



GPO Box 5359
Melbourne VIC 3001

20 December 2011

Committee Secretary
Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Secretary

**Re: Inquiry into the Corporations Amendment (Future of Financial Advice) Bill 2011
and the Corporations Amendment (Further Future of Financial Advice Measures)
Bill 2011**

The Consumers' Federation of Australia (CFA) is a peak body for over 100 community based consumer organisations and consumer advocates. CFA is managed by a volunteer Executive Committee sourced from member groups and does not employ any full-time staff.

Since 1997, despite a high degree of apparent need for and interest in obtaining consumer viewpoints and input to Federal Government and Departmental processes, the CFA has not received any Federal Government funding.

As a result, it is with regret that we decline your invitation to submit to the Inquiry into the Corporations Amendment (Future of Financial Advice) Bill 2011 and the Corporations Amendment (Further Future of Financial Advice Measures) Bill 2011. Whilst we agree there is a clear need for a consumer voice to be heard on important issues like financial advice, our lack of resources means that CFA does not currently have the capacity to provide input.

In the circumstance we can only encourage the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services to keep the following basic principles at the forefront of their minds:

Consumers in Australia are entitled to:

- *affordable and equitable access to essential services*
- *protection from unsafe or unfit products and services*
- *products and services that are sustainable in terms of their environmental effects*
- *fairness*
- *information and education to assist them in making choices in an increasingly complex marketplace*
- *accessible and effective remedies for failures and breaches of the law*
- *active monitoring and enforcement of consumer protection laws*
- *input through representative bodies to policy-making that affects their interests*

Low income and disadvantaged consumers deserve special protection.

Please do not hesitate to contact me

We

encourage you to note the constraints we have raised in this letter in your report.

Yours sincerely,

Catriona Lowe
Chair
Consumers' Federation of Australia