

Senate Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Budget Estimates

2017 - 2018

Division/Agency: Australian Competition and Consumer Commission

Question No: 44

Topic: Debt vultures

Reference: Written

Senator: Ketter, Chris

Question:

1. I refer to answers to questions taken on notice from the 2017 Additional Estimates (ref SQ17-000130) regarding so-called 'debt vultures'. In relation to the multi-agency 'Policy and Research Advisory Committee' (PRAC) referred to in that answer,
 - a. When was PRAC established, and under what authority?
 - b. What is the committee intended to achieve? For example, is it convened with the view to identifying regulatory gaps or potential changes to legislation or government policy?
 - c. How often does PRAC meet?
 - d. Does the committee keep minutes or reports of their meetings? If so, can copies be provided to the Committee? If no records are kept, why not?
 - e. What have the outcomes of the committee been since its establishment?
 - f. Is this the same committee referred to in ASIC's answer to a similar question about 'debt vultures' from the 2017 Additional Estimates (ref SQ17-000275), which ASIC described as 'The Policy and Research Committee of the Consumer Affairs Australia New Zealand (CAANZ) group'?

Answer:

- a. PRAC is one of the three sub-committees of Consumer Affairs Australia and New Zealand (CAANZ). CAANZ was established in 2011 to support the introduction and implementation of the ACL.

The purpose of CAANZ is to provide primary support to the Legislative Forum on Consumer Affairs (CAF), which operates to oversee significant collective responsibilities for Ministers on consumer affairs matters.

Specifically, CAANZ's role includes promoting and advancing a consistent and coordinated national approach to consumer policy and its implementation, undertaking research and sharing information on consumer issues, educating consumers and developing greater cooperation between consumer agencies.

In 2011 CAANZ established a number of advisory committees, including PRAC, to support its work. These committees contribute to projects under CAANZ's direction, provide CAANZ with research and advice, conduct consultation, and develop recommendations in relation to CAANZ's projects.

- b. The purpose of PRAC is to conduct research and provide advice and recommendations to CAANZ on consumer affairs policy.
- c. PRAC meets monthly.

- d. PRAC keeps minutes for every meeting. The minutes may be available from CAANZ upon request.
- e. Outcomes of PRAC since its establishment include:
 - Developing legislative options for single pricing provisions for restaurants and cafes in the Australian Consumer Law (ACL)
 - Review of and research into issues such as unfair contract terms, unsolicited sales, charitable fundraising, and fuel price boards
 - Developing legislative options for free range egg labelling, including a national information standard
 - Developing legislative options to improve country of origin labelling laws
 - Developing legislative options to extend unfair contract term protections to small businesses
 - Coordination and implementation of the ACL Review
- f. Yes.