

Accomplish

Contents

A message from the Executive Manager, Dr. June Smith.....	1
Annual Compliance Statement 2012	2
Mutuals' dealings with Financial Counsellors.....	2
Appointed Code contact	3
Other activities.....	4
Contacting the CCC.....	4

Committee members:

- new Chairperson yet to be appointed
- Patricia Langham (Industry Representative)
- Prof. Gail Pearson (Consumer Representative)

Future CCC meetings:

- 2 November 2012 (teleconference)
- 6 December 2012 (Sydney)

CCC interested in:

- Abacus Compliance workshops
- Upcoming review of the Code

Key Projects:

- Analysis of the 2012 Annual Compliance Statements (ACS)
- CCC Annual Report
- Project: financial difficulty (February to May 2013)

A message from the Executive Manager, Dr. June Smith

The Code Compliance Committee (CCC) had its last meeting chaired by the outgoing chairman Jeff Whalan on Sunday 23 September. We are now awaiting advice from the Mutual Banking Code Compliance Committee Association (MBCCCA) and Abacus about the appointment of a new chairperson.

Members of the CCC and the Secretariat attended the Abacus conference on the Gold Coast between 22 September 2012 and 26 September 2012. We had some interesting discussions with Mutuals regarding their operations in the issues they are currently facing.

As part of our engagement with Mutuals we will undertake a number of initiatives in late 2012/2013 including:

- onsite visits and/or teleconferences with Mutuals to discuss their responses to the 2012 ACS and Code compliance in general;
- participate in the Abacus Roadshow in October/November 2012 in Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and Brisbane; and
- arrange presentations to small groups of Mutuals, in particular in rural and remote areas on Code compliance issues.

If you are part of a small Mutual discussion group, whether regional or metropolitan, and would like to arrange a Code presentation at your next meeting, please contact us on info@codecompliance.org.au.



Only 64% of ACS received by due date 30 September 2012!

Extension granted to lodge ACS by latest 15 October 2012.

Need to develop guidelines and samples for completion of breach and complaint register.

Definition and use of Financial Counsellors, in particular in the area of financial hardship.

Annual Compliance Statement 2012

As at due date 30 September 2012, the CCC had received 64% of the 2012 Annual Compliance Statements (ACS) from Mutuals.

We have forwarded a reminder to those Mutuals who have not responded to date and will accept ACS returns until 15 October 2012. Returns received after this date will not be included in the Annual Report data.

Details of the results from the 2012 ACS will be published in the Annual Report.

One issue which has already come to our attention is the diversity and quality of breach and complaint registers used across Code subscribers. There appears to be no common industry practice or guidance in place about the importance of accurate and meaningful capture of breach and compliance data.

Mutuals' dealings with Financial Counsellors

At a recent presentation to a group of small NSW Mutuals, we clarified that the CCC was interested in dealings with Financial Counsellors in the not for profit sector only, in part IV question 6. of the 2012 ACS.

The question forms part of our research prior to conducting an inquiry in 2013 into how well Mutuals comply with their obligations to assist consumers who may be in financial difficulty.

In our experience Financial Counsellors in the not for profit sector assist people with a wide range of financial problems. They work with their clients to help them get out of the cycle of debt and take control of their finances and often represent consumers in negotiations with financial service providers resulting from debt collection or financial difficulty applications.

A Financial Counsellor will:

- help consumers get a clear picture of their overall financial situation;
- explain what options consumers have in relation to their debts and the advantages and disadvantages of them;
- may advocate or negotiate with creditors, government agencies and others; and
- listen and provide support.

Financial Counsellors have strong links with other service providers and may also provide referrals to other agencies that can assist, such as community legal services, housing bodies and other services.



Call 1800 007 007 to find a Financial Counsellor in your area.

Financial Counsellors' services are free of charge.

Peak bodies for Financial Counsellors

Ask your relevant staff to subscribe to our website to be kept informed about our Code monitoring activities.

How can consumers contact a Financial Counsellor?

We were also asked to provide information about how consumers could access such services. The [FCRC](#) has advised that consumers can talk over the phone to a Financial Counsellor from anywhere in Australia by calling 1800 007 007 (minimum opening hours are 9.30am – 4.30pm Monday to Friday). This number will automatically switch through to the closest service in the relevant State or Territory.

To make an appointment to see a Financial Counsellor go to www.financialcounsellingaustralia.org.au/corporate/find-a-Counsellor/

Can Financial Counsellors charge a fee?

We were also asked this question at our presentation and we thought you might all be interested in the response. The FCRC has advised us that Financial Counsellors in the not for profit sector do not charge a fee. They are employed by welfare organisations who receive an exemption from requiring an Australian Credit License from ASIC based on certain conditions, including that the service is free to consumers. Financial counselling staff receive appropriate training and are eligible to be a member of a state based peak body

Coming into effect on 1st March 2013, the term 'financial counsellor' and 'financial counselling' will be protected by law.

Financial Counselling peak bodies

They actively support Financial Counsellors by promoting the needs of those experiencing financial hardship. The peak bodies work with government (both state and federal), the banking, utilities, debt collection and other industries, and with many other sectors and organisations that impact Australians facing financial difficulty.

National peak	www.financialcounsellingaustralia.org.au
NSW	www.fcan.com.au
Qld	www.fcqn.asn.au
SA	www.safca.info
Vic	www.fcrc.org.au
WA	www.financialcounsellors.org

Appointed Code contact

The CCC requires each Code subscribing Mutual to provide details of one person in their office who is responsible for Code monitoring activities. This person will be our main contact in regards to Code matters, such as bulletins, surveys and the completion of the Annual Compliance Statement.



**Inquiry: Code Training
Obligations published on
CCC website**

**Project: Financial difficulty
Annual Report 2011/2012
2012 ACS verification
process**

Email:
[info@
codecompliance.org.au](mailto:info@codecompliance.org.au)

Phone: 1300 78 08 08

Address:
PO Box 14240
Melbourne Vic 8001

Website:
www.cccmutuals.org.au

Please ensure that you provide the CCC with any changes to that person. Unfortunately, we do not have the ability to have more than one person as your main Code contact as requested by some Mutuals (e.g. your Compliance Officer, your Senior Manager or an alternate staff member in case the Compliance Manager is on leave).

However, we would like to highlight that any person can subscribe to our bulletins and reports via the subscriber button on the right bottom corner of our website <http://www.cccmutuals.org.au/subscribe/>. This is a great opportunity for any of your staff to be kept informed about the CCC Code monitoring activities.

Other activities

The CCC has set itself an interesting and challenging work program for the rest of 2012-2013.

In particular, the CCC proposes to conduct an inquiry in the first half of 2013 into how well Mutuals comply with their Code obligations under Part D, Section 24 (financial difficulty). This has been prompted by concerns, voiced by consumer groups and other key stakeholders, about the level of assistance received from financial service providers by consumers who may be in hardship.

The full report on our inquiry into Mutuals' Compliance with Code Training Obligations has been published on our website (see <http://www.cccmutuals.org.au/2012/10/04/reports-28-review-of-mutuals-compliance-with-their-code-training-obligations/>)

We are currently preparing the Annual Report 2011/2012. This report will be published in due course on our website and distributed to all Code subscribers and other relevant stakeholders.

Contacting the CCC

If you have a general enquiry or want to provide feedback –

You can write to CCC or call CCC using the details beside.

You can also email your enquiry to info@codecompliance.org.au.

If you have a media enquiry –

All media inquiries regarding the CCC should be referred to Dr June Smith, Executive Manager, at jsmith@codecompliance.org.au.

Copies of the Code and information about the Code are available on the [CCC's website](http://www.cccmutuals.org.au) and the [Abacus Australian Mutuals website](http://www.abacus.com.au).

