

FAIR TRADING TO USE WORLD CLASS TECHNOLOGY TO CATCH CONSUMER CROOKS

March 5, 2003

Fair Trading Minister, John Aquilina, has announced that Fair Trading will use NetMap Analytics technology to spearhead the fight against consumer fraud, scams and shonky traders in NSW.

Mr Aquilina said that NetMap analytical software will allow Fair Trading to quickly interpret massive amounts of data to find trends and links that will identify individuals and businesses that are trying to rip off honest traders and consumers.

NetMap Analytics, CEO, Richard McLean, welcomed the opportunity to work with the Department of Fair Trading to increase consumer protection in NSW through the use of its leading edge technology.

Mr McLean said NetMap finds the subtle and often hidden links between people and places, objects and owners, actions and outcomes, and displays the connections between them.

“This technology has been used by leading law enforcement and intelligence agencies around the world including the FBI, New Scotland Yard, ASIO, and major insurance companies in their fight against fraud.

“Locally, it was used to help the NSW Police identify serial killer, Ivan Milat,” Mr McLean said.

The Department of Fair Trading is responsible for consumer protection in NSW, including identifying, deterring and remedying unscrupulous behaviour by traders and businesses. The Department has a register of 500,000 business names, 208,000 licensees and has in excess of 2,000,000 contacts with consumers and traders each year.

“Using this technology, the department will be able to quickly analyse this massive amount of ever changing data to identify areas of concern, and act upon it,” Mr Aquilina said.

“In conjunction with proposed reforms to the Fair Trading Act to be debated by Parliament this year, Fair Trading will now be smarter, faster and tougher on consumer crooks.

Mr Aquilina said the NetMap technology would be used for a wide range of purposes including:

- tracing the origins of international scam mail and “sucker lists”
- financial tracking of sources of income of overseas mail scam promoters
- profiling and identifying importers who pose a high risk with relation to the distribution of unsafe children’s toys and other products
- identifying individuals who have obtained a business licence through fraudulent means
- identifying the people behind the notorious practice of false billing

“NSW is the first Fair Trading agency in Australia to adopt this type of technology and this leadership is a clear demonstration of the Government’s commitment to consumer protection.

“When it comes to identifying consumer crooks and shonks, we will now be able to make the invisible, visible,” Mr Aquilina said.

Media contacts:

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Minister Aquilina’s Office | Steve Adams | 9228 4744 / 0411 253 345 |
| NetMap Analytics | Richard McLean | 8436 8601 / 0414 959 392 |