

Warning on sale of fake Maori souvenirs

By Sallyshni Devi



The Commerce Commission warns souvenir stores, retailers and distributors to abide by the Fair Trading Act during RWC2011. They have written to approximately 200 souvenir shops across the country with advice on packaging country of origin claims. This was after a flood of fake and cheap "Maori" souvenirs were reported entering the country for the Rugby World Cup2011.

REAL THING AND FAKE IMPORTS: Gallery owner Tia Kirk shows, from left, a whale's tail bone carving by Rangi Kipa for sale at \$350, a Scott Parker hei tiki for \$1050, an imported fishhook for \$5.90 and a metal and paua pendant for \$2.50. Photo: PHIL REID/The Dominion Post.

The Commerce Commission Spokesperson told New Zealand Pacific they were closely working with Customs to crack down on imports. The Spokesperson reveals receiving periodic complaints from the public alleging that imported souvenir products may mislead consumers in relation to their country of origin.

Based on those complaints and through their own surveillance, they have identified some souvenir products. They are concern and have been liaising with suppliers and importers about these it. With the number of shops selling fake this type of product it is not possible to visit every store, says the spokesperson so they are currently working with suppliers rather than retailers. Their clear message is, selling "trinkets" themselves is not an offence under the Fair Trading Act – it is only a potential offence if consumers are liable to be misled over claims of country of origin. For example clothing items without a country of origin label.

This work is in the course of their normal inspections says the spokesperson. And warn that any offence proven in court can receive a fine not exceeding \$200,000 for a company or \$60,000 for an individual (**Update:** These fines have been increased effective from 18 June 2014 to \$600,000 for a company or \$200,000 for an individual). Courts impose the fines for breaches of the Fair Trading Act, not the Commission. However the Customs are alerting them to any products being imported into New Zealand that potentially breach the Fair Trading Act, The Commerce Commission enforces the Fair Trading Act, which covers misrepresentation of goods and services to consumers. Businesses must avoid misleading consumers about where goods are made says the Commission. They say it is not just words that can be misleading. But the symbols such as kiwis, flags or other national emblems can also convey false or misleading impressions as to place of origin. Where such symbols are

used on a product that was manufactured overseas, the Commission's view is that sufficient information should be put as prominently as possible on the label to indicate that the product came from elsewhere.

Website Link: <http://newzealandpacific.co.nz/maori-voice/maori-voice/1235-warning-onsale-of-fake-maori-souvenirs>