

 <p><b>QUEENSLAND CONSUMERS ASSOCIATION</b></p>	<p>A non-profit, volunteer organisation, advocating to advance the interests of consumers in Queensland</p> <p>Secretary: Max Howard PO Box 261 Corinda Q 4075</p>
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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

14 November 2010

**FOR IMMEDIATE FOR USE**

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### **DOOR-TO-DOOR ENERGY MARKETING: PROBLEMS AND ADVICE FOR CONSUMERS**

Consumer watchdog, the Queensland Consumers Association, says too many consumers in south east Queensland are being pressured by commission-based, door-to-door marketers into signing up for energy contracts which can make them worse off, are not suitable for their needs, or are not the best available.

Disadvantaged consumers, such as the aged, sick, poor, and unemployed, are often the most vulnerable to high pressure, misleading, or deceptive marketing practices, which are illegal.

Association spokesperson, Ian Jarratt, said that choosing the right energy contract is an important, complex decision best not made under pressure, and only after careful consideration of individual requirements, circumstances, and all available options. It can also have significant financial implications.

So, consumers should be wary about entering into energy contracts offered by uninvited door-to-door marketers.

Consumers contacted by uninvited door-to-door energy marketers should not be afraid to:

- Indicate firmly and clearly any lack of interest and request the marketer to leave (by law the marketer must leave and the retailer must not make contact again for a year).
- Ask for written information about the offer to consider later (the marketer is required by law to provide this)
- Request evidence of the marketer's identity and of the retailer being represented (the marketer is required by law to provide this)
- Use the 10 business day cooling-off period to cancel without penalty any contract entered into
- Complain to the Energy Ombudsman and the Queensland Competition Authority about any unacceptable marketing conduct
- Ask to be placed on the retailer's do not contact register.

The Association says "No door-to-door traders" stickers are available FREE from the Queensland Government to place on doors or windows to deter traders from door knocking.

The stickers can be ordered by going to [www.bookshop.qld.gov.au](http://www.bookshop.qld.gov.au), clicking on Search Catalogue, and entering SSQCON76.

Many consumers favour a ban on all door-to-door marketing of energy contracts.

The Association says that as a minimum, a national Do Not Knock Register should be set up to apply to door-to-door energy marketing. It should work like the highly successful national Do Not Call Register which has allowed millions of consumers to easily and quickly opt out of receiving phone calls from telemarketers for up to five years.

Regulated electricity prices include an allowance of about \$80 million for door-to-door and other marketing by energy retailers. The Association says that much of this \$80 million is not benefiting consumers.

Unacceptable door-to-door energy marketing practices cost south east Queensland consumers dearly in terms of financial and time losses, stress, and frustration.

Consumers who have experienced problems with door-to-door energy marketers are invited to send details to the Association at [energy@australiainmail.com](mailto:energy@australiainmail.com)

### **Background Notes**

*The number of marketing complaints to the Energy Ombudsman Queensland is increasing rapidly and the Ombudsman has indicated concerns about marketing practices in the 09-10 annual report (page 10) and in several media releases issued during 2010. This material and a fact sheet for consumers "Dealing with energy marketers" is available at [www.eoq.com.au](http://www.eoq.com.au)*

*However, the number of complaints by consumers to the Energy Ombudsman about marketing issues greatly understates consumer dissatisfaction with the marketing of energy contracts undertaken by energy retailers in SE Queensland. This is mainly because many consumers do not make complaints about marketing problems, especially if to do so would be of little or no benefit to them as individuals. Examples of un/under-reported marketing problems include high pressure, misleading or deceiving marketing conduct which failed to get the consumer to sign a new contract.*

*The following free "No door-to-door traders" sticker is available from the Queensland Government for consumers to place on doors or windows to deter traders from door knocking.*



*The stickers can be ordered from:*

<https://www.bookshop.qld.gov.au/ProdView.aspx?popup=1&Category=SXXG4530&Product=SSQCON76>

*The national "Do Not Call" Register was established in May 2007 and is operated by the Australian Telecommunications and Media Authority. Consumers can register phone numbers for 5 years to avoid receiving many types of unsolicited telemarketing calls. Currently, over 5 million phone numbers are on the Register.*