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Real Estate Agents Authority Launched Today

The Real Estate Agents Authority, a new Crown entity established under the Real Estate Agents Act 2008, opened its doors for business today to bring a new regulatory regime to the industry.

“The purpose of the Act is to promote and protect the interests of consumers and to promote public confidence in the performance of real estate agency work. The Authority has a dual role in that it exists to protect and inform consumers and raise industry standards,” Authority Board Chair Kristy McDonald, QC, said at the launch this morning.

Protecting consumers by providing information to assist them with buying and selling property was one of many of the Authority's important roles.

“The Authority aims to enhance professionalism through a range of measures including compulsory licensing, an independent and transparent complaints process, a compulsory Code of Professional Conduct and Client Care as well as consumer guidelines,” she said.

The Act provides for compulsory licensing of those working in the industry. Licensed agents, branch managers and salespersons will need to reach certain qualification standards, and their names will be recorded on a publicly accessible register.

“Being on that register provides an assurance to the public that the person they are dealing with is subject to the provisions of the Act. Consumers will be able to check whether the person is licensed and whether they have been subject to any disciplinary action. This allows the consumer to make an informed choice of agent or salesperson.

The Authority's approved guides, which must be given to consumers, will also help them to assess their options and make informed decisions,” Ms McDonald said.

The new Act creates an independent, transparent process for complaints. The new complaints and discipline processes provide a range of sanctions available to the Complaints Assessment Committees (CAC) when they find a licensee guilty of unsatisfactory conduct.

“These sanctions focus on putting things right for the consumer and re-educating the licensee. For the more serious matters, the CAC will lay a charge before the Real Estate Agents' Disciplinary Tribunal, and that charge will be prosecuted on behalf of the consumer by the Authority.

The Authority has also developed a compulsory Code of Professional Conduct and Client Care.

'This code, unlike many such codes of conduct or ethics, is enshrined in the regulations, so has the force of law. It will become the benchmark by which standards of conduct will be measured. The licensee and the consumer will have clear guidelines on what is expected,' said Ms McDonald.

“Buying or selling a house is the biggest expense many of us will ever undertake: the Authority brings independence, openness and transparency to the regulation of the real estate industry.”

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