

Book up under scrutiny

THE State Government is seeking public comment on an informal type of credit known as 'book up'.

The practice of booking up goods or 'running a tab or account' has a long history of use in many rural and remote communities to purchase food and supplies. In some cases, book up involves shopkeepers holding consumers' bank debit cards and even their PIN details, then reimbursing themselves for goods supplied on credit, when the consumers receive money in their accounts.

"A survey of indigenous consumers conducted last year showed that credit concerns were frequent. In particular, book up came in for significant mention by indigenous consumers in remote parts of Western Australia," Consumer Protection Minister Sheila McHale said.

"The issues surrounding book up are complex and problems with it involve a range of factors such as poor financial literacy, limited credit alternatives and general social disadvantage in some communities."

The Department of Consumer Protection has released a discussion paper and is undertaking consultation

throughout remote communities. The aim is to obtain comment from not only consumers and businesses, but also community organisations, banking and finance industries and local government authorities.

"We will also use this as an opportunity to target specific problems in the Kimberley, and will seek a suitable training provider to deliver financial literacy education programs to vulnerable consumers," Ms McHale said.

"The Government is keen to measure the real impact of book up on consumers and traders. This approach hopefully will avoid any knee-jerk reactions which could interfere with a system that may, in some instances, be working quite successfully," the Minister said.

"Obtaining the discussion paper and having a say is easy and will be very valuable in learning more about the issues facing vulnerable indigenous consumers."

Discussion papers are available by telephoning 1300 30 40 54 (local call cost from anywhere in WA) or by emailing (Word document) consumer@docep.wa.gov.au

Stiffer penalties coming

HOONS, speeding drivers and people not wearing seatbelts will face some of the harshest penalties in the country under new WA road safety measures. The State Government is sending a strong warning to all WA road users that there are responsibilities directly connected to driving and they must adhere to them.

Premier Alan Carpenter said the new measures were in direct response to last year's horror road toll and community outrage at the continued poor and inexcusable behaviour of some drivers on WA roads and those who fail to take road safety can now expect tougher penalties.

More than 1900 drivers have had their vehicles impounded since the Labor Government introduced laws in 2004.

"Under the State Government's changes, police will be given the power to automatically impound

vehicles involved in hooning offences for seven days for the first offence, a dramatic increase from the current 48-hour period," Mr Carpenter said. "For second and subsequent offences, police will be able to impound vehicles for 28 days."

Seatbelt penalties were also increasing. "We increased seatbelt penalties in April last year and always said that we would look at increasing them again if we believed it necessary," he said.

Currently, the driver is only responsible for passengers under the age of 16 not wearing seatbelts. Now a driver is responsible for ensuring all passengers are wearing seatbelts, regardless of age.

Under the new changes, drivers who have passengers not wearing seatbelts will be fined and lose demerit points. Passengers over the age of 16 who are not wearing seatbelts will continue to

receive their own penalty of \$500.

And that's not all, the penalty increases for drivers using a hand-held mobile phone, from \$100 and three demerit points to \$250 and three demerit points. Penalties will also be increased for drivers who continue to speed on the state's roads by more than 20kmh. The changes also include increased court-imposed penalties for reckless driving, further enhancements to WA's Driver Reviver Program and the expansion of the regional road safety message signage program.

The seatbelt, speeding and mobile phone penalties are expected to come into effect within the next month. The new hoon and road rage measures and the increased court-imposed penalties for reckless driving will require legislative changes and will be introduced into Parliament when it resumes this month.

Boosting sport and recreation

APPLICATIONS are now open for groups to apply for grants under the Sport and Recreation Community Grants Scheme.

Amounts between \$1000 and \$20,000 would be available to support projects that increased physical activity or enhanced the skills of people who provide sport and recreation opportunities.

"The Sport and Recreation Community Grants Scheme, totalling \$1 million, is open to local governments, educational institutions, sport and recreation clubs and other community

organisations," said Jon Ford MLC.

"The scheme replaces several previous funding programs, and will mean a far more streamlined application and assessment process."

There are two funding categories including: Seasonal Grants of \$5000 to \$20,000 which are available twice a year; and Small Grants of \$1000 to \$5000 for small-scale projects that are likely to be one-off activities focussing on participation or training initiatives in sport and recreation.

Mr Ford said there were two focus areas for the scheme - increasing

participation and people development.

"We want a more physically active society in which sport and recreation maintains and increases its contribution to community well being," he said. "We also want to make sure groups with low participation rates - such as women, seniors, Indigenous people and people with disabilities - have the opportunity to benefit."

Application forms and funding criteria are available by contacting the Department of Sport and Recreation on 9182 2100 or at www.dsr.wa.gov.au

EVENTS CALENDAR

- Feb 19** Line Dancing at The Beach, 7-8pm. Gold coin donation. Contact Melissa on 9175 2972.
- Feb 20** Red Dirt Quilters meet at the Newman Neighbourhood Centre, 9am-12pm, cost \$3 (crèche available at \$3 per child).
- Feb 27** Terrific Toddlers Community Workshop, 9:00am-12:00pm at Newman Neighbourhood Centre, cost \$5. For further information call on 9175 3361 or email wpcnew@benet.net.au
- Feb 27** Clothing Exchange at The Beach, bring up to five good garments you want to exchange, 2-5pm. For more information phone 0437 788 678.
- Mar 2** Clean Up Australia Day.
- Mar 8** International Women's Day.
- Mar 11 & 13** Appliqué and Quilting Workshop, 7-10pm at Newman Neighbourhood Centre, cost \$60 plus materials. For bookings and more information phone Jenyce at the Newman Neighbourhood Centre on 9175 1516.
- Mar 14** Newman Campdraft and Rodeo Association St Patty's Day Rodeo, with events including bull ride, saddle bronc, steer ride, horse vs motorbike barrels as well as a live band on the night. Enquiries to Joel Blake on 0412 625 632 or email joelblake@gmail.com

If you have any updates for our Events Calendar, call 9177 8127 or email editor@newmanmail.com.au

The Heart of the Pilbara Newman Mail

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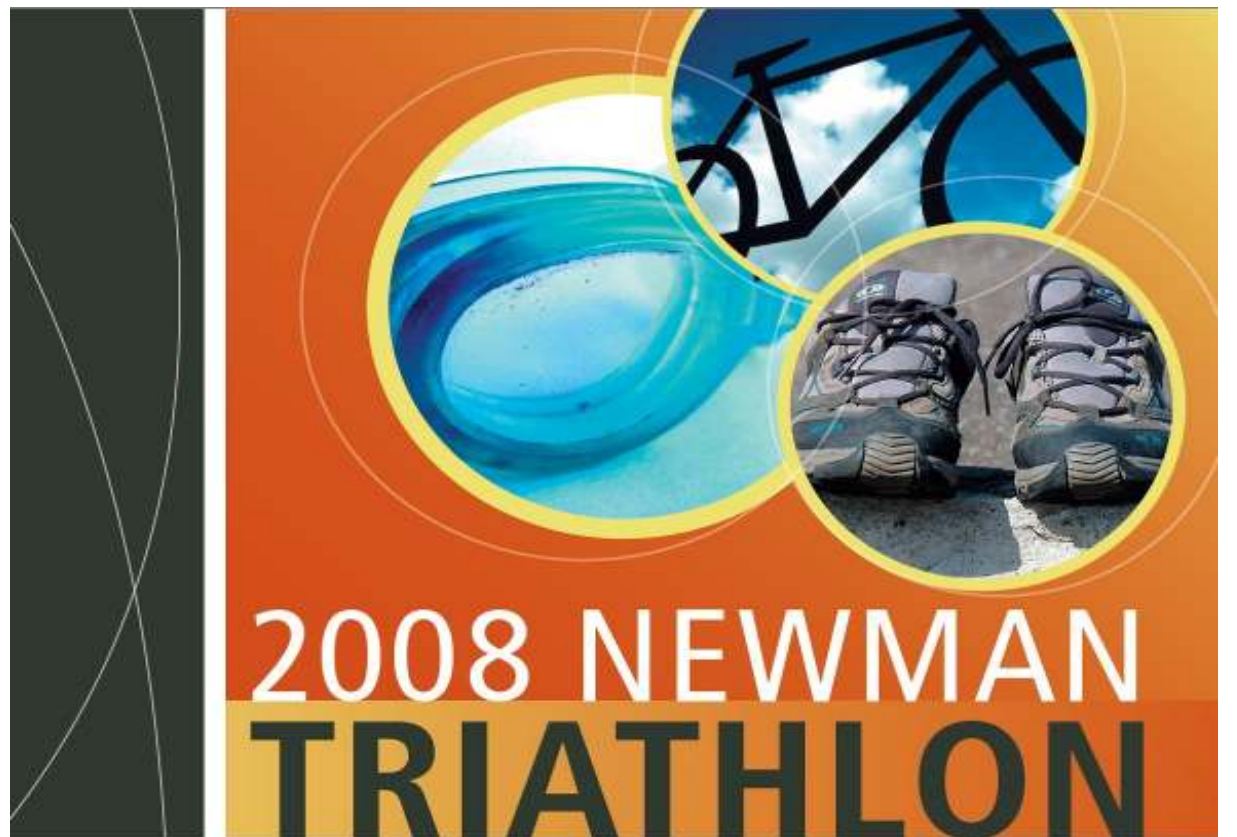
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Join us for a great day in the 2008 Newman Triathlon...

WHEN: 6 April 2008

WHERE: Newman Aquatic Centre

ADULTS: TEAM OR INDIVIDUAL
350m swim/15km cycle/5km run

CHILDRENS: TEAM OR INDIVIDUAL
7-10 years 50m swim/3km cycle/500m run
11-14 years 200m swim/6k cycle/1km run

REGISTRATION: Adults 6:00am,
Children 8:00am

STARTING TIMES: Adult individuals 6:30am
Adult teams 7:00am
Children individuals 8:45am
Children teams 9:15am*

ENTRIES CLOSE: 26 February 2008
(unless field limit is reached before)

ENTRY FEE: Please support your community, the \$10 entry fee goes toward St John Ambulance and the Royal Flying Doctor Service

*Children's start times may vary depending on the adult finish times.

CATEGORY PRIZES AND RANDOM DRAW PRIZES FOLLOWING CHILDREN'S EVENT

Entry Forms available at: Newman Aquatic Centre, Newman Recreational centre or contact David Rosenthal on: 9175 3359, 0439 098 650 or email: David.Rosenthal@BHPBilliton.com

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