

Media Release

Gabrielle Williams MP

Minister for Government Services

Minister for Consumer Affairs

Minister for Public and Active Transport



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RIGHTS, REFUNDS, REMEDIES: BACKING FAIRNESS FOR CONSUMERS

Victorians are being reminded they can contact Consumer Affairs Victoria for help with retail and shopping issues if they find they've been sold a dodgy product or poor services that waste their hard-earned money.

Minister for Consumer Affairs Gabrielle Williams today revealed the top five most frequently reported retail problems Consumer Affairs Victoria has dealt with in the past financial year. Refund and return rights topped the list, with more than 6,400 of the 42,259 contacts to Consumer Affairs Victoria about shopping issues in 2022-23.

Valeri purchased a sofa for \$7,500 but noticed when it was delivered that it was crooked and not structurally safe. The delivery driver had pressured Valeri to sign a paper saying the item was delivered in good working condition, but Valeri discovered it was anything but. When Valeri contacted the retailer, they refused to provide a refund.

Valeri contacted Consumer Affairs Victoria and the regulator explained his rights under the Australian Consumer Law. Assisted with the clear information provided by Consumer Affairs Victoria, Valeri contacted the retailer again to assert his rights and the sofa was replaced.

Ely paid \$600 online for clothing that a retailer didn't have in stock and instead of providing a refund, the retailer offered a credit. A second purchase using the store credit ended in the same result – out of stock and no refund.

Ely contacted Consumer Affairs Victoria to check if she was entitled to the refund she expected. After Consumer Affairs Victoria spoke to the retailer, the store processed the refund.

The top five complaints to Consumer Affairs Victoria about shopping problems last financial year were:

- Refund and return rights – 6,433 contacts
- Major failures or defects with products – 5,525 contacts
- Partial or non-supply of goods or services – 4,385 contacts
- Unsatisfactory or defective services – 4,080 contacts
- Minor failures or defects with products – 3,516 contacts.

The products Victorians contacted Consumer Affairs Victoria about most were:

- Furniture and furnishings – 2,898 contacts
- Clothing and footwear – 2,346 contacts
- Maintenance services (such as gardening) – 2,281 contacts
- Electrical appliances and whitegoods – 1,984 contacts.

Many people who experience problems with a retail service or product never report it, thinking they can't do anything about it, but consumers and small businesses have important rights when buying products and services.

Consumer Affairs Victoria can help people understand their rights and options for seeking a refund, replacement or remedy. To contact Consumer Affairs Victoria call 1300 55 81 81 or go to consumer.vic.gov.au.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Consumer Affairs Gabrielle Williams

"Every year thousands of Victorians spend money on dodgy products and services – it's money that many people can't afford to lose."

"It's vital that consumers are supported to understand their rights. If you're having problems with a retail product or service, get on to Consumer Affairs Victoria's website or call them for expert advice."

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