

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
Competition and Consumer Act 2010

Consumer Protection Notice No. 1 of 2014

**NOTICE OF THE RESULTS OF AN INVESTIGATION INTO FIRE WALLETS
CONTAINING ASBESTOS**

I, Bruce Billson, Minister for Small Business, pursuant to section 130 of the Australian Consumer Law (ACL), being Schedule 2 to the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010* (CCA), hereby announce the results of the investigation notified in Consumer Protection Notice No.8 of 2013 into whether certain fire wallets will or may cause injury to any person, or a reasonably foreseeable use (including a misuse) of those goods will or may cause injury to any person, due to possible asbestos content in those goods.

PARTICULARS OF GOODS

Fire wallets are a product used by magic enthusiasts and are also a novelty item. They have the appearance of a regular leather wallet but when opened they can produce a large flame. The products contain absorbent pads that the user pre-fills with lighter-fluid. All of the products have some kind of mechanism that is used to ignite the flame.

RESULTS OF INVESTIGATION

As a part of its investigation, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) identified twelve suppliers of fire wallets in Australia. Tests on fire wallets supplied by nine of those suppliers did not indicate the presence of asbestos. Tests on fire wallets supplied by the other three of the twelve suppliers indicated the presence of friable chrysotile (white) asbestos.

The ACCC commissioned an expert risk assessment to estimate the risk of injury to persons exposed to those fire wallets that contain asbestos. The expert risk assessment concluded that those fire wallets containing asbestos constitute a “negligible asbestos related health risk” to people handling the wallet during normal use of the product. The assessment further concluded that the use of the asbestos containing fire wallet would not give rise to detectable levels of airborne asbestos fibres in the breathing zone of the handler/user of the wallet.

As to the risk raised by damage to the wallet, the expert risk assessment determined that some fraying may occur over time on the cut edges of the woven pad, particularly on the exposed edge section on the pad where the metal case has been cut out to fit the flint wheel when the wallet is closed. However, such fraying is highly unlikely to result in the generation of respirable airborne fibres above detectable levels when the wallet is handled or used. Most of the asbestos debris generated by such fraying or any deliberate manual scraping of the woven pad would consist of coarse fibrous clumps and fibres which would not be of respirable size so even if they were to become airborne, the airborne asbestos concentration would still be below detection limits.

The importation of goods containing asbestos into Australia is prohibited under the *Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations 1956*.

No proposed ban under section 132 of the CCA, proposed recall under section 132A of the CCA or interim ban or recall without delay under section 132J of the CCA has been published or issued.

Dated this ^{21th} day of February 2014


BRUCE BILLSON
Minister for Small Business