

# Adverts to get new scrutiny

By ROY EDMONDS

Television and other media advertising is to face tough new scrutiny for accuracy, the Consumer Council said yesterday.

Miss Ophelia Cheung, the council's executive director, said a newly-formed Trading Standards Advisory Committee would be vetting advertising closely for misleading promises to consumers.

She made it clear that too much sugar-coating on the pill will not be swallowed.

The committee, which has yet to sit, will advise the Director of Trade, Industry and Commerce on cases where it believes offences have been committed.

"Under the Trades Description Ordinance it is an offence if an advert is not true, but enforcement is a huge job," said Miss Cheung, who will sit on the committee.

In addition, the Consumer Council is operating a committee to study media advertising, she said.

This refers items which it believes are misleading consumers to the Commissioner for Advertising and Licensing.

One recent example, said Miss Cheung, was in a television ad in which tests were shown of shirts with lipstick stains being washed in different machines.

"In the first adverts they were claiming they were washing in cold water," she said.

But when the council put this to the test it found the shirts could only be cleaned of their stains in very hot water.

"They have now dropped the claim of cold water," she said.

The council also dropped some laundry detergent manufacturers into hot water yesterday.

The different brands are studied in this month's copy of "Choice," the council's monthly magazine.

Although results showed that some brands washed cleaner than others the difference in value for money was much wider.

"Given the same detergent,



Miss Cheung

cy, the cost per wash of the samples was found to vary from the cheapest to the most expensive by as much as 300 per cent," the magazine claims.

This month the council has also studied air-conditioners and electronic games.

Miss Cheung told a press conference, held to launch this month's edition of Choice, some of the complaints which left buyers of "new" air-conditioners hot under the collar.

She said some firms supply second-hand ones as new; deposits had to be paid immediately but often delivery was slow; customers were often fobbed off with brands different to the ones they wanted or ordered, and hire purchase is not usually available but is sometimes promised to get a non-returnable deposit.

Finally, on electronic games, Miss Cheung said their value-for-money depends on their appeal to individual customers, but some are "very expensive" and "an entire waste of money for very young children."