**CONSUMER NZ**

**PRINCIPLES AND POLICIES**

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**Index**

**Consumer NZ Operating Principles**

1 Principles of impartiality and independence 2

2 Principles of fairness 2

3 Principles of funding 4

4 Principles of conflict of interest 5

5 Principles of disclosure and confidentiality 5

**Consumer Protection Policies**

1 Policy of consumer information 6

2 Policy on Safety 6

3 Policy on Sales 6

4 Policy on Testing 6

**Consumer NZ Operating Principles**

1. **Principles of impartiality and independence**

Consumer NZ is a politically impartial and independent organisation. When Consumer NZ comments on issues that are politically contentious, it will be based on Consumer NZ’s judgement of the public interest.

Consumer NZ will consult with its membership where possible, and encourage the development of an active community of consumers.

Consumer NZ will encourage the business community to adhere to policies and practices that are fair to consumers, and protect their interests.

Consumer NZ will consult with government departments and bodies, trade and professional organisations and individual firms, and present joint cases with them where there is common interest, and such action advances the interests of consumers.

Consumer NZ will advocate for consumers’ interests through work on legislation, submissions to inquiries, appearances at hearings and service on committees, as far as resources permit.

Consumer NZ supports the broad aims, objectives and principles of Consumers’ International but reserves the right to adopt a position different from that body where the Board so determines.

1. **Principles of fairness**
	1. Consumer NZ seeks always to apply the strictest standards of thoroughness, accuracy and fairness in its research and testing activities.
	2. Consumer NZ accepts the basic principle of natural justice, that those accused of anything must be given adequate opportunity to present a defence and that the defence must be considered fairly.
	3. Consumer NZ will invite all affected people to comment on draft findings before publication. All comments will be thoroughly and fairly assessed. Amendments will be made where warranted.
	4. If Consumer NZ should publish a factual error, it will be corrected at the earliest opportunity.
2. **Principles of funding**

3.1 Consumer NZ will be funded by membership subscriptions, sales of publications and other products or services, interest on investments, and non-commercial grants, donations, contracts and partnerships that are compatible with the aims and objectives of the organisation.

3.2 Consumer NZ will not accept payment from commercial interests except by way of membership, subscriptions, sales of publications and other products or services or interest on investments. Commercial donations may be made to the Consumer Foundation. Its Trustees will refer to its governing rules before acceptance.

3.3 Consumer NZ will not accept gifts other than minor business courtesies.

3.4 Consumer NZ will not accept external advertising in any of the Consumer NZ publications.

3.5 Staff and Consumer NZ may accept reasonable fees and other payments for addresses or articles, including travel and hotel expenses, and food and beverages provided as part of a function, providing they have approval from the Chief Executive.

1. **Principles in respect of conflict of interest**

4.1 Board members must declare any potential conflict of interest whether financial or otherwise before speaking or voting on a particular issue.

4.2 Staff employment contracts will contain appropriate provisions to ensure conflicts of interest are avoided or appropriately managed.

4.3 Staff members must not engage in outside work where this might create conflict of interest. Approval to engage in outside work must be obtained from the Chief Executive.

4.4 Staff members must not use their position to gain advantage.

1. **Principles of disclosure and confidentiality**

5.1 Consumer NZ works from a principle of openness, transparency and ready disclosure of information.

5.2 Published material of Consumer NZ can be obtained either by appropriate payment or free when Consumer NZ has designated it to be freely available. Reproduction of Consumer NZ published material is governed by the Copyright Act 1994. Consumer NZ has the sole right to decide whether its works can be republished or not.

5.3 Permission may be granted to organisations to reprint articles or use the Consumer NZ name or findings where such requests are likely to be in the interest of consumers.

5.4 Consumer NZ must not breach confidentiality when a trader supplies trade secrets to assist investigation.

5.5 In its publications Consumer NZ will normally name products, services, firms and individuals in the interest of the public’s right to know but must obtain permission from individual consumers before publication of their names to protect them from embarrassment or possible harassment.

**Consumer Protection Policies**

1. **Policy on consumer information**
	1. Consumer NZ supports informative labelling which enables consumers to make more informed purchasing decisions. Such labelling is of particular importance where health and/or safety is involved.
	2. Consumer NZ supports honest and informative advertising as a service to consumers, and will oppose dishonest and/or misleading advertising.
	3. Consumer NZ supports the use of plain English in contracts and other business documents so that consumers and traders clearly understand the terms of their dealings.
	4. Consumer NZ respects its members’ right to privacy and their right to update personal information held about them. Personal information will only be dealt with in accordance with the Privacy Act.
2. **Policy on safety**
	1. Consumer NZ holds that safety is of paramount importance; it makes safety a major feature of its testing and supports the recall of unsafe products.
3. **Policy on sales**
	1. Consumer NZ may from time to time sell content and other forms of communication. Such items may be produced and published by Consumer NZ, solely or in joint venture with other producers and publishers, or sourced from other producers and publishers.
4. **Policy on testing**
	1. Consumer NZ will generally purchase all goods for tests, from goods shops selling to the general public. In the interests of getting information to consumers in a timely way, Consumer NZ may obtain goods directly from the importer, distributor or manufacturer.
	2. A manufacturer may be given details about test methods or general information. On rare occasions a manufacturer may be permitted to see a test in progress on his/her own product, provided competing manufacturers are extended the same opportunity.
	3. No manufacturer may be informed about a competitor’s techniques.
	4. Consumer NZ staff may not visit a manufacturer’s plant to assist in overcoming faults revealed by tests.
	5. Consumer NZ will, where appropriate, include tests of products for disabled people.
	6. Consumer NZ may conduct tests on behalf of or jointly with overseas consumer organisations. Consumer NZ may also contract out testing to these organisations
	7. Consumer NZ will not become involved in prototype testing for manufacturers.