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Press Release

www.consumersfiji.org

Council educates consumers on the dangers of sub-standard products

With the increase in complaints on faulty and counterfeit products, the Consumer Council of Fiji's Lautoka Office has embarked on educating consumers on the dangers of substandard products. In this regard, the Council will speak on the topic *Dangers of Sub-Standard Goods in Fiji: Knowing your consumer rights* at the Ba Provincial Youth Workers Workshop organized by the Department of Youth and Sports at the Korotu Hall, Namoli village in Lautoka tomorrow.

As products move cross borders and supply chain become longer and more complex involving many players, control of product safety becomes increasingly challenging. Hence the Council believes that it is imperative for consumer's health and safety that they be aware of the dangers of using faulty and poor quality products. In addition to this, the Council also believes that many consumers in the Western division need awareness on consumer rights and dangers of using sub – standard goods sold in the supermarkets.

From January to April this year, the Council has received 45 complaints related to groceries which were mainly on expired and damaged food products. Council's regular market surveillance has also found a large number of food products with labels written in foreign language. The products do not meet the required standards of food labeling in Fiji and pose a great risk to consumer health and safety. Similarly, from January to April 2010, the Council also received 44 complaints on electrical products most of which were faulty products that went bad after few months or just in few uses. In same period we also received 28 complaints on mobile phones out of which a substantial number was on fake Nokia phones.

Poor and low quality products not only pose danger to consumer health and safety but also breaches the basic rights of consumer which includes the right to safety, the right to be informed, the right to choose; the right to be heard; the right to satisfaction of basic needs; the right to redress; the right to education; and the right to a healthy environment. It is also a waste of money and time for consumers.

Products and services which comply with standards provide assurance to consumers on safety, fitness for use, reliability, efficiency, and environment friendliness of products and services.

Meanwhile, the objective of the Ba Provincial Youth Workers Workshop is for the young people to become aware of how and where to seek advice, assistance, training and support from. It is also an opportunity for them to understand the roles and functions of the various stakeholders and the impact it can have in a community. It is extremely important for these youths to be aware of the functions of the various stakeholders, as they are the future of Fiji and therefore deserve the integrated assistance of all stakeholders.

Mr Narendra Padarath
Chairman