



## Making sense of consumer information

### Purpose

This section equips students with the knowledge and skills to make sense of, and use, a range of information about goods and services.

The activities involve students in:

- gathering and analysing information about product packaging, labels, weights and measures and product safety
- conducting research with people and from print and online material
- presenting the information they researched to the class.

### Learning intention for students

*We will:*

- access, make sense of, and use some information derived from consumer laws and regulations.

### How will we know we have done these things?

*We will be able to:*

- make sense of information on products, product packaging and product labels
- describe what to do if you have been given underweight goods or short measure
- explain why manufacturers need to make safe goods, retailers need to take responsibility to sell safe goods, and consumers need to use the goods safely
- recognise product recall notices and explain what they mean.

### Background information

The main ideas explored in Section 4 are:

- By law businesses must supply goods of correct weight and measure (where goods are sold in this way). Retailers or manufacturers of pre-packaged goods must make sure they sell accurate weight or measure. There are processes consumers can use to check they have received correct weight or measure and processes they can use to have the sellers of underweight goods investigated and possibly prosecuted.
- Important information for consumers is contained on product packages, product labels, the products themselves and in product manuals. It is the consumer's responsibility to read and make use of this information.
- Consumers can expect that products they buy are safe for normal use.



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- Product safety standards are designed to prevent or reduce the risk of injury with specific potentially dangerous goods. Currently in New Zealand there are six product safety standards around children’s toys, children’s nightwear, pedal bicycles, household cots, cigarette lighters and baby walkers.
- Other products can carry product certification marks from New Zealand and other countries that show they have reached a specified level of safety.
- If products are found to be unsafe, the manufacturer or retailer usually takes responsibility to fix or eliminate the problem. They organise a voluntary recall of the unsafe product and either refund customers’ money or make the product safe.
- However, the Minister of Consumer Affairs can order a compulsory recall if a manufacturer or retailer is not willing to voluntarily recall the unsafe product.
- The Minister of Consumer Affairs also has the power to ban goods that will, or may cause, injury to any person. For more information see the Unsafe Goods Notices (Product Bans) (<http://www.consumeraffairs.govt.nz/productsafety/bans.html>)
- There are three compulsory consumer information standards for labelling under the Fair Trading Act. All items must show:

### Country of origin labelling

New clothing sold in New Zealand must be labelled to show which country it was made in.

### Fibre content labelling

All new textile goods (carpet, clothing etc) must be labelled with the fibre content, eg, whether it contains wool, cotton, rayon etc.

### Care labelling

There are specific words, phrases and symbols that must be used to tell people the correct way to care for clothes and fabrics, eg, wash in cold water only or dry cleanable.

## How to use this section

This section includes four research tasks. The research tasks come from classroom activities in this section. They are placed beside the relevant classroom activity, however it is suggested that the class undertakes all the research activities at the same time when they have completed all the class work in this section. The parameters for the research tasks are discussed as **Activity 5: A guided group inquiry**.

You could establish additional research tasks from the questions your students generated from the **Fair play?** scenario in Section 2. Students could find the answers to these questions from the Ministry of Consumer Affairs website or other consumer websites.