "non-stick", it's called the Leidenfrost effect. Start with a clean, dry pan placed on a medium-high heat for a few minutes. Once it has heated up, throw a few droplets of water in. If the water sizzles, the pan isn't hot enough. If it spits, it's too hot. What you want is to see the water form little beads that bounce gently across the surface of the pan. Once you see this happen, add a little bit of oil and turn the pan to your desired cooking heat (for eggs you'll likely need to turn it down a little). Add your food to cook, and voila – it won't stick to the pan.

