

# CHOICE

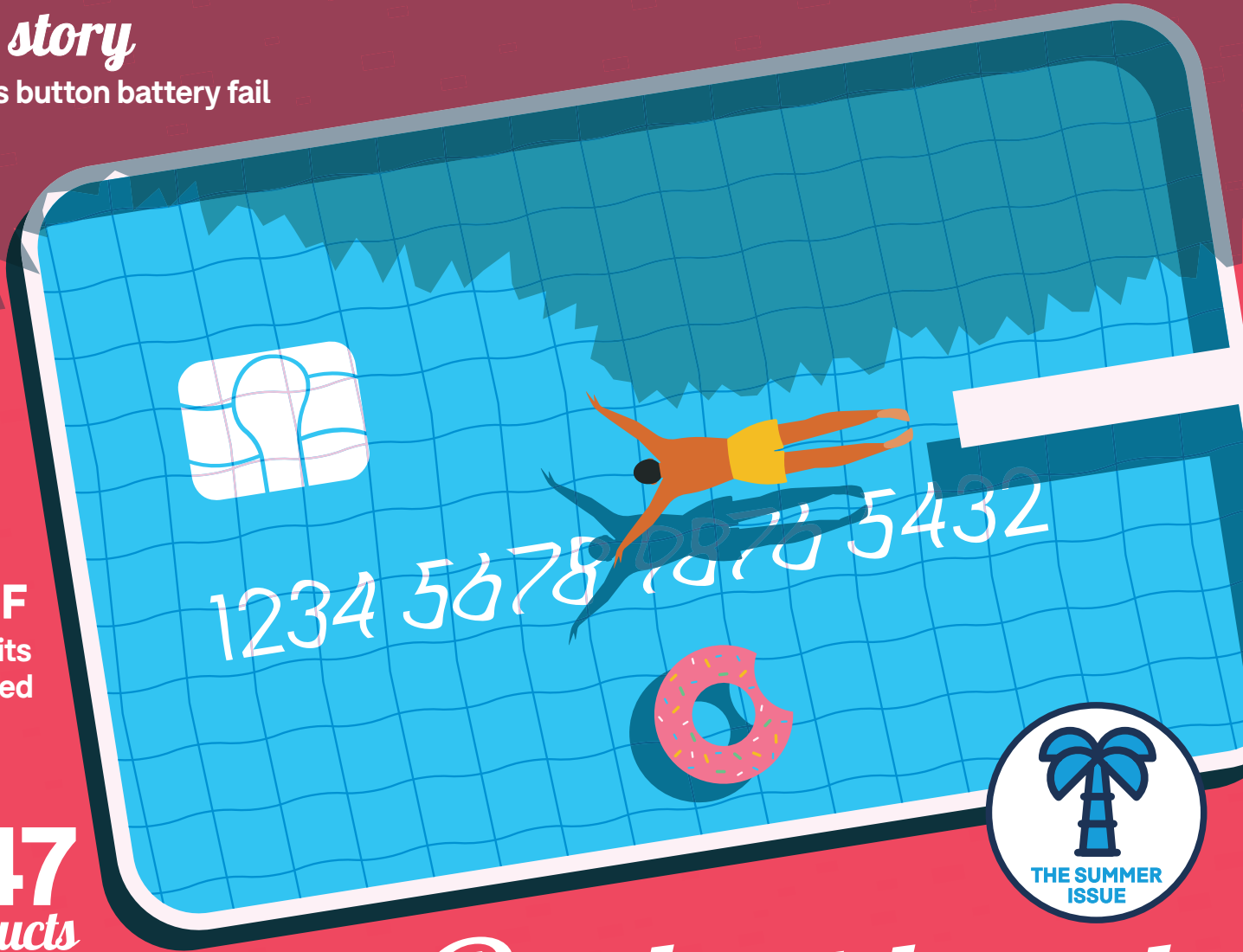
## *Toy story*

Temu's button battery fail

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# Endless summer

## Where did the time go?

**T**he passage of time is truly a terrifying thing. It can't be summer already, can it?

Feels like yesterday I was writing an editorial about summer and how much I loved it – but now spring has sprung and I'm writing a new editorial about another summer, another heatwave. It's ridiculous. The days fritter past, the seasons turn without mercy, blah blah blah...

OK, so maybe I'm feeling a wee bit old. Just the other day I sent my oldest son for his high school trial day. Terrifying. He got to meet his new classmates, get a taste of high school life. How is it high school time already? Not that long ago

be another winter, another autumn. They come around and we say, "damn that came around quick", but the existential dread is minimal. Children, on the other hand, are walking, breathing reminders of our own mortality.

Every time one of my children hits some sort of milestone I radiate with pride, but then comes that tap on the shoulder – that's the last time I'll drive him to primary school, carry him to bed, change a nappy. One second they're in your arms, as you pace endlessly trying to get them to sleep, next you're shaking them at 8am because they're too lazy to wake up in time for school.

## How do you expect me to know what a low taper fade is? I'm still wearing skinny jeans and ankle socks

I was changing nappies and scooping poop out of the bath, now he's asking for a low taper fade at the hairdressers. A low taper fade?

Son, I apologise. I'm a 43-year-old man. My best years are behind me. How do you expect me to know what a low taper fade is? I'm still wearing skinny jeans and ankle socks.

Seasons come and go, but they're cyclical in nature. There will always

The days are long, but the years are short. That's the old cliché, but the older you get the shorter those years become – especially when you have kids. There's something about the endless rotation of school runs, sports games, that makes time dissolve. It fritters away like gold dust and you never get it back.

My wife and I often talk about it – the grind of it. The fact we have very



little time for ourselves, that we signed up for this, that we should appreciate it because it will soon be gone. But what happens when they're gone? When we're no longer embroiled in the everyday chaos of parenthood.

Will the days become slow again? I have no idea. Part of me hopes so. But another part knows that one day I'll long for the days I'm currently enduring; that when my house is empty and I can hear the slow, endless ticking of the clock, I'd probably empty my bank account to travel back in time, and scoop poop out of the bathtub one more time.

Actually, maybe I'll skip the poop part.

Thanks as always for the support. Enjoy this month's issue!

Mark Serrels

CHOICE Editorial Director

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## CHOICE

CHOICE gives you the power to choose the best goods and services, and avoid the worst. Wherever possible, we pay full price for the products we test, so we remain 100% independent. We don't take advertising or freebies from industry. We're not a government body and our consumer publishing and advocacy is almost entirely funded by membership. Membership includes access to services such as CHOICE Help and the Voice Your Choice research program. Our product ratings are

based on lab tests, expert assessments and consumer surveys. We also research a wide range of consumer services, reveal the truth behind the facts and figures, and investigate their quality and claims.

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# CHECKOUT

The latest consumer news in brief  
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## CHOICE celebrates two big consumer reform announcements

In October, the government announced plans to make two big changes that will make Australia's consumer protections even stronger – a new law banning unfair business practices, and penalties for businesses that unfairly refuse to honour consumers' rights to a refund, repair or replacement.

A ban on unfair business practices could cover a range of tricks and traps such as dynamic ticket pricing, costly gym memberships that are almost impossible to cancel, and pre-checked extras at online checkouts. This huge consumer win should bring Australia's consumer protections in line with many other countries, and make sure the law catches up with what people already expect from businesses.

Similarly, introducing strong penalties will create a disincentive for businesses that flout consumer laws by denying people their consumer guarantee rights to a repair, refund or replacement. This change will support businesses that are already doing the right thing, and mean consumers can shop with peace of mind knowing that they're better protected if something goes wrong.

We've been calling for these important reforms for years. Thank you to the tens of thousands of CHOICE supporters and members who have joined these campaigns along the way, whether by signing a petition or sharing a tip-off or story. This huge step forward is only possible because you made your voices heard. Together, we'll keep fighting to make sure these important changes make it over the line.

**JORDAN CORNELIUS**

### Correction

On p18 of *CHOICE* Nov 24, we said that in Australia, Facebook's advertising revenue was between \$4.7 billion and \$5.1 billion in the year to June 2022. This is actually the combined advertising revenue of Facebook and Instagram (both of which are owned by Meta).

## People power puts card surcharge reform on the agenda

In mid-October, the Reserve Bank of Australia released a consultation paper about card surcharges. The government joined the party by announcing it was prepared to ban debit card surcharges. Payment surcharges – those extra fees added at the checkout for paying by card – have been forced onto the national agenda largely because of a clear message from the general public that current practices are not working.

CHOICE members and supporters have been vocal about the need to address issues with card surcharging, including excessive fees and a lack of consistency and disclosure. We've heard the message and are kicking off a campaign to ensure that the RBA's consultation leads to good consumer outcomes.

The CHOICE campaign is calling for a fair way to pay. To us, this means not being charged extra for paying with your own money, and making sure big companies involved in the payments system are not gouging consumers or small businesses. We're getting

involved in the RBA consultation and will keep public pressure on the government to ensure consumers benefit from this process.

**TOM ABOURIZK**



IMAGES: GETTY

## New laws to scrutinise supermarket mergers

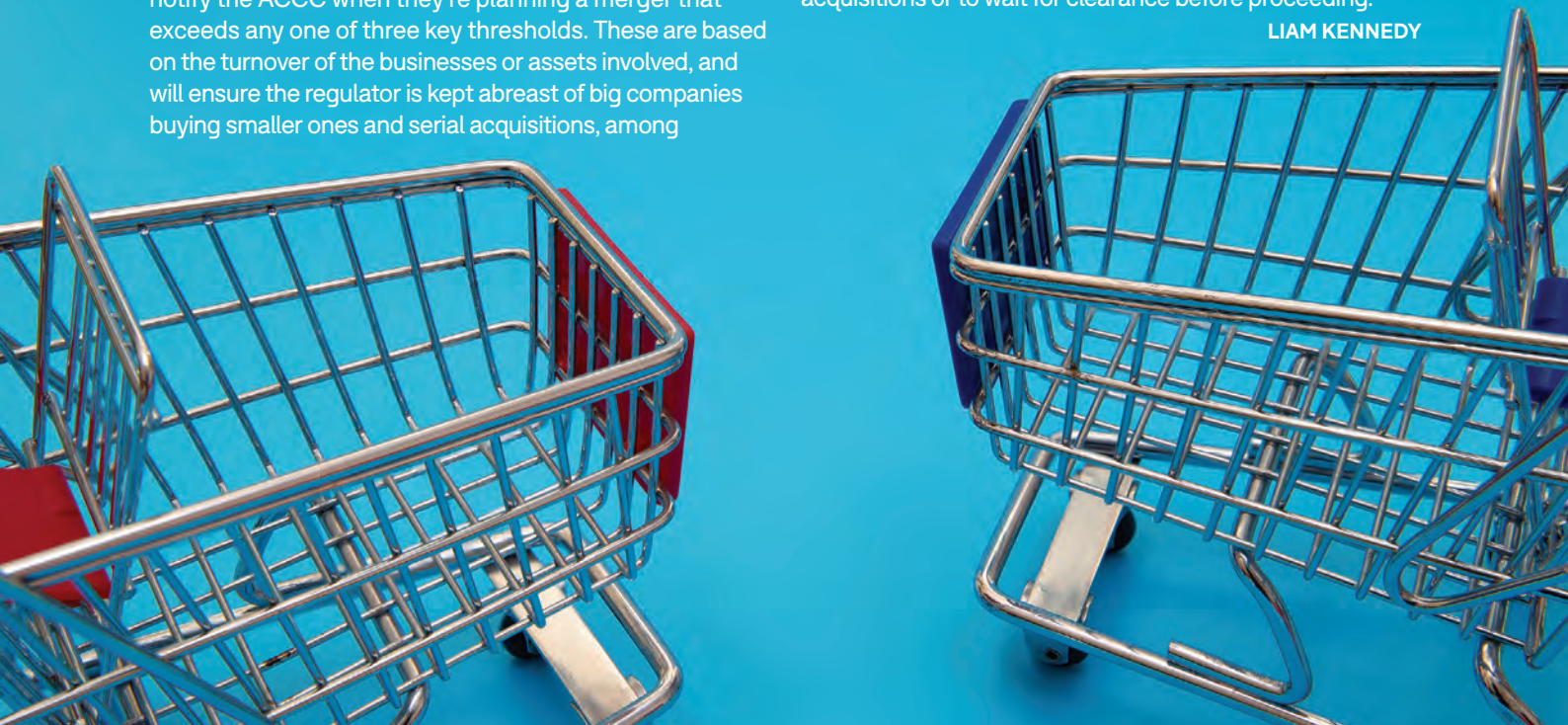
The federal government is pushing ahead with an overhaul of Australia's merger laws, saying it wants the ACCC to investigate every takeover in the supermarket sector. The competition regulator has welcomed the introduction of the legislation into parliament, saying the new rules will help it identify and prevent anti-competitive acquisitions in all parts of the economy.

The government's plan is to require businesses to notify the ACCC when they're planning a merger that exceeds any one of three key thresholds. These are based on the turnover of the businesses or assets involved, and will ensure the regulator is kept abreast of big companies buying smaller ones and serial acquisitions, among

other developments. The government will adjust these thresholds to allow the ACCC to investigate all mergers it's concerned about. In particular, the Treasurer says, this will ensure the competition regulator is notified of, and can review, any takeovers in the supermarket sector.

Once it has reviewed a proposed merger, the ACCC will then decide if the merger can continue. Currently, companies aren't required to notify the ACCC of proposed acquisitions or to wait for clearance before proceeding.

**LIAM KENNEDY**



## Harvey Norman's misleading interest-free offer

**W**hen we handed a CHOICE Shonky Award to Harvey Norman in 2020, it was because the retailer had entered into what we considered an unholy alliance with the firm Latitude Financial. Harvey Norman was signing up customers to Latitude cards at point of sale, meaning customers instore were being given the ability on the spot to buy something without a proper check by the card issuer that the purchase was appropriate to their financial situation. The Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) took an interest in the Harvey Norman/Latitude Finance partnership around the same time, and the recent win by the regulator in the Federal Court against both companies shows just how dubious their interest-free offers can be.

The issue for ASIC was that advertisements for the Harvey Norman/Latitude Finance 60-month interest-free offer neglected to make clear that you needed to sign up to a credit card to access it. Deputy chair Sarah Court says the regulator “took this case because we believed many consumers may have been unaware of the financial



arrangements they were entering into when they bought everyday products at Harvey Norman stores. In some cases, this may have meant they paid considerably more for purchases than they expected”.

ANDY KOLLMORGEN



## QBE taken to court for false loyalty promises

**C**ustomer loyalty in the financial services sector often goes unrewarded. In fact, existing customers often pay more than new ones. But it's even worse when an insurance company promises its customers loyalty discounts and then fails to deliver them. Such is the story with QBE Insurance, which was recently taken to court by ASIC.

Between July 2017 and September 2022, the insurance giant made statements and sent renewal notices promising discounts on premiums for a range of general insurance products, including home, contents and car insurance. About 500,000 customers were told they were about to save some money, but then QBE apparently walked away from the offer.

“The failure by insurers to deliver on pricing promises is a key priority for ASIC and we will continue to take action to hold insurers to account,” says ASIC deputy chair Sarah Court.

“Where insurers make discount promises to renewing customers, they need to have robust systems and controls in place to make sure their customers receive the discounts they were promised.”

ANDY KOLLMORGEN

## CBA hit with \$7.5 million spam penalty

Between November 2022 and April 2024, Commonwealth Bank sent about 170 million emails to Australians that lacked one critical element – a way to unsubscribe from receiving further emails. Failing to give recipients that option meant the emails were classified as spam per the Spam Act, which is overseen by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA).

ACMA chair Nerida O’Loughlin says the “vast scale” of the non-compliance is not okay, which is why CBA was slapped with a \$7.5 million penalty.

“Australians are sick and tired of this kind of spam intruding on their privacy and it’s clear CBA did not have its systems in order. The rules are clear: if a message includes marketing content or direct links to marketing content, it is a commercial message and must give people the option to unsubscribe. We have seen several companies get this wrong and businesses are on notice to check how they are classifying messages as commercial or non-commercial.”

It wasn’t the bank’s first transgression. In May 2023, CBA paid a \$3.55 million penalty for sending 65 million emails without working unsubscribe functions. Over approximately the last 18 months businesses have paid over \$20 million in spam penalties imposed by the ACMA.

ANDY KOLLMORGEN

IMAGES GETTY / ASIC / QBE / COMMONWEALTH BANK



## Government streamlines product safety standards

The federal government has released draft legislation to streamline product safety standards, saying it will save businesses \$5 billion over 10 years.

Under the new laws, businesses will be able to import products without duplicating testing and compliance measures, provided the products have been tested and are found to comply with equivalent overseas safety standards. It’s hoped this will lower the cost of household products and offer greater options for consumers.

“This change will ensure Australian businesses aren’t falling behind the rest of the world, while delivering savings on unnecessary costs without putting the safety of Australians at risk,” Assistant Treasurer Stephen Jones says.

The legislation also ensures that compliance requirements in Australia do not fall out of step with best practice standards around the world as they are updated.

JARNI BLAKKARLY



## Qantas ordered to pay \$100m for cancelled flights

A court has confirmed Australia's largest airline will have to pay \$100 million in fines for selling tickets to flights it had already decided to cancel, and for taking too long to tell ticket holders it wouldn't be running the services. The Federal Court ruling comes after Qantas agreed to provide \$20 million in compensation to tens of thousands of customers affected by the scandal.

The \$100 million fine was proposed to the court by the ACCC and Qantas in May 2024, with both agreeing the amount would be an appropriate deterrent to Qantas and other businesses from breaking consumer law in the future.

"This is a substantial penalty, which sets a strong signal to all businesses, big or small,

that they will face serious consequences if they mislead their customers," says ACCC chair Gina Cass-Gottlieb, welcoming the court's decision.

In August 2023, the regulator took Qantas to court, alleging its sale of the tickets and failure to quickly inform customers once the flights had been cancelled was misleading. In May 2024, Qantas admitted it had misled consumers and committed to compensating those affected.

LIAM KENNEDY

## More competition coming to nation's busiest airport

The federal government says it will reform how take-off and landing slots are allocated and used at Sydney Airport, in order to boost competition at Australia's busiest air travel hub. The government says airlines could face penalties for not using a slot, applying for allocations they're unlikely to use, and failing to return or transfer unused slots. The changes, which were recommended by a 2021 review, will also give governments the power to compel carriers to produce information on how they use their slots and give regional and new airlines better access to Sydney Airport.

Introducing the legislation to parliament, the government said it will help make the major transit hub more "efficient, resilient and competitive".

The reforms come after the ACCC in 2023 said a lack of competition in Australia's domestic aviation sector was leading to higher airfares and poorer service for consumers. The commission argued that reforming how slots are allocated at Sydney Airport would be "critical" in helping new and expanding airlines, and "the best way to promote competition".

LIAM KENNEDY





## CHOICE welcomes new Aviation Industry Ombuds scheme

In August, the government committed to establishing a new independent Aviation Ombuds Scheme. It will replace the industry-funded Airline Consumer Advocate, which we awarded a Shonky in 2021 for doing little more than forwarding complaints to airlines.

The new ombuds scheme will provide travellers with an avenue to seek compensation for cancelled and unreasonably delayed flights. CHOICE has long called for a scheme like this and welcomes plans to help handle consumer complaints, enforce consumer rights, and drive improvements in airline and airport practices.

CHOICE has written a submission to the government, recommending that the scheme is designed to be:

- **independent:** governed by a board with an equal number of consumer and industry directors and an independent chair

- **effective:** established based on all the standards set by the Treasury's Benchmarks for Industry-based Customer Dispute Resolution
- **comprehensive:** all airlines should be members
- **fair:** decisions are made based on the law, good industry practice and fairness in the circumstances
- **accessible:** the scheme should be free to all consumers and accessible for people living with disabilities
- **transparent:** the scheme should be empowered to collect and publish information from the industry as it sees fit.

Thousands of CHOICE supporters and members supported the call for fairer travel rights, and this change would not have been possible without your support. Thank you!

BEA SHERWOOD

## New entry requirements for your holiday in Europe

Currently, Australians can enter Europe just using their passport, but a new system will soon require a visa before arriving.

The European Travel Information and Authorisation System (Etias) is similar to the US Esta. An Etias will be required for entry to the European Schengen Area, which includes the majority of European countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. The only European Union countries not in the Schengen Area are the UK, Ireland and Cyprus.

The Etias will cost about \$11.50 (7 Euro) and will be valid for three years or until your passport expires, whichever comes first. It will be available online and through the Etias

mobile app, and is expected to start in mid-2025.

European countries are also introducing a digital border system called the European Entry/Exit Scheme (EES). The EES applies to non-EU visitors travelling into the Schengen Area. You'll have your fingerprints and photo taken, which creates a digital record that registers your biometric details.

Etias is yet to start, but the European Border and Coast Guard Agency has already identified 100 fake Etias websites that charge huge service fees.

For more information see [smartraveller.gov.au](http://smartraveller.gov.au) and [travel-europe.europa.eu/etias\\_en](http://travel-europe.europa.eu/etias_en).



UTA MIHM



## New help for scam victims as bank ordered to compensate

The federal government is providing \$14.7 million to the Australian Financial Complaints Authority (AFCA) to establish a single pathway for victims of common scams to seek compensation.

The government had previously announced that AFCA would manage the external dispute resolution scheme, which will assist consumers who have fallen victim to scams involving banks, telcos and digital platforms under the new Scams Prevention Framework.

The funding was announced just as AFCA ordered HSBC to reimburse a customer who fell victim to an impersonation scam in a publicised case.

The SMS- and phone-based scam received media attention after multiple victims suffered significant losses. This particular customer sought support from AFCA when he lost more than \$47,000, after sharing sensitive passcodes with a scammer he believed was working for HSBC.

AFCA rejected the bank's arguments that the customer was liable, and ordered HSBC to compensate the customer for the lost money, in addition to other costs.

**LIAM KENNEDY**

## Criminals impersonating charities offering scam loans

The National Anti-Scam Centre has issued a warning to financially vulnerable Australians that criminals are impersonating charities and offering fake financial assistance schemes.

Legitimate charities such as Good Shepherd and The Salvation Army offer loans through the No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS) to support low-income earners with unexpected payments and expenses. But criminals posing as charities are offering similar schemes, as well as fake emergency relief and rental assistance, in order to steal money.

"As the cost of living has risen, struggling Australians are being targeted in despicable ways by criminals. We are warning people who need financial assistance and those that provide it to be aware of these scams," says ACCC deputy chair Catriona Lowe. "Impersonating trusted organisations is a common scam tactic. Australians should independently check an organisation offering financial assistance is legitimate, and never provide personal identifying information through social media."

**JARNI BLAKKARLY**



## Head-turning headphones

**B**ack in 2023, Dyson gave us the rather unique Zone Absolute+ air purifying headphones. The detachable air filter seemed like a bit of a novelty, but the headphones sounded fine. It turns out that wasn't the end of Dyson's audio ambitions, because the new OnTrac over-ear headphones are staking a serious claim.

With their vibrant, industrial-chic style, you can hardly accuse Dyson of taking a subtle design approach. The big, bold look works well, even if it's a tad garish for some. You can swap out the external plates and ear cushions (an additional \$79 apiece) if you prefer a different look.

In a rather clever move, Dyson has built batteries into the headband, leaving enough space for a whopping 55-hours of battery life with active noise-cancellation (ANC) turned on. That'll cover just about any long-haul flight in both directions.

They're robust, snug and comfortable to wear, and only feel a bit weighty, despite the size. That said, they can slip a bit when leaning forward, as you might while gardening, for example.

Onboard controls include touch commands and a physical joystick, covering the basics like play, pause, volume, skip songs and adjusting ANC. They also support Bluetooth and wired (USB-C) connectivity and have a built-in microphone for phone calls and online meetings.

But while the OnTracs stand out in terms of style, sound quality is a little more conservative. That's

not to say they sound bad – they're actually quite good. Very good, in fact. But they don't quite deliver the emotional heft that really gets the blood pumping.

Technically, they're very impressive. Audio is clear, crisp and balanced with enough stereo separation and breathing room to let every element of the mix shine through. There's an overall richness as well. Bass, while suitably restrained, can still pump up the doof with ease, impact and zero distortion.

For all this prowess, however, the OnTracs are pretty flat, lacking the dynamics, excitement and personality that make a truly great pair of headphones. It's almost like nuance has been subdued to make way for detail and clarity. This even-keeled mix may have broad appeal, but Dyson is holding these headphones back from an audio experience that's emotionally expansive and completely immersive.

Unfortunately, this can't be resolved by tweaking bass, treble and mid-tones in the MyDyson app equaliser (EQ). Where brands like Apple offer at least 20 EQ presets, Dyson has only provided three – Enhanced, Bass Boost and Flat. This limitation just feels lazy.

You can hardly accuse Dyson of taking a subtle design approach

FIRST LOOK

### DYSON ONTRAC HEADPHONES

PRICE \$799

CONTACT [dyson.com.au](https://www.dyson.com.au)



Active noise-cancellation, meanwhile, is great. Full isolation mode reduces all of the consistent sounds in your surrounds (such as traffic, trains, vacuum hums) to a soft, dull sensation. Even sudden, sharp and inconsistent noises like dogs barking or the clickety clacks of a mechanical keyboard are gently softened and barely distracting. Unlike some other headphones, the OnTracs don't generate a sense of pressure on your head when full isolation is on.

At the end of the day, most consumers will expect a fairly fleshed out experience for \$799, but there isn't enough going on to justify that price tag. Something closer to a \$550 RRP and a broad update to the EQ settings would make these headphones a rather enticing prospect. Until then, they may struggle to find an audience.

PETER ZALUZYNY



## Anti-scam legislation must go further to protect Australians

Scams are a scourge costing Australians billions every year. And they're only becoming more prevalent and more sophisticated.

The government's proposed Scams Protection Framework is potentially a big step towards addressing the problem, but it has some major gaps. The framework doesn't include super, despite increasing reports of scammers operating in the space.

The stakes for super scams are very high. For many Australians, super is their biggest asset after their home. So, when scammers target the retirement income people have spent decades building up, the results are devastating.

Super Consumers Australia policy manager Rebekah Sarkoezy says the government must include super funds in the new framework within a year of it becoming law.

Further, Sarkoezy says the framework needs to require financial institutions to reimburse scam victims so that there's a strong incentive to prevent, detect and disrupt scams. A recent report found that customers are currently footing 96% of the bill for banking scams.

"We need a robust anti-scams code with real consequences for funds who fail to prevent scams," says Sarkoezy. "All Australians deserve peace of mind that their fund is at the forefront of protecting them from scams."

**DANIEL HERBORN**

## More support from telcos for family violence victims

The federal government will direct the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to make an enforceable industry standard to better protect telco customers experiencing domestic and family violence. The government says a voluntary guideline has been unable to provide sufficient levels of consistent protection and that the Telecommunication Consumer Protection Code was also not a solution. The ACMA's industry standard will include regulated safeguards for people accessing support from their telcos.

"For too long our organisations have been hearing harrowing stories from people when their telcos have failed to provide the appropriate assistance and support when they are in very vulnerable circumstances, including circumstances of domestic and family violence," says Consumer Action Law Centre acting director of policy and campaigns Luke Lovell. "This is a step forward and will make a big difference to the lives of people, many in desperate circumstances, who call us when their telco has failed them."



Directly regulated safeguards on domestic and family violence will address the serious issues being faced by victim-survivors in accessing support from their telcos when they need it most.

**JARNI BLAKKARLY**



# RANTS AND RAVES

## In defence of dating apps



**W**hat will be the quickest way to appear cultured and sophisticated in 2025?

Recommend a longform podcast?

Swear off the big supermarkets?

Take an overseas holiday to somewhere cool enough that your friends have heard

of it, but not so cool that they've been there already? Any of these

strategies will get you on the road to looking more worldly and mature, but I would argue one action will get you there faster.

Criticising dating apps.

And fair enough, too, because there's a lot to be critical of.

These are the platforms that, along with many other parts of the internet, helped bring in the now-familiar malaise of anonymised harassment and abuse that has touched many of us at one time or another. In the decade they've been around, dating apps have caused emotional distress and helped criminals fleece those looking for love. In 2024, romance scammers stole over \$17 million from Australians and were the second-costliest type of scam, according to the ACCC's Scamwatch.

And it's not just other users that could be taking advantage of you. In 2020, a CHOICE investigation revealed major dating platform Tinder was charging different people different prices to use its premium service, with older Australians

**There are early signs that the worst excesses of these platforms could soon begin to be reigned in**



charged the most. Tinder later claimed it had stopped this age-based pricing, but the whole story only served as more fuel on the already raging

fire of dating app hatred.

So, yes, dating apps aren't great, but surely most of us know this by now? They're the great metaphorical punching bag of our time, an easy target for people wanting to look learned in conversation. Say they're bad and you'll win approving nods and murmurs of agreement, especially from young people.

But surely these platforms have also had some positive impact on some peoples' lives? After all, they've allowed individuals with diverse interests to connect and perhaps form meaningful relationships more easily than they might have otherwise been able to.

With the extent to which they encourage people to be upfront about their intentions, they have likely helped more people confidently connect with

others, navigating what can be a pretty opaque social process.

But all these points, good and bad, are old news. So what's next? Well, there are early signs that the worst excesses of these platforms could soon begin to be reigned in.

In September 2023, the federal government directed the online dating industry to develop a code of conduct to better protect Australian users from the harms many have felt. Facing the threat of direct regulation if they didn't comply, the app companies came back with their plan. The resulting voluntary code of practice was approved by the government and came into operation in October 2024.

And yes, I know a voluntary code of conduct sounds like it'll offer about as much protection as a cheap umbrella in a cyclone, but it's a step in the right direction. It could even be the first of many, taking us to a point where we're able to tame what's been a wild and disruptive industry.

We'll have no choice but to make sure it does, because despite the haters, dating apps are here to stay.

**LIAM KENNEDY**

# ASK THE EXPERTS

Got a niggling question our team can help with?

**Q** I recently bought a Eufy Mach cordless vacuum and mop. It came with its own cleaning solution and a warning that using any other product might cause damage to the device.

Living in Tasmania, I've found that local department stores no longer stock the Eufy cleaning solutions, so I have to order them online. I'm curious to know if this directive to use their branded solutions is a genuine concern or more of a marketing strategy. Is it safe to use another brand of floor cleaner, or even just vinegar, or would this harm the device?



**A** CHOICE home appliances expert **Kim Gilmour:**

Those branded cleaning solutions can be expensive and difficult to

obtain. If you'd rather not buy them, we'd suggest using plain water rather than another brand of cleaner. We've found that plain water on its own (lukewarm is best)



## ASK US

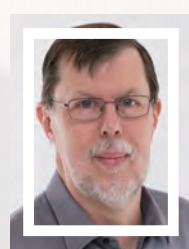
Email your question to [asktheexperts@choice.com.au](mailto:asktheexperts@choice.com.au) or write to Ask the Experts, CHOICE, 57 Carrington Rd, Marrickville, NSW 2204. You can also tap into the 'brains trust' at [www.choice.community](http://www.choice.community).

can do the job just fine. We wouldn't recommend using another brand of cleaner or vinegar as it is possible that they could harm the machine.

While we haven't put the question to Eufy, we have in the past asked another floorcare company, Ecovacs, if its robot window cleaner could be used with any cleaning product other than the solution provided. Ecovacs indicated that water would be an adequate substitute.

**Q** In your review of air purifiers, there seems to be no score for filtering out mould, which is something they're designed for. I'm wondering if maybe mould is included in the volatile organic compound (VOC) score?

**A** CHOICE air purifier expert **Chris Barnes:**



We test air purifiers for dust removal, smoke removal and VOCs. VOCs include chemicals such as formaldehyde, methylene chloride and acetone (we test with acetone).

Unfortunately, our testing lab doesn't have the capacity to test with microbiological materials such as mould spores and viruses. These present a number of challenges for testing, in particular obtaining the test materials and the handling risks for testing staff.

Generally, mould spores fall into similar size ranges as particles of smoke and dust, so any model that performs well in those tests should be effective against airborne mould spores.

It's the HEPA filter in an air purifier that will help with mould. Note that these need replacing, so factor that into cost.



**Q** I have purchased an LG microwave oven and was wanting to register the product online. However, LG seems to force you into signing up as a member to do this. I don't want to be an LG member, I just want to register my microwave for warranty purposes. Is it legal for LG to do this?

**A** **CHOICE** investigative journalist Andy Kollmorgen:



Forcing people to open online accounts in order to register their warranty is undoubtedly an unfair business practice, but under the current law it's unfortunately not illegal. It's one of the dodgy practices we've been calling out in our current campaign against unfair business practices. We are pushing for reforms that would make conduct like this illegal. You can sign the petition at [choice.com.au/MakeUnfairIllegal](https://choice.com.au/MakeUnfairIllegal).



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## CHOICE Help

### Let's dry that again

**C**HOICE member Kathryn got in touch with us about a problem she was having with Siemens. The power module on her heat pump dryer had failed and she was put in touch with an authorised service dealer. But unfortunately when the technician replaced the module, it blew up immediately. Kathryn was advised that a new motor would also be required, at a cost of around \$1000 for parts and labour.

The dryer cost \$1700 when Kathryn had bought it six years ago, and it had been used to dry about two loads per week. She wrote to us as she believed it was not reasonable for the machine to now need such expensive repairs.

We suggested that Kathryn contact Siemens in writing and explain that the life expectancy of the heat pump dryer should be longer than six years and request that the machine be replaced or repaired free of charge under Australian Consumer Law.

Kathryn advised us that just 24 hours after sending the email, Siemens responded with a credit for the full purchase price of the heat pump dryer.

CHOICE Help is our in-house advice service for CHOICE members. We'll arm you with the information and tools you need to tackle your consumer issue and help you work towards a solution.

**CONTACT US** at [choice.com.au/choicehelp](https://choice.com.au/choicehelp).

**CHOICE**