

Media Release

Gabrielle Williams MP
Minister for Government Services
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BUY WISELY – DON'T TOY WITH CHILD SAFETY THIS CHRISTMAS

Victorian families are being urged to choose safe toys and products for Christmas – and shop owners to ensure only safe products are offered for sale – as the gift-buying season builds to a peak.

Minister for Consumer Affairs Gabrielle Williams today joined Consumer Affairs Victoria Director Nicole Rich and inspectors to announce that Christmas product safety checks are underway across the state.

Consumer Affairs Victoria inspectors are carrying out safety inspections from this week and will be on the lookout especially for unsafe children's toys, portable pools and Christmas-themed products containing button batteries.

Too many shops are not being vigilant in their stocking practices or are deliberately flouting the law – in October inspectors seized 23 Christmas lanterns with exposed button batteries during a Halloween safety compliance blitz.

Last year, Consumer Affairs Victoria inspectors seized 245 toys from shelves before Christmas because they were unsafe, including baby rattle sets that were choking hazards, children's sunglasses that didn't have the required labelling (including lens and usage information) and cosmetics with no ingredient labelling.

To pick the safest toys this Christmas, Consumer Affairs Victoria is advising people to avoid buying toys with sharp edges, points or splinters, to watch out for toys with button batteries and make sure the batteries are in secure compartments, and to keep in mind the child's age.

Under Australian Consumer Law, it is illegal to supply products that do not meet mandatory safety and information standards. Consumer Affairs Victoria inspectors have the power to issue infringement notices and \$5,000 fines on the spot.

In cases where items are seized, further enforcement action can range from warnings to infringements or court action. In 2019, Consumer Affairs Victoria took court action against a Victorian business, forcing it to pay \$415,000 in penalties, plus \$15,000 in costs, for serious breaches of the Australian Consumer Law's product safety provisions.

In 2022-23, Consumer Affairs Victoria conducted 453 product safety inspections targeting non-compliant goods, and issued one infringement, 94 official warnings and received 44 voluntary undertakings to withdraw and not restock products for sale.

To report a potentially unsafe product, contact Consumer Affairs Victoria on 1300 558 181 or visit consumer.vic.gov.au/productsafety. A list of recalled and banned products can be viewed at productsafety.gov.au.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Consumer Affairs Gabrielle Williams

"Consumer Affairs Victoria inspectors are in shops and on the streets to make sure unsafe toys and products are removed from sale."

"Christmas should be memorable for the right reasons – so I encourage parents and carers to keep safety front of mind when choosing gifts for children."

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