

12 June 2020

[REDACTED]

By email only: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Official Information Act #19.168 - Complaints about online reviews

1. We refer to your Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) request received on 14 May 2020 for the number of complaints received by the Commerce Commission (Commission) about online reviews during the period from 1 October 2019 to 31 March 2020 (relevant period), including the reason for the complaints and the websites named in the complaints.
2. You advised that you are requesting the information for [REDACTED] the Commission's Bachcare case.¹
3. On 15 May 2020, in response to our email of 14 May 2020, you clarified that you are interested in complaints received by the Commission about online reviews generally, rather than complaints limited to Bachcare Limited.

Our response

4. We have decided to grant your request.
5. The Commission has received 31 complaints about online reviews during the relevant period.
6. These complaints were identified by searching our database for complaints received during the relevant period responding to the following search terms:
 - 6.1 "online" or "web" or "facebook" or "social media" or "google" or "page" or "site" or "star"; and
 - 6.2 "review" or "rate" or "rating" or "testimonial" or "feedback" or "feed back".

¹ <https://comcom.govt.nz/case-register/case-register-entries/bachcare>

7. We have also included complaints contained in a demand² about manipulation of online reviews.
8. We have included the reason for the complaints and the traders named in the complaints in the table below.³
9. Please note the fact that a complaint has been received does not necessarily mean that a trader has done anything wrong or any harm has been caused; some complaints will not be investigated by the Commission because they are unfounded or outside our jurisdiction, and some complaints that are investigated will not proceed to further action.

| Issue | Number | Trader(s) |
|--|--------|---|
| Complainant states that trader uses false or manipulated reviews | 11 | Appliance Fix Limited AppSally Anime House Bookabach Limited JMZ Group Limited t/a Cozy NZ Mighty Ape Limited Motorcentral SAC - Share A Camper Pty Ltd Seed Credit Limited Trade Me Limited Trade Tested Limited |
| Complainant states their online review not published or removed | 11 | Bookabach Limited Brand Developers Limited Cactus Outdoor Limited Gelato New Zealand Groupon New Zealand Limited First Table Limited Marley the Label |

² A demand is the name the Commission gives a matter where we intend to complete further work. We place demands on a list and prioritise them based on our Enforcement Criteria and strategic priorities. We review our demand lists on a regular basis and sometimes demands are removed from the list, this is called a resource review. We may remove a demand from our list of pending work for several reasons (e.g. the trader has amended its conduct, the trader is no longer operating, and/or other matters have come to our attention that have de-prioritised previous demands).

³ Please note that some complaints are about multiple issues or multiple traders, and have been recorded against all issues and/or traders complained about.

| Issue | Number | Trader(s) |
|--|--------|---|
| | | SAC - Share A Camper Pty Ltd Springfree New Zealand Limited The Nile NZ Limited Trade Tested Limited |
| Complainant is not satisfied with trader's response to their review | 5 | PMS Enterprise Limited t/a A2Z Car Retro Hair & Beauty Limited Screenhug Limited Smilesville Dental Skinvae Limited |
| Complainant believes trader only publishes positive reviews | 4 | Boxhill Limited First Table Limited Groupon New Zealand Limited Trade Tested Limited |
| Complainant believes reviews approved before publication | 1 | Southern Cross Healthcare Limited |
| Complainant states they were prevented from leaving review | 1 | Springfree New Zealand Limited |
| Complainant states that trader offers discount in exchange for positive review | 1 | eMax.co.nz |
| Complainant states that trader offers free product in exchange for review | 1 | Ezi Phone Repair |
| Complainant states trader made request to change review | 1 | Mi Store NZ |
| Trader states customer left an unfair or untrue review | 1 | Bookabach Limited |

Further information

10. Please note the Commission will be publishing this response to your request in the Official Information Act register on our website.⁴ Your personal details will be redacted from the published response.
11. Please do not hesitate to contact us at uia@comcom.govt.nz if you have any questions about this request.

Yours sincerely

Mary Sheppard
OIA Coordinator

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT
1982

⁴ <https://comcom.govt.nz/about-us/requesting-official-information/oia-register>