

(Draft)



**Speech by Hon. Sivia Qoro, Minister for Commerce and Industry at the
Handing Over of AusAID grant to Consumer Council of Fiji on 15th June
2006 at the Consumer Council Conference Room**

It is a pleasure for me to be here today to accept the AusAID grant on behalf of the Consumer Council of Fiji. I understand that for over 20 years now the Council has been playing a very important role in safeguarding the interests and welfare of consumers not only in Fiji but also people from overseas who use the services and consume products while in Fiji.

The Council like many other government ministries and departments have very limited resources to work with be it financial, human or technical. This is where we appreciate the kind assistance of AusAID and other donor agencies in assisting organizations such as ours to provide effective and efficient services to our people.

The Council has received the first research project grant to conduct a **Review of the Consumer Council's Awareness Programme and its Consumer Services Programme**. This project will analyse the effectiveness of the services currently being provided by the Council via a wide consumer survey covering urban, rural and outer island areas. No such research has ever been conducted since the inception of the Council in 1976. Therefore, at this stage the Council is not clear whether it is meeting the needs of consumers or not, or whether it is conducting its awareness programmes effectively. Through this research project it will also be able to gauge what consumer issues need more attention and how

programmes can be modified or developed to suit the changing needs of consumerism today. Such exercise will give clear directive to the Council to design programmes based on different issues facing consumers living in urban, rural, and outer islands including the disadvantaged group.

The second project proposal is a **Comparative Analysis of Life and Health Insurance Service Providers in Fiji**. This is another area where very little research has been conducted in Fiji and consumers have constantly voiced their grievances on this issue in the recent past. This project is anticipated to make consumers aware of the categories of Life and Health Insurance policies available in Fiji and the real costs involved in buying one. Consumers therefore will be able to make better and informed decisions and ultimately save some money.

I thank AusAID once again for providing the funds to the Council and we give you our word that it will be utilized for its intended purpose in a transparent and accountable manner. We look forward to strengthening our ties with you for future projects so that together we can foster development of consumer movement in Fiji through the power of information and knowledge.