

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release



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Customs leaves retailers waiting for answers - PC Retail Inquiry credibility in jeopardy

The Fair Imports Alliance has called on the Customs management to come clean and provide crucial importation data to industry, business and the Productivity Commission (PC) inquiry into the future of retail.

The Fair Imports Alliance spokesperson Brad Kitschke said industry was still waiting for answers to questions about the low value importation threshold crucial to the Productivity Commission (PC) retail inquiry submitted to the Customs and Border Protection Service on 7 March.

"These questions were then followed up at a Customs forum for industry held on 25 March in Melbourne, but went yet again, unanswered," Kitschke said.

"The Fair Imports Alliance has written to the Minister for Home Affairs Brendan O'Connor and lodged Freedom of Information requests in an attempt to gain access to data held by government agencies after most of the questions it had placed on notice prior to the Customs forum on 25 March were not able to be answered at the event.

"We have hit a brick wall and we need the Minister to step in. We have been told by Customs it provided some advice to the Board of Taxation when reviewing the low value importation threshold in 2010, but that information isn't being provided to industry. We are told a lower rate of the threshold is not 'administratively or economically feasible' but we have seen no modeling, not data, no analysis, no reports. On what basis is this claim made if the data doesn't exist? This information is crucial to industry being able to properly contribute to the PC inquiry process. Fair Imports Alliance is concerned the PC may not be able to make informed recommendations.

"We asked questions like: how many packages come in under the threshold in a year, what is their value, what has been the increase? Customs say they either don't have the data, can't share it with industry or it's for 'government only'. If they don't have some of this data, what have they been basing their decisions on for the last five years?," Kitschke said.

The Fair Imports Alliance comprises the following organisations: Australian Retailers Association (ARA), Australian Sporting Goods Association (ASGA), Bicycle Industries Australia (BIA), Australian Toy Association (ATA), Photo Marketing Association (PMA), Australian Fishing Trade Association (AFTA), Australian Booksellers Association (ABA), Australian Music Association (AMA) and the Retail Cycle Traders Australian (RCTA). For more information visit: www.fairimportsalliance.org.au or email fairimportsalliance@retail.org.au or call 1300 368 041.

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For interviews with Fair Imports Alliance spokesperson Brad Kitschke call 0403 809 630



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