CUSTOMS AND ICCC AGREE TO JOINTLY TACKLE THE IMPORT OF UNSAFE CONSUMER GOODS INTO PNG

Today the PNG Customs and the Independent Consumer and Competition Commission (ICCC) signed an agreement that will reduce and hopefully eliminate the import of unsafe consumer goods. The agreement essentially puts into operation an early warning system that will identify such goods at the country’s border.

Mr Ray Paul, Commissioner of the PNG Customs Service said “We have been concerned for some time that goods that may cause injury or even death to consumers have been imported. We are pleased the ICCC has taken positive steps to address this major consumer issue. We believe this initiative will have a positive impact on consumers in PNG.”

ICCC Commissioner Dr Billy Manoka said “Under the ICCC Act we may impose bans on products that are unsafe as well as imposing mandatory standards in respect of consumer products and this agreement will certainly enhance the effectiveness of our operations.”

Mr Paul added: “Not only will we identify goods that are banned and those that do not conform with mandatory consumer standards but we will also alert the ICCC if we become aware of any other goods likely to cause harm to consumers.”

“As the principal consumer watchdog, ICCC is giving priority to product safety issues and has already identified a number of goods that may be hazardous or dangerous to consumers. It will be imposing bans on some of those products and will be alerting consumers to the risks that other products pose.’ ICCC Commissioner Dr Billy Manoka said.

Winston Rodrigues, the senior advisor to ICCC, who was also present at the signing, said: “Children are the most vulnerable section of society and need to be protected from the risk of harm and death from dangerous products. All parents would be relieved that the Commission and Custom are collaborating to reduce the risk to life and lives of their children.”
Background

The Independent Consumer and Competition Commission (ICCC) is responsible for administering the ICCC Act as well as a number of other laws. The ICCC Act is designed to enhance the welfare of the people of PNG by encouraging competition, fair trading and efficiency in business as well as preventing anti-competitive behaviour.

The ICCC has specific wide ranging powers in relation to consumer product safety. It takes its responsibility under those provisions seriously and will take immediate action when it becomes aware of a product that can affect the health or safety of consumers.

Its powers include:

- warning consumers of the possible danger of particular goods and conducting an assessment of the risks involved;
- recommending to the Minister to declare a standard that suppliers of the product must meet or for the provision of information in relation to such a product;
- issuing interim bans where the Commission is of the view that such goods are unsafe;
- issuing of permanent bans on unsafe goods; and
- requiring compulsory recall of products that are unsafe, or not compliant with a product or information standard.

The Act provides that the Commission will, on request, hold a conference with any supplier who may be adversely affected by its actions.

It has already banned small high powered magnets as these have the potential to cause serious injury or even death to children and teenagers. It is also in the process of banning dangerous toys like novelty cigarette lighters and yo-yo water balls. There are a number other products being considered for banning.

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