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The Australian Consumer Law – is it really a new era of consumer protection? – <i>Jacqueline Downes</i>	
Consumer protection was enshrined in the Trade Practices Act 1974 (Cth). While the aim of competition law is to promote vigorous competition between suppliers to increase choice and lower prices for consumers, the aim of consumer law is to protect consumers by arming them with information and prohibiting certain practices. After many years of focus on competition law reform, the new Australian Consumer Law puts the focus back on consumer protection. This article will look in detail at the reforms and assess whether they strike an appropriate balance between consumer protection and business freedom.	5
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The reforms to consumer protection broaden and strengthen those protections and clarify the rules for business and consumers. They are tailored to modern markets and offer the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and other regulators a broader suite of options than before to respond to breaches.	27
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Price discrimination arises where different customers are charged a different price for the same product or service. Anti-competitive price discrimination arises where the differences in prices cannot be explained by reference to differences in the reasonable cost of supplying the two customers. The inability of the two customers in these circumstances to obtain the same price means that there is a distortion in the market such that one customer is materially disadvantaged by paying a higher price than the other customer. At the retail level such price discrimination becomes what is called “geographic price discrimination”, where a consumer in one location is paying a higher price than a consumer at another location in the same geographic area. This price gouging can, however, be effectively dealt with in a targeted and balanced manner with sufficient safeguards for competition and consumers.	33

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