

***Channel NewsAsia**

New CASE accreditation scheme for direct selling businesses launched



SINGAPORE: The Consumers Association of Singapore (CASE) and the Direct Selling Association of Singapore (DSAS) on Thursday (Jan 8) announced the launch of their joint accreditation scheme, and more than 10 direct selling businesses have already been accredited.

Direct selling is a practice in which products are sold from no fixed location.

With the launch of the CaseTrust-DSAS Joint Accreditation Scheme, consumers can expect the following:

- A cooling off period of seven working days (excluding Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays), during which consumers may seek full refund of payment made
- An order form at the time of sale, with clear and accurate contact details of the direct seller
- A well-defined complaint mechanism put in place by the business to address disputes

Besides these, accredited businesses are governed by DSAS' Code of Ethics, which ensures all direct sellers within their distribution system practice responsible and ethical selling, the press release stated.

Companies must also comply with regulations that regular businesses are bound by, such as the Lemon Law, and detail the terms and conditions of any warranties and/or guarantees clearly.

These terms are on top of DSAS membership criteria, which require companies to at least be registered for a year with the Accounting and Corporate Regulatory Authority, undergo a six-month probation period where the DSAS committee will conduct investigations on business behaviour and credit ratings, submit a legal opinion on their marketing plans, and have no more than five breaches of the Consumer Protection (Fair Trading) Act over the past year with CASE.

These practices will be checked in re-audits every four years after accreditation by a CaseTrust-appointed third-party auditor, with interim assessments conducted every two years. CASE and DSAS hope that the CaseTrust accreditation would better reassure consumers of direct sellers, as well as to encourage a set of best practices within the industry that rewards ethical business practices.

On Thursday, 14 out of 24 direct selling companies were awarded the CaseTrust Accreditation Mark. These are:

1. Agel Enterprises
2. Amway (Singapore)
3. Best World Lifestyle
4. Creative Network International
5. DXN (Singapore)
6. Elken (Singapore)
7. Extra Excellence (S)
8. Healthy Homes Marketing
9. Herbalife International Singapore
10. Neways Singapore Enterprises
11. Nikken Wellness Singapore
12. Nu Skin Enterprises Singapore
13. Qnet
14. Usana Health Sciences Singapore

Mr Willie Chua, the managing director of Nikken Wellness Singapore, said: "The main complaints that might come in is always (for) refunds, or (about) damaged products. So the distributors or customers will get very frustrated if you do not have a specific policy ... And there will be arguments between the two parties. But if we have this accreditation scheme in place, everything is (in) black and white."

CASE President Lim Biow Chuan added: "In the past, I think a consumer would struggle a little bit, because the consumer is wondering: 'I am only dealing with a DSAS company that has this code of conduct. How assured am I that I will be treated fairly and impartially by someone within their own organisation and own industry?'

"Consumers would then be given greater assurance that there is an independent CaseTrust organisation that is looking at the way they (direct sellers) conduct their business."

- CNA/kk/ac