

Don't rush into buying post-iso holiday

This announcement is for:

[ConsumerTravel agent](#)

WA's Commissioner for Consumer Protection is advising travel-buyers to read terms and conditions very carefully and be wary of 'pay now/book later' deals when purchasing holidays during the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic.

Lanie Chopping said that while regional border restrictions continue to ease in Western Australia, interstate and international travel restrictions are a different story and that means buying future travel can be risky.

"Many of us would like to book a holiday that we can look forward to but there are risks in doing it too soon because you may have to postpone or cancel," Ms Chopping said.

"It's more important than ever to read the fine print when buying a flight, cruise, accommodation or holiday package. Pay close attention to terms and conditions in case you have to cancel or postpone your travel because of further disruptions.

"Suppliers, such as hotels, may require you to pay 100% of the booking upfront and the terms and conditions may restrict your ability to get any refund for cancellations. Airlines or travel agents may deduct fees or charges from refunds or place restrictions on future credit.

"You could end up losing money or sitting on a credit note or voucher while you wait for restrictions to be lifted, rather than having cash to spend on local travel or something else."

Ms Chopping said Consumer Protection was currently handling hundreds of complaints from consumers whose travel plans had been impacted by COVID-19 and most were from people struggling to get refunds for their bookings.

"Of 370 complaints since the start of March, 124 have been about credit notes provided as the remedy instead of money back, 82 from people unable to get refunds, 66 about cancellation or refund fees and 33 complaints about how long it takes to get a refund.

"It is important that consumers understand that if their travel can't go ahead, their money could be tied up in a credit note or voucher for the foreseeable future. In the worst-case scenario funds may be lost because a travel business closes due to financial difficulties."

Australian consumer law regulators have noted that some travel companies are advertising 'pay now/book later' holiday deals that must be used by as early as November 2020. Such marketing practices are a concern because of the potential inability for consumers to take advantage of the offers.

"Holidaymakers face the risk that the country they intend to visit may not open its borders by the time they want to travel, may not keep the borders open, or may impose conditions or restrictions, such as travellers having to quarantine on arrival," Ms Chopping said.

“Australians may also be unable to leave Australia due to ongoing international travel bans imposed by the Federal Government.

“Even domestic travel is not risk-free in the short term. Dates and conditions for the opening of interstate borders may not align with consumers’ holiday plans and a change in COVID-19 infection rates may cause a border to re-close.

“Consumers should also be aware that insurance purchased now for future travel is unlikely to cover any loss incurred due to continuation or re-emergence of COVID-19.”

For more information about travel-buyers’ rights, visit the Consumer Protection website at www.consumerprotection.wa.gov.au or www.dmirs.wa.gov.au/cpcovidfaq

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