

Media Release

The Hon Marlene Kairouz MP
Minister for Consumer Affairs,
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Minister for Suburban Development



**DELIVERING
FOR ALL VICTORIANS**

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CHECK UP ON RETAILERS BEFORE YOU CHECKOUT ONLINE

Consumers are being warned to exercise extra caution when buying online, with new figures revealing a jump in complaints about online purchases in the last financial year.

Consumer Affairs Victoria received 8,957 online shopping reports in 2017-18 – up 12 per cent from the previous financial year.

Goods not being supplied or only partially supplied continues to be the number one issue for consumers – with 1375 complaints – followed by refund and return rights (1,084 complaints) and major failures or defects (1,003 complaints).

Examples of complaints include a parent who ordered baby clothes that fell apart soon after arrival and was told by the business that seeking a refund was against the law.

In a separate case, a couple purchased an entertainment unit online for \$799, only for it to arrive with the incorrect doors, chips in the paint and timber detaching from the frame.

Another consumer bought a \$200 pair of boots advertised as genuine leather. After three weeks of wear, the leather started to peel off. The retailer refused a refund or exchange, claiming the damage was caused by wear and tear.

Australian-based online retailers must comply with the Australian Consumer Law, and consumers have the same protections as if they buy in-store. This includes the right to a refund, exchange or repair if a product is faulty or unsafe, doesn't match its product description, or never arrives.

Retailers based overseas who sell products or services to people in Australia also need to comply with Australian Consumer Law.

Simple precautions Victorians can take before buying online include:

- searching for business reviews and warnings to help identify bad online businesses or even scam websites
- only making payments through secure sites. A secure internet address starts with https instead of http (the 's' stands for 'secure')
- knowing details such as delivery timeframes and the online store's refund, return, exchange and repair policies. Businesses are not legally required to offer a refund, return or exchange if you change your mind.
- keeping copies of all electronic documents and receipts in case there is a problem later.

For more information on your consumer rights go to consumer.vic.gov.au/products-and-services.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Consumer Affairs Marlene Kairouz

"Buying online is a quick and easy way to get what you need – but it pays to do your homework."

"There are a number of precautions Victorians can take to protect themselves on line – they should read the fine print, know their rights and only buy from trusted websites."

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