



INDEPENDENT CONSUMER & COMPETITION COMMISSION

Office of the Commissioner

SPEECH

WELCOME ADDRESS BY THE ICCC COMMISSIONER &
CHAIRMAN OF CPCC, MR. THOMAS ABE

ON THE OPENING OF THE CONSUMER PRODUCTS CONSULTATIVE
COMMITTEE (CPCC) INAUGURAL MEETING ON
WEDNESDAY 27TH JULY 2005 AT THE ICCC CONFERENCE ROOM

Minister for Finance and Treasury, Hon. Bart Philemon
Members of the Consumer Products Consultative Committee (CPCC)
Friends from the Media

Good morning, I welcome all of you here today and wish to sincerely thank each of your respective organizations for accepting the Independent Consumer and Competition Commission's (ICCC) invitation to attend this inaugural Consumer Products Consultative Committee meeting and to be part of the Consumer Products Consultative Committee (CPCC).

Your very presence as senior members of the government, key stake holders, the private sector, non government agencies, consumer groups and the media makes this occasion unique and important.

What is Product Safety and why is CPCC important?

Ladies and Gentlemen, the ICCC Act contains a declaration of consumer rights, including consumers' right to safety and their right to information. It follows that those who are responsible for producing, importing and selling consumer goods should ensure that consumers have sufficient information about the safety of products that they are purchasing so that they are protected. This is also in line with the 1985 United Nations Charter of Consumer Rights, which emphasizes the need for all those involved in making goods available to consumers, to consider product safety as an important factor in their business practices.

Whilst in PNG the Consumer Protection provisions of the ICCC Act are quite general and do not cover in detail all consumer safety issues and unfair business practices the way some other developed countries do, the Act concentrates on product safety and information standards.

As the PNG economy is improving, there is evidence of an increasing availability of consumer products in the PNG market from all over the world including our own PNG made products. Whilst this improvement in the diversity of the PNG economy is good for business in terms of trade, competition and consumer choices, it also comes with a price in terms of an alarming increase in consumer products appearing in the PNG market which may be illegal, unsafe or risky for the vast majority of PNG consumers.

Among the consumer product safety and information issues the ICCC has before it, for instance, are food products with long since expired dates still sitting on the traders shelves, contaminated food products (including contamination from foreign objects in cans during processing), uninformative or unintelligible foreign labels, and unapproved electrical appliances, to name a few. The ICCC through our Regional Offices has numerous examples and cases which have been investigated as a result of formal complaints lodged with the ICCC.

This has prompted the ICCC to consider and develop strategies that will address product safety issues for the benefit of all who are involve in making consumer products available to the market or are consumers of these products. One of the steps taken by ICCC has been its recent appointment to membership of the Consumer Products Advisory Committee (CPAC) in Australia, which comprises members from the Australian and New Zealand Governments and all Australian State and Territory governments. Through this link the ICCC is now actively able to learn and participate in monitoring product recalls including ban notices of products in those countries, in order to be warned of dangerous products that may come into PNG.

In PNG we require a lot more awareness and responsible participation from all concerned in the production, importation, distribution, selling, regulation and consumption of consumer products to ensure that these products produced and sold to our people in this market are safe for consumption. That is why the ICCC has taken a lead in establishing the Consumer Products Consultative Committee (CPCC) whose primary purpose will be to serve as an on going informal forum for discussing and providing

appropriate advice to the ICCC on issues of product safety and product information standards, consumer product safety recalls and similar issues.

Progress in ICCC.

We at the ICCC have accomplished a lot in a short period of time since the formal establishment of the Commission in 2003. This is attributed to the dedicated staff, consultants and strong leadership from the Commissioners, and the support from the Government for the economic and market reform principles embodied in the relevant legislation establishing the Commission.

Our vision is to foster an informed and fair PNG market. We value good corporate governance, transparency, fairness and professional conduct to achieve our mission in the promotion of competition, economic efficiency, and the protection of consumer's rights and interests.

We value the inputs of businesses and consumers alike including those of other PNG regulators and key stakeholders, in our decision making processes. Our aim is to provide the opportunity for the views of all to be represented. We have achieved this objective in the consultation processes adopted in our recent public reports on matters including flour, fuel, water and postage pricing and currently underway in rice and public transport pricing.

This Consumer Products Consultative Committee represents yet another example of our consultation processes. This Committee is to effectively address issues of concern regarding product safety and information standards designed to minimize risks to consumers in Papua New Guinea.

Conclusion.

In the sessions after the tea break we will shed some more light on the area of product safety and demonstrate some examples of unsafe products for the purpose of our discussions. I am sure you also have some of your own experiences and suggestions to share with the other members of CPCC.

I look forward to the CPCC inaugural meeting. I trust that each one of you shares this enthusiasm, and will take the opportunity to participate actively in this gathering today. Your input is most welcomed and valued.

Before I call on the Minister for Finance and Treasury who has kindly agreed to open this workshop despite his busy schedule, I should mention here that it was the Minister's foresight and leadership that, in October 2002, directed the Department of Treasury to commence the ground work for the establishment of ICCC and which led to its formal launch in March 2003. For me personally, the work of the ICCC would have not progressed this far without the support of the Minister.

Therefore it is only fitting to acknowledge his efforts by asking him to open this inaugural Consumer Products Consultative Committee meeting.

Ladies and Gentlemen, – the Minister for Finance and Treasury.

THOMAS ABE
Commissioner & CEO

27 July 2005