



MEDIA RELEASE

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## **ALERTING CONSUMERS TO THE DANGERS OF BUYING GEMSTONES AND DIAMONDS**

The Gemmological Association of Australia (GAA) and the Diamond Guild of Australia (DGA) have joined forces in urging consumers to be very careful when purchasing diamonds and gemstones.

In a national campaign launched to the media last month, the two highest gemstone and diamond authorities in Australia issued a press release highlighting the increase in complaints by consumers of jewellery purchases which have turned out to include fake, synthetic, inferior quality and fracture-filled gems.

The GAA also wrote a letter to the world's largest online global marketplace, eBay warning it of the number of misleading and incorrect descriptions of diamonds and gemstones being offered by auction and private sale.

Bill Sechos, founder of the Australian Gem Studies Laboratory, and spokesperson for the GAA, says that the rise of dodgy and unsubstantiated gem and diamond descriptions on eBay and the Internet is astounding.

“We have had customers come in with diamonds they purchased on eBay for thousands of dollars only to find out that they are far below the quality they believe they have bought. Often they turn out to be a man-made artificial stone such as a cubic zirconia or paste and are practically worthless,” he says.

According to Bill, these customers claim that many sellers provided certification and valuations of the diamonds and gemstones, which they thought were legitimate.

“Anyone with a computer can print an authentic-looking but worthless diamond or gemstone certificate,” he says.

Chairman of the DGA and GAA graduate, Cameron Marks of Sydney's high-end jeweller Percy Marks, is also concerned with the damage being done to consumers by disreputable and uneducated sellers.

“There's no way that the average consumer can tell the difference between a fake diamond, such as a cubic zirconia, and a real diamond. Nor can a consumer identify whether the diamond has been treated with heat or pressure to change the colour – or whether it has been fracture filled,” says Cameron.

The advice from both the GAA and DGA for consumers buying gemstones and diamonds is to do so from a reputable source and from someone who has credentials from the GAA.

As a way to engage the media, a number of press kits included cubic zirconias (donated by Sapphex) and two real diamonds (donated by DGA) with journalists having to email a number on a diamond paper to see if they had a real diamond or a fake.

According to Kathryn Wyatt, Federal Publicity Officer of the GAA, the media responded incredibly well.

“Almost every journalist receiving the envelope with a cubic zirconia or diamond in emailed us, which is a terrific response,” she says.

The two real diamonds were sent to Bridie Smith, Consumer Affairs writer at the Age and Kimberley Walsh at Vogue Australia.

Both recipients were delighted to learn that they were the recipients of a real diamond, which included certification from the Gem Studies Laboratory.

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